

# The STORY of

## Miss Garbo makes her film debut and appears, like a comet, in the Northern Sky

HER childhood in Sweden, a little lonely, but colored by vague dreams and shy ambitions—this was the theme of the first installment of Greta Garbo's own story. In it, too, Miss Garbo told of her examination for entry into the Royal Dramatic School in Sweden, of her great desire to become an actress. She described frankly her bad habit of being late for classes, her neglect of routine. And she told of her first meeting with Mauritz Stiller, the director who first discovered her screen possibilities. Now go on with the second chapter in the life of the fascinating woman.

### CHAPTER II

“AND a few days later, Mr. Stiller telephoned me to take a test at the studio of ‘The Swedish Film Company.’

“I was pleased, but not even yet, very excited. I do not get excited until I have something in my hand.

“I went out on the street car to the studio with a girl named Mona Mortenson. She is here in America—in Hollywood—now. But she is going back to Sweden. The pictures are not so good to her. We went to the Dramatic school together. Was it not funny that we met on the way to take the test together and then meet again in this city?

“The test was to me very funny. The stage is so different from the movies. On the stage you have your voice, but in the movies, only your face.

“I was all shaky. I come off the street, go in and they make me up and then they take me in and tell me to lie in a bed and be sick. Very sick. I didn't know what it was all about. It seemed to me like a big joke, to come off the street and be right away sick.

“And I was ashamed. I was ashamed to try and put myself over, as you say it. I had never done anything to put myself over before, and it made me very ashamed to do it.

“Mr. Stiller waited a few moments, and then said, ‘My God, can't you be sick? Don't you know what it is to be sick?’

“Then I knew it wasn't play and it wasn't funny. I knew it was necessary in the movies and I became a very sick lady.

“One day I was walking alone on the street in Constantinople and I followed along behind one of the old Turks. I do not know how many hours I followed him. He did not go anywhere; did not have anywhere to go but to wander. He was fascinating”

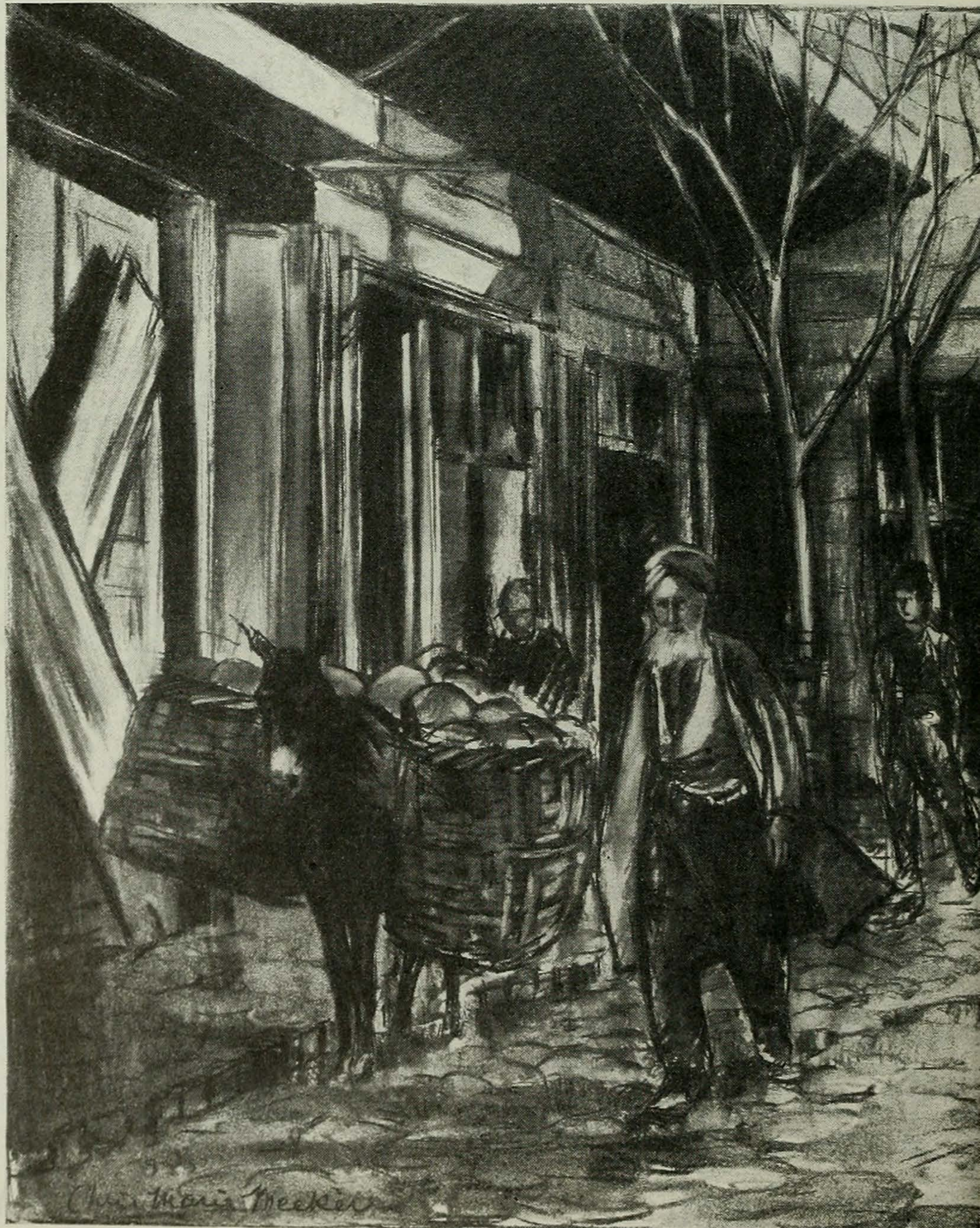
“I went home. I still did not know whether I would get any part. I went on at school. Then, in a few days he called me and told me he had a place for me. I had it in my hands; now I could get a little excited.”

Greta Garbo paused, paused to remember the thrill of the eighteen year old youngster with her first dramatic position.

“And he gave me the part of *Countess Dohma* in ‘Goesta Berling.’ The very best part for my very first picture!”

She paused again to remember.

“The first days of work I was so scared that I *couldn't* work. I was sick in earnest. Finally, everyone went





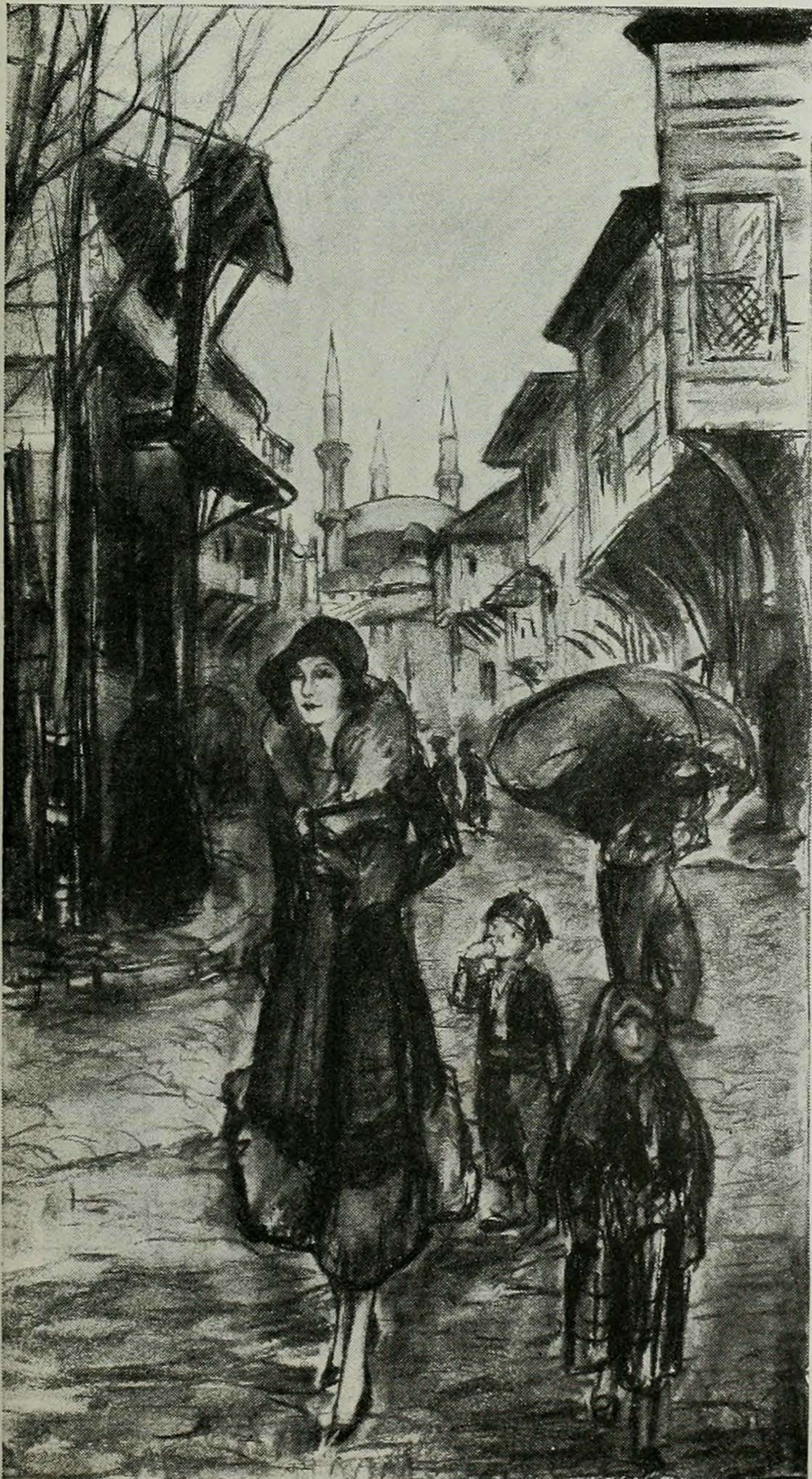
# Greta Garbo

*As Told by Her  
to Ruth Biery*

*Illustrated by  
Chris Marie Meeker*



**"I am always nervous when I am making a picture. I stay by myself all I can"**



out and left me. The electricians, the prop boys—even Mr. Stiller. He told me to practice alone. But I knew he was in some corner watching. I looked all around and could not see him, but I *knew* he was there. So I would not practice. I would not rehearse all by myself,—I would not look so stupid.

"Lars Hansen played my leading man. Now he is back in Sweden—" She interrupted herself with a voice which trembled with longing. "But there were no love scenes; not even a kiss. It was not an American picture.

"The picture took a long time. There were snow scenes and we had to wait until it was winter. When it was over, I was no longer frightened. But I am always nervous and restless when I am making a picture. I cannot help it. That is why I never want people to see me while I am acting. I do not let people on the set. And I stay by myself all I can while I am making a picture. I sit in one corner alone, or go to my dressing room, or I walk outside by myself while the others are working. I cannot stand it for someone to come up and say, 'What did you think of the football game?' as they do here in America. I cannot get back on the track. I cannot do my best work then. It is the same with every picture—I tremble always, all over.

**W**HEN we had finished 'Goesta Berling,' there were no more pictures, so I went back to school. We have to make our pictures in the summer except for the snow scenes—No, school was not any different. I was still the naughty Garbo and still late in the morning.

"When it came toward summer again, I had a telegram from Mr. Stiller. 'Do not make any plans for the summer,' he told me. Of course, there were other companies who might want me.

"So I made no plans. I went away into the country. Oh, yes, I was alone. I always went away alone. That is what I like—to go away, far into the country, alone. An old couple to cook for you, look after your things for you. But there are not so many places in America where you can be alone." Her voice saddened. "Here there are always the people—I miss it. Some people need to be with people. I need to be alone, always.

"It is so wonderful alone in our country in the summer. In the midsummer you can read all night long, in the open. The little noises of the country, the wonderful air—Ah,—it gets you."

She paused, closed her eyes, to remember.

"While I was there," it was perhaps five minutes before she continued, "I received a letter from Mr. Stiller. They wanted me to come to Berlin for the opening of 'Goesta Berling.' I went back to Stockholm and Mr. Stiller came for me—I have everything in the world to be grateful to Mr. Stiller. I have never seen a more beautiful inside of a person! [CONTINUED ON PAGE 127]



# The Story of Greta Garbo

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37]

"No, I had never been out of Stockholm except to my own country before. I was not so excited"—Greta Garbo hesitated, crossed both hands on her breast and waited. One moment, two, three, perhaps seven. Then, very slowly, pausing between each word of explanation: "I do not know—as I should tell this. People may not believe what I say—but I have the most amazing feeling,—I feel I have lived—before. I am never terribly surprised at anything. I feel always, I have been there before—that it is not entirely a new experience. I cannot describe—but in here—" her hands worked on her breast—"I feel it.

"MISS LUNDEQUIST, a very big Swedish actress, who played in the picture, went with us. She is a most marvellous person. She has the most amazing eyes of any person. So much soul and so tired, always.

"Berlin was wonderful to us. Oh, yes, it was a very big opening. Everything that Mr. Stiller does in Europe is big. There, he is the master. Everybody goes to see his pictures.

"We went on the stage. They sent us many flowers. They had sent way to Stockholm for us and they made it a very big time for us. The German people are wonderful. They do not touch you, yet they have their arms around you—always.

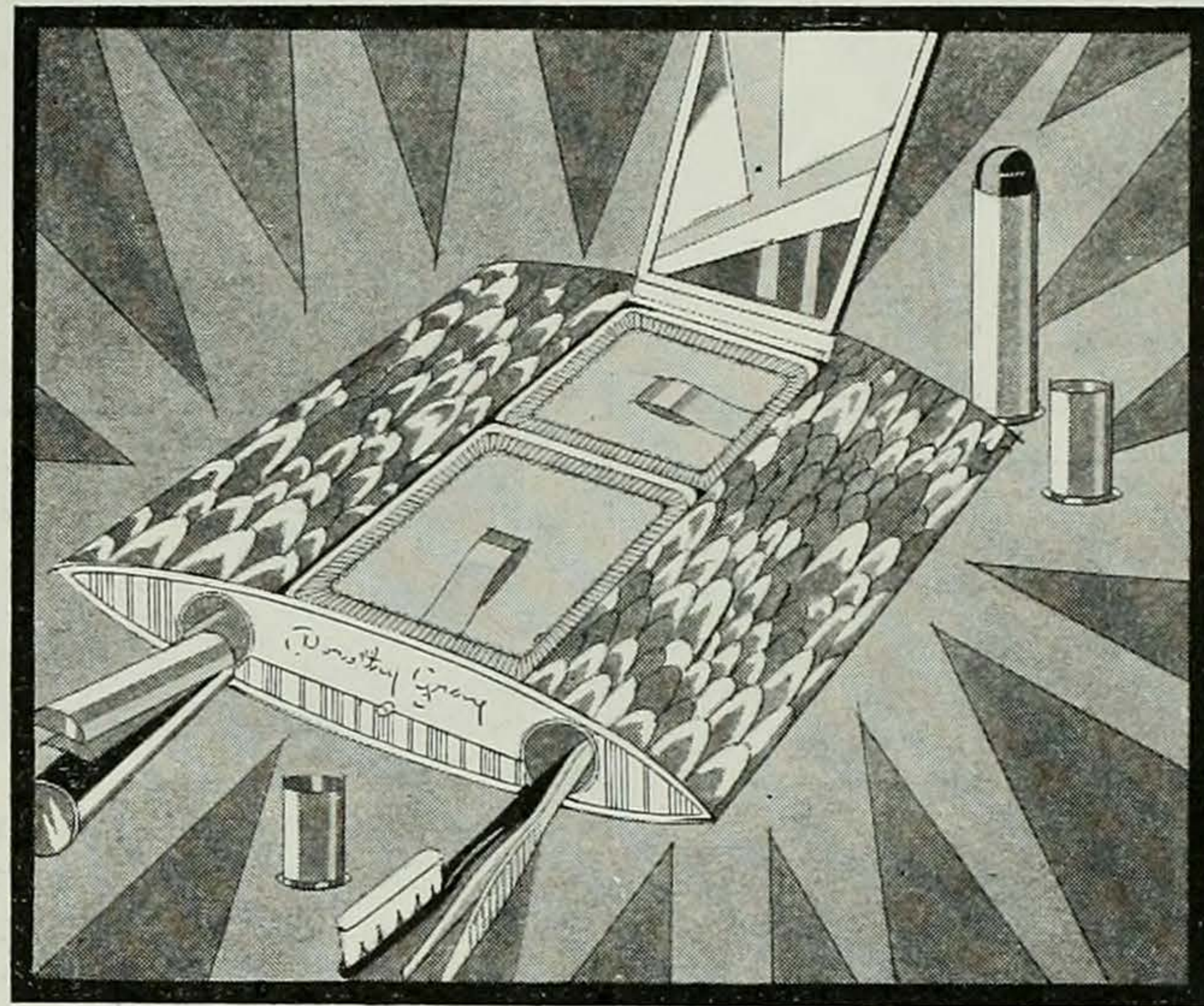
"And Ber-*lin!*" Would that we could reproduce Greta Garbo's enunciation of Ber-*lin*. The love there is in it. "I will never forget when I came to it. The smell of the city. An amazing smell that has everything in it. You can feel it in your breast, when it is coming. I had not been in a big city before—where there were so many, many people. But I could feel the smell long before we were really inside the city—it was as though I had smelled it before," her voice lowered, "been there before, as I told you.

"While we were there, that one week for the



Since odd and ornate jewelry is very much the fashion, Elinor Fair wears a combination ring and bracelet. The ornament is of beaten silver, set with brilliants and turquoises. The turquoise is Elinor's birth-stone. A trick like this should only be attempted by girls with well-shaped hands and arms

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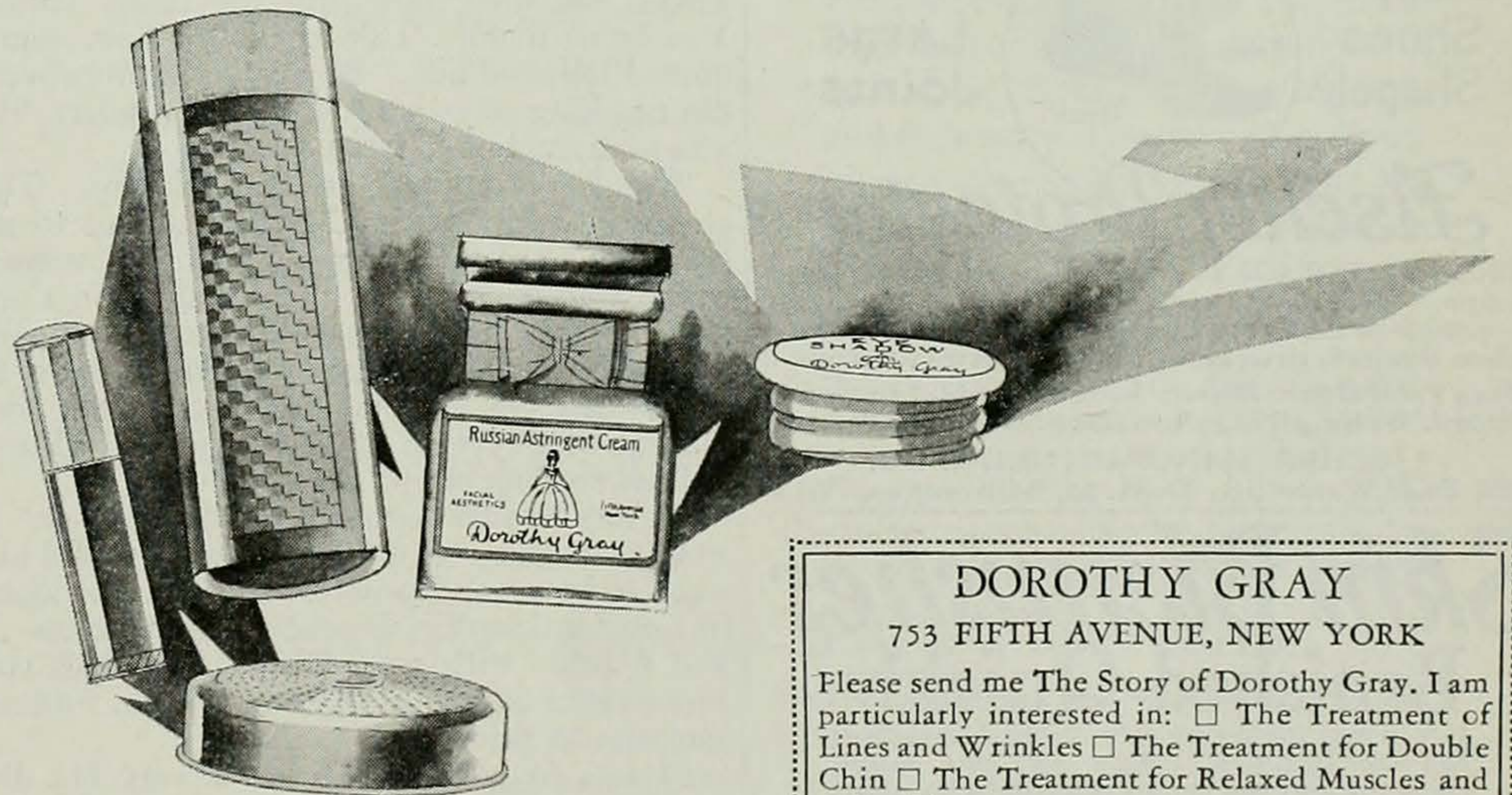
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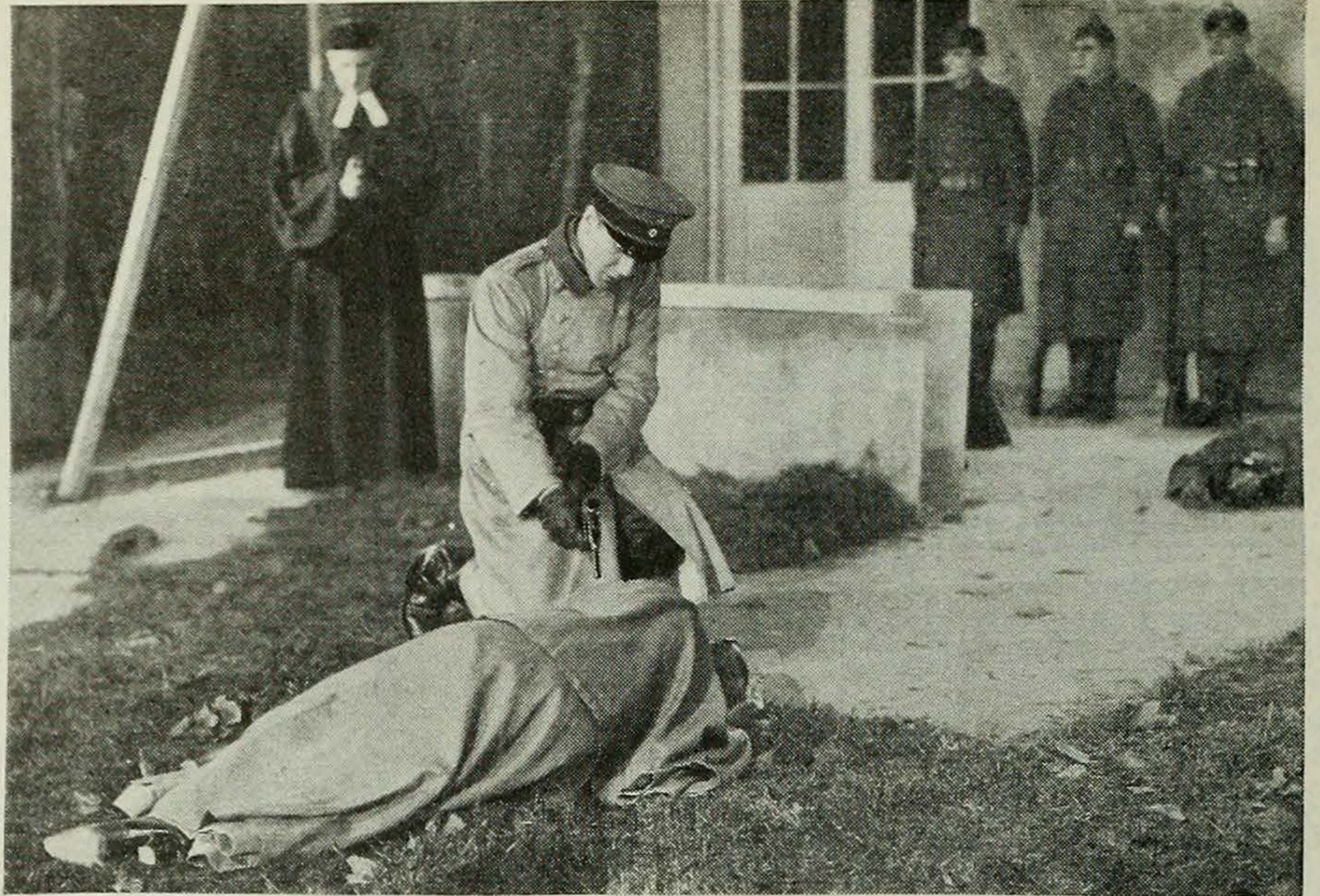
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Here is a film scene that is causing international complications. An English company made the story of Nurse Edith Cavell, shot as a spy by the Germans during the war. Protests from Germany, claiming that the picture would only stir up unnecessary bitterness and revive old hates, caused the film to be banned, as a concession to international amity. This particular scene caused the strongest protest. The picture, its title is "Dawn," has been brought to the United States. Arch Selwyn, an American theatrical producer, is going to show it. What do you think?

opening, people spoke to Mr. Stiller about our coming to America. He talked, but he did nothing. We went back to Stockholm, to get ready to make a German picture.

"IN a month we went back to Berlin and then on to Constantinople, where we were to make the picture. There were to be many Turks in it.

"Constantinople! I do not know how to describe it. It isn't like what people say about it. They are not in costume. They dress like European people. Except the very old Turks, who are dirty.

"The streets—narrow with dirty little shops; dirty cafes filled with food which is oily. The lazy Turks—they are fascinating.

"One day I was walking alone on the street and I followed along behind one of the old Turks; the dirty one with the funny pants. You know them? I do not know how many hours I followed him. He did not go anywhere; did not have anywhere to go but wander. He was so dirty, but so fascinating.

"We never started on that picture. The company went broke. Mr. Stiller had to go back to Germany to see about the money which was not coming. I was alone in Constantinople. Oh, yes, Einar Hansen," she paused, "the Swedish boy who was killed here in Hollywood not so long ago—was there, too. He was to play with me in the picture. But I did not see him often.

"I was invited to the Swedish embassy. I went two times, but I did not like it. I did not want to be around people. I liked to be alone in Constantinople. I went to the bazaars. I had a guide with me. They are so big, you could never find your way out of them without someone to guide you.

"I was so restless. It was a very big disappointment not to have the money for our picture. But I was not lonely. I walked around the old city by myself mostly.

"I LOVE to travel. I would like just to have enough money to travel. I have no place I want to go—except back to Sweden. I want to go every place! Back in the hills of China. To Japan. The Chinese and the Japanese have such strange faces. I wonder what must be on the inside of them. I would like to touch in

China the little things that have been so many thousand years on earth. I would not care for company. It is not necessary to have company when you travel.

"If I go back to Sweden," she sighed. "I do not know. One month, two—three. Perhaps it will be too small for me—I want to go everywhere and see every people.

"Yes, I would like to go back to Constantinople. But I would not like to live there. The colors of that country. You cannot describe them. I would like to see them again, but not stay longer than the one month I was there then.

"IT was a shock, about not making that picture. But it was none of my fault. Although I was so restless, why should I have worried? There were other companies and I was young—and was alone in a big, wonderful city.

"Mr. Stiller came back and took me to Berlin and had me make another picture which he was not directing. It was 'The Street of Sorrow.' It was a very bad picture. When it ran in New York, the people did not like it.

"Louis B. Mayer was in Berlin. He wanted to sign a contract with us for his company. Whatever Mr. Stiller said, I knew was always the best thing to do. I would say, 'Is it good?' and if he say, 'It is good,' I would do it.

"When I met Mr. Mayer, he hardly looked at me. I guess he looked at me out of the corner of his eye, but I did not see him. All of the business was done with Mr. Stiller.

"I signed a three year contract. The money was to be four hundred dollars a week and six hundred and seven hundred-fifty for forty weeks each year.

"I do not really know what I got in Europe. That is the truth.

"MR. STILLER gave it to me. And it came and it went like all money. I am not a good business woman.

"I went back to Stockholm to get ready. "It was strange; a very strange feeling. I was looking forward to something I had never seen. I did not know how it would turn out.

"People here do not know what it means to my people when somebody goes to America. There is always much crying—a feeling that they will never come back to their own country



and their own people. My people do not realize how short the world is. They do not know how the boats and the trains go. They feel they are going away forever.

"My mother didn't say much. She said, 'I think you know better. I want you to go where you should.'

"My mother and my sister and my brother went to the railroad station. My little mother stood there and looked at me. Her eyes were swollen—big.

"My brother's name? My sister's? What does that matter? They are *my* people. Why should I tell their names to other people? Names do not matter. If I should read them—it would hurt. Hurt here."

Her hand covered her heart as though to protect it from hurting.

"I WAS very brave. All I said was, 'I will be back in one year. It is only twelve months.' I have been away two and one-half years.

"My sister. I call her my little sister, but she was two years older. In only eight months after I had gone, she, one of my people, has passed.

"That is the hardest. To be so far away when something happens. Your own flesh and blood—

"I couldn't understand. She had always been so healthy. She was so beautiful. Then she got sick—just a little sick—then—"

A sob escaped the lips of Greta Garbo. She bit back another, hurried on with her story—

"I would have brought her here by now. She would have been in pictures—

"But the way things are here now. The way you have to work to get the results! Perhaps, it is better—my sister—

"We sailed from Gutenberg. Oh, that was marvellous, on the ocean. I would love to do that trip over and over. You feel *free* on the ocean. There you are—and you cannot walk away.

"Unless you want to walk on the water. It lifts a stone from you. You are almost"—her voice lowered to a half whisper—"You are almost happy.

"Happy," she repeated. "Happy is too big a word to use very often. It means so much to our country—the word happy, that we hardly speak of it. Here you use it so common.

"I had a heavy coat on me and walked around on the deck and watched the ocean. I played that game where you push things back and forth, a little. I did not talk to anyone but a tiny boy. Little Tommy. I wanted so madly to give him cakes. But he had never eaten cakes. His mother and father were very careful.

"CHILDREN don't get close to you. You can say intelligent things to children. When you talk silly things, they just look at you, and you feel they are thinking, 'Why are you saying such silly things for?' Children are very sensible persons.

"We came into New York harbor in the night. When we saw the lights, lots of people screamed. They were from New York City. You felt it with them.

"They felt like you will feel when you go back to Sweden.

"I thought that America will be all flowers. I thought there would be almost carpets of flowers on the streets of New York City. I wasn't terribly excited.

"I do not get excited. But I was ready to see the flowers on the streets of the American cities."

*Did Miss Garbo find flowers on the streets of the American cities? Probably no woman in pictures has had a more hectic career than Miss Garbo. "Temperamental," "Hard to handle," "A woman who says, 'I will go home!'" is the way she has been heralded in this country. Why this has been, she will tell you in the last installment of her career in the next PHOTOPLAY issue.*

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