

Tom Meighan Is Restless

The man with the million dollar personality smile has an idea. When he has, then step lively, World!

By Walter D. Shackleton



Tom Meighan again is in Hollywood—with another big yarn in his mind. He craves action and he'll get it!

IF you had one palatial home in the exclusive Great Neck section of Long Island, whose broad expanse of lush lawn fronted on the Atlantic. And if you had another in sunny Florida. And if you enjoyed outdoor games by day and bridge by night. And if you had a host of gay, intelligent, congenial friends to enjoy all these things with. And, more to the point, if you had a plump purse to maintain such an existence, would you be apt to get restless with a desire to do a gruelling piece of work? No need to answer. I can readily visualize the scoffing snickers the question caused.

But, believe it or not, there is such a person. Thomas Meighan.

Tom is restless again. Fresh from the success of his "Peck's Bad Boy," he wants to leap right into another screen story with all that stimulating vitality and vigor of his.

And what is more, he's going to do it. You can't stop him. When he gets an idea, you can't stop Thomas any more than Thomas can stop that Atlantic tide from ebbing and flowing at the foot of his Great Neck dooryard, or prevent Florida from getting a devastating gale ever so often. Or, let us say, no more than Tom can help his great smile from warming the deepest cockle in the heart of anyone it is turned on. Meighan's smile is one of the most potent and captivating ever flashed in this vale. It is a million dollars worth of personality. And the best of it is its sincerity—good honest value in it.

However—about the restlessness of Mr. Meighan. His rest-

"The Miracle Man" was probably Thomas Meighan's greatest film. It still ranks as one of the best pieces of cinematic art ever turned out. But Tom had to organize his own company to produce it. He was the only one who could see its value. In this scene from it are Betty Compson, Joseph J. Dowling and Tom

lessness is always directed. It is thoughtful, not hit or miss. No, indeed. You don't know your Tom Meighan if you as much as suspect such a thing. Meighan gets restless because he has plans that demand action, plans that have come to a keen edge only after studied shaping and sharpening. All right, Mr. Meighan is going

to get action. He'll see to that. As a matter of fact, as you sit reading this, he will be in Hollywood getting that action.

As for his plan, the only thing that may be divulged about it at this time is that it involves the screen characterization of an internationally known figure. And it is a figure that American writers, at least, have right under their respective noses—and have not been able to see.

Yet, Thomas Meighan has seen the possibilities for some time. And he's got his ideas about the screen development set. He's even got a writer picked out, his close friend Gene Fowler. To Tom's mind, Fowler is the only writer who can do justice to this character. That, unquestionably, is a great compliment to the ability of Fowler, noted as a [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 118]

Kitty Crashes Fame

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as bubblingly refreshing as Dry Monopole, he set about the baffling business of trying to convince a career-minded rich girl that she should hearken to the tap of opportunity, when she wanted to but was still afraid to.

Well, Kitty finally gave in, and when the show closed its run on Broadway, she made her first trip to California for a part in "Murder At The Vanities." But Hollywood dates her from the time she went to town with Bing in "Love in Bloom."

"THAT song seems like a child of mine or something," Kitty confessed in the privacy of her brand new and very fancy blue dressing-room, which still reeked of turpentine and white lead. "I mean, it keeps following me around." She nodded across the studio to the music department where Bing Crosby's recorded split-larynx was crooning: "Can it be the spring—"

A passing bicycle messenger joined in whistling the chorus, and the carpenters on a nearby set kept time tapping home nails.

But the strangest thing about Kitty's success and her songs, is that she has clicked rendering popular numbers, after devoting years to a study of classical music abroad.

After childhood schooling in Switzerland and her society debut in Rome, she deserted the gaiety of the Continental social whirl to devote herself seriously to becoming an opera singer. Cunnelli of Paris and Mme. Kaszowska of London groomed her for an European operatic career, and practically disowned her when she decided to come to America and get a job in a show.

Though Kitty was born in New Orleans, Catharine Carlisle ("there were fifteen 'Catharines' in the first school I ever attended, so

they had to call somebody 'Kitty,') grew up abroad, learned to speak French, Italian and German like a native, and probably would today be singing arias from "Rigoletto" in London if England hadn't gone off the gold standard.

"I don't know that that had anything to do with it," giggled Kitty, "but in order to sing in London, I had to get a labor permit. I asked for it the day England went off the gold standard, and they turned me down—said I'd be taking the money away from English singers—so I've always blamed it on the gold standard." That amazing, paralyzing, hypnotizing laugh again.

America, even for an expatriate, was still the land of opportunity—especially Hollywood, although at first Kitty was a bit wary of how she and the movies would hit it off.

"You know, I'm not beautiful," she insisted, "and I wasn't so sure I could act very well. At first my face twitched—every time I came anywhere near a camera it twitched. It's a little disconcerting trying to act with a twitching face. And when I finally got over that I started worrying about singing with Bing."

Doesn't she like Bing?

"I'm mad about him—I mean about working with him. But you know he simply won't rehearse songs. Not even *once*. Says he gets stale—and I'm just no good at all, at impromptu singing. So when we sing together, I start worrying. About everything. I worry about the harmony. I worry about the tempo. I worry about the key. I ask Bing if such and such a key is all right and he says, 'Oh, sure,' just like he isn't giving it a thought—so I *know* we'll be singing in entirely different keys when we start.

"Of course, everything comes out all right,

but at first it made me nervous just to walk right up to the camera and start singing without any rehearsals at all. The first few times I'm afraid we went goggling off in entirely different directions. But I've got used to it—I've had to, because Bing just won't rehearse."

Just at this point Bayard Veiller, the playwright, looked in on the elegant blue dressing room and after recovering from its splendor, the turpentine and white lead, and Kitty's electric charm, he wanted to know when "the beau" was coming out. "Soon," said Kitty, "any day now."

The beau?

"Don't tell a soul," said Kitty, *sotto voce*, after he had left, "but there *isn't* any beau! You know, everyone here at the studio believes I have a mysterious sweetheart in New York. He's always 'coming out.' Really it's a grand idea; it makes me very intriguing, and exciting. But really, I haven't any sweetheart."

What, no sweetheart?

"OH, I *have* had," admitted Kitty, dimpling her pretty brown eyes with a tremendous grin. "In Rome I fell in love with the son of the Brazilian ambassador, but 'Mummy' stopped that. He wasn't the right man.

"But right now I think I'm in love with my work. Honestly, I'm crazy about it. I get up at six in the morning and just can't wait to get started. I love every minute of it."

"Here Is Your Heart?" I asked.

"Here Is My Heart," smiled Pretty Kitty. "Perfect—but honestly, nobody's in love with me."

Of course, that's where Miss Kitty Carlisle is wrong.

Because everyone in Hollywood, including me, is simply crazy about her.

Tom Meighan Is Restless

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delineator of character. But it is also more. It is an indication of the thoroughness of Thomas Meighan. Nothing but the best will do.

You see, first, Meighan has picked himself an original character. (This writer, when the name was whispered to him, breathed his amazement that it had been overlooked. It's what is called a natural.) Then, secondly, Thomas wants that character at his best advantage.

Thus the importance of the writer.

TOMMY MEIGHAN, above all, insists on his characters being themselves, natural.

And he has his reasons for all this.

"I can't," he said, "play anything unless it is believable. It causes me actual agony. I know. I've tried to do it. In addition, let me add, a part must not be merely believable, it's got to be interesting."

So much for the story Tom has in mind. For the success of the screen version, he rates a director as top man there. "I would rather," he said, "work on a second rate story with a first rate director, than on a first rate story with a second rate director. And yet," he quali-

fied, "no individual is wholly responsible for any particular picture."

Now, during all this discussion, there was nothing said by Thomas Meighan about Thomas Meighan's ability. Getting self-praise out of this man is like trying to turn a well inside out. It may be possible, but I have my doubts. Whoever coined the word "modesty" must have used Thomas Meighan for his model.

And Tommy will *like* that, should he read it, because he insists he's the most boring gabber on the subject of Meighan that ever came along the pike.

But it isn't necessary for Tommy to talk about himself. Others have done that very nicely, and with enjoyment.

For instance, here's one writer on Tommy's acting ability: "... as true in his depiction of emotion as Tellegen used to be when he played on the stage with Bernhardt." For good measure, here are a couple of other remarks culled at random from volumes of comment about him: "... second to no man in popularity," and "... career unparalleled in his profession."

Just to heap up that good measure on this

"boring" person, here are some of the names of producers, writers, actors and actresses, with whom he's been closely associated on and off-stage. This is not a full list, mind you, merely a few plucked here and there from the records: David Warfield, George M. Cohan, Henry W. Savage, William H. Crane, William Collier, Sr., Booth Tarkington, George Ade, Grace George, Pauline Frederick, Blanche Sweet, Billie Burke, Valeska Suratt, Laura Hope Crews, Lois Wilson, Lila Lee, Norma Talmadge, Elsie Ferguson, Betty Compson, Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford—Enough? One more. Frances Ring.

TO Miss Ring goes top billing, because she is still *the* leading lady. In fact, she has been since she and Mr. Meighan met in George Ade's first play, the first of a number the noted humorist has written for Tommy. The play was the well-known, three-seasons success, "The College Widow." It was during the run of that play Miss Ring became Mrs. Meighan, and theirs is still one of the few stage and screen romances with any permanence.

But, some more about the interview with Mr. Meighan. Naturally, I spoke of "Peck's

Bad Boy." And, after again trying unsuccessfully to get something out of him about himself, other than that he enjoyed the part and the company, I asked about Jackie Cooper and Jackie Searl.

Then he flashed the Meighan smile and talked.

Suffice it to say that Tom sees them both as grand fellows, both real boys.

He also praised them right up to here as actors of definite ability—and their own ability, he emphasized.

FROM there, I went somewhat reminiscent. I mentioned "The Miracle Man." Who wouldn't talk about that great picture with Thomas Meighan? In fact, that was probably Tom's *greatest* picture. Julian Johnson, writing in PHOTOPLAY Magazine at the time, said of "The Miracle Man" and of Lillian Gish's "Broken Blossoms" ". . . the screen has not only failed to furnish their equals, but nothing which in any way compares with them."

Also I mentioned another great picture of his, based on "The Admirable Crichton," which came out under the title of "Male and Female." Gloria Swanson was the feminine lead.

I asked Tommy if he'd like to do again either of these two.

The answer was another insight into the character of the man Meighan.

"I never," he said, "try to play anything younger than I feel. Those two pictures were done some years ago. Also, I don't like to go back to anything."

Yet, in how "The Miracle Man" came to life as a movie at all serves as an illustration of Mr. Meighan's ever-present determination to carry out a particular idea as he sees it.

It is typical of his present directed restlessness.

HE read "The Miracle Man" as a magazine story. He saw in it a perfect movie. But he was alone in this thought. But that was no drawback to Tommy Meighan. He was convinced he was right.

So, he organized an independent company and produced the picture.

What happened is glorious history. And, the possibilities are strong that history is just about due to repeat itself.

Because Tommy Meighan is restless with an idea he knows is good. And, he's gone to Hollywood with it.

The Fan Club Corner

MEMBER clubs of the PHOTOPLAY Association of Movie Fan Clubs, attention! All fan club correspondence, and matters pertaining to the Association, should be addressed to the New York offices of PHOTOPLAY Magazine, 221 West 57th Street, New York City. Club secretaries should, hereafter, send all reports, inquiries and news bulletins to the above address.

FANS everywhere will be happy to learn that the international Francis Lederer Fan Club is now a member of the PHOTOPLAY Association of Movie Fan Clubs. The purpose of the club, as stated by the president, is "To put thinking people all over the world in touch with one another so that they may exchange ideas, broaden their views, and improve their knowledge of how the rest of the world thinks, acts and lives." The club paper is called "Czechago" and appears monthly. Headquarters of this fine organization are at 4341 North Albany Ave., Chicago, Ill. Miss Beatrice Kramer is acting secretary. She will be glad to answer all inquiries from fans regarding the club. Foreign inquiries may be sent to their British representative at 67 Hodford Road, Golders Green, N. W. 11, London, England.

Bonnie Bergstrom, 6805 S. Artesian Ave., Chicago, Ill., reports that the Barbara Stanwyck Buddies have received some beautiful new photographs of Miss Stanwyck. Many out of town "Buddies" have visited president Bonnie lately, she writes.

THE Billie Dove club celebrated its sixth birthday at a party in the home of president Lenore Heidorn, 5737 S. Artesian Ave., Chicago, on Nov. 4th. Many plans for future activities of the club were discussed at the meeting.

Lillian Conrad, busy president of the Ruth Roland club, won the contest for naming the club news bulletin of the Ginger Rogers club. She was rewarded with a gorgeous personally

autographed portrait of Miss Rogers. Those interested in joining the Ginger Rogers fan club should write to Marion L. Hesse, president, 154 Elm Street, Elizabeth, N. J.

A report of the activities of the Ramon Novarro Service League for the past year shows the wonderful progress this group is making. All inquiries regarding this progressive organization should be addressed to Ethel Musgrave, general secretary, 6384 Elgin St., Vancouver, B. C., Canada. Foreign inquiries may go to L. Margiocchi, 3, Allington Road, Hendon Central, London, England.

THE Lanny Ross League, Catharine Macadam, P. O. Box 164, Wilmington, Del., president, announces that the club will begin a big membership drive around Christmas. There will be special prizes to the winners. Fans interested in Lanny Ross should write Miss Macadam.

The news bulletin of the Gloria Stuart club is filled with interesting items and member gossip again this month. "The Gloria-ous News" is its name, and it goes to all members of Miss Stuart's club. Estelle Nowak, 3223 N. Central Park Ave., Chicago, is president.

FANS interested in the newly formed Pat Paterson club are invited to write the club's headquarters at 955 N. Central Ave., Chicago, for information.

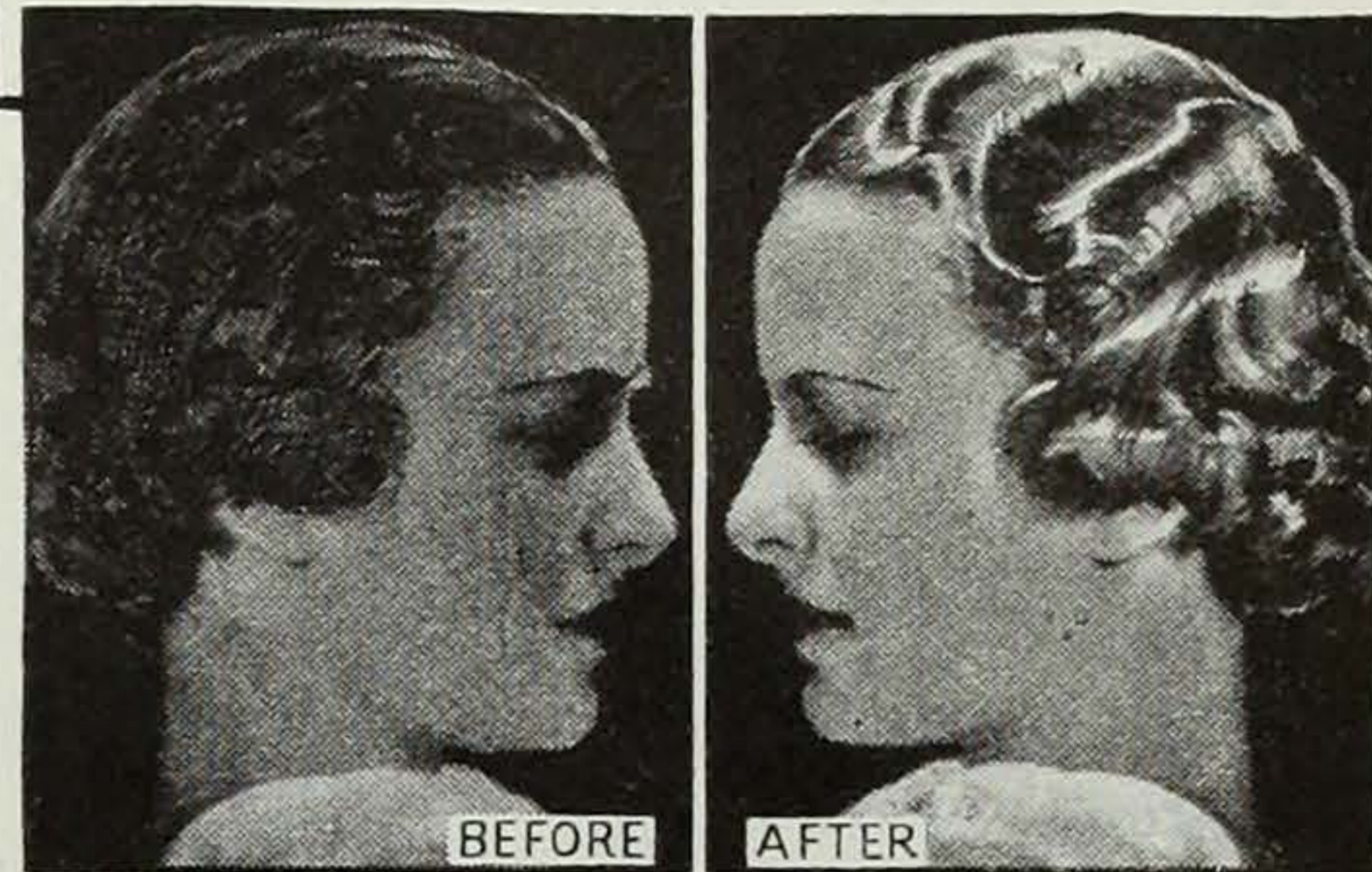
Neil Hamilton's host of fans will be glad to read of his fan club organization, The Hamiltonians, 4254 Normal Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. Those wanting more information are invited to write John G. Whidding, president, at the above address.

Phyllis Carlyle, president of the Franchot Tone club, invites all interested fans to write to her at Portland, Maine.

Irene G. Rourke, 7908 S. Ridgeland Ave., is president of the Douglass Montgomery club.

The Movie Club Guild, of Chicago, held another penny social sale, a big success, late in November.

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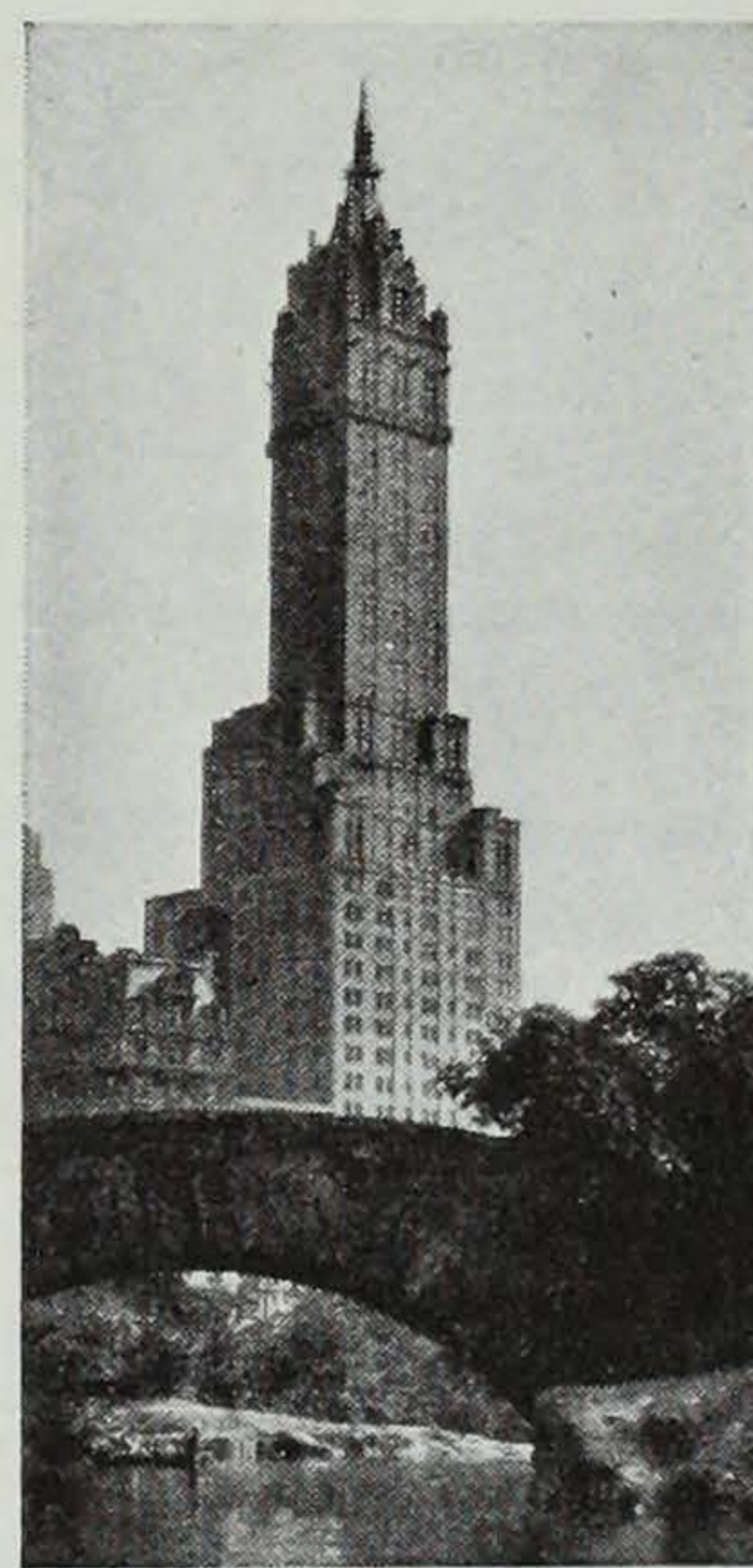
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