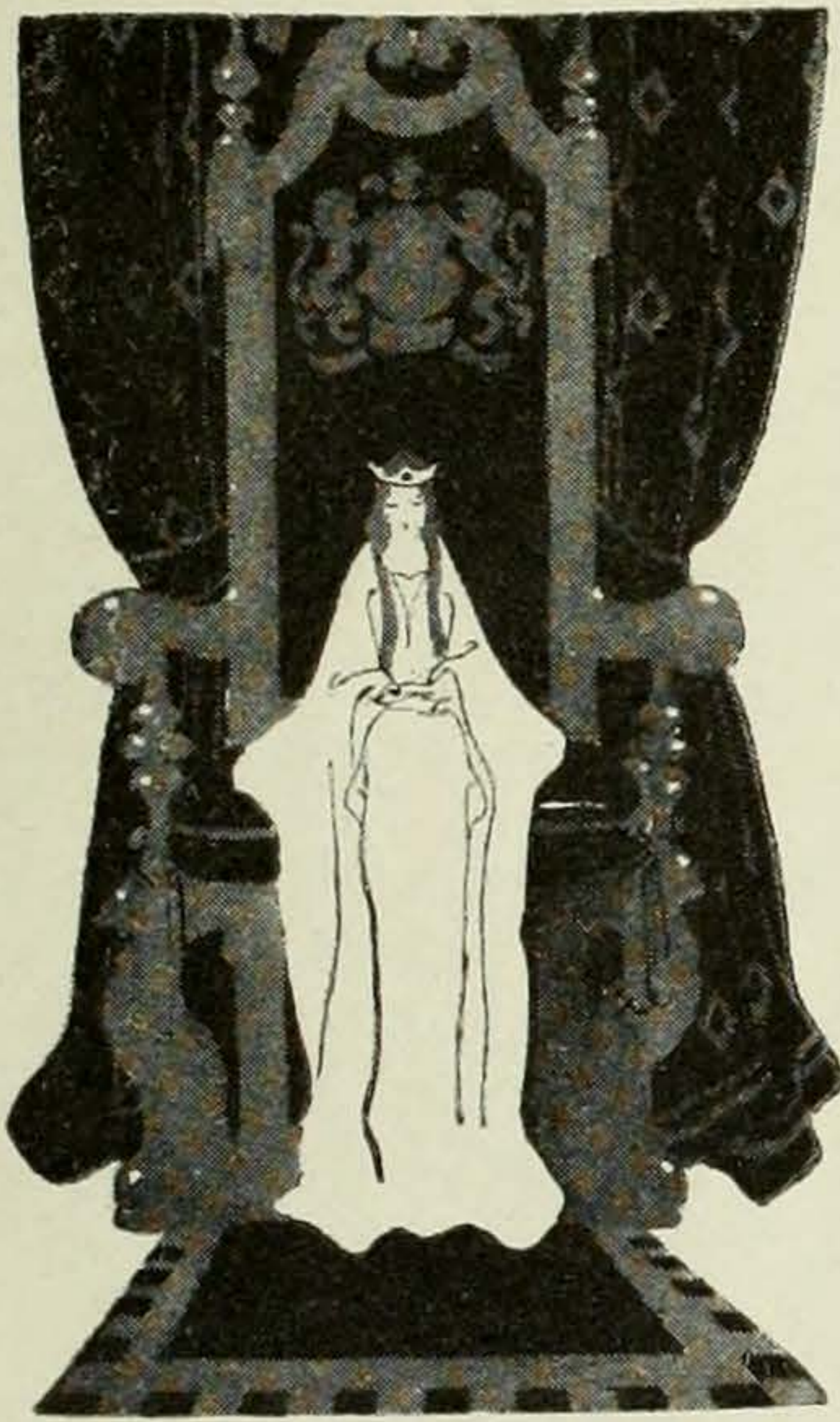


The Lonely Princess



A very modern fairy-tale,
with a motion picture
star for the heroine.

By
FRANCES DENTON



She would have made a good school teacher, too.

ONCE upon a time there was a fairy princess. She was a regulation princess with golden hair that didn't come out of a bottle, blue eyes, and a sunkist disposition. She was only nineteen or thereabouts; she was a very human princess—she even had freckles and a sense of humor. She would, in fact, be too conventional to write about, except that—

She was lonely. She had a big white palace, maids, and butlers at the door. She had a lovely blue car with her monogram on the door, in gold-embossed letters. She had pretty dresses, and a diamond ring. She had other jewels that she would wear when she was grown-up. She had everything she wanted—but she was the loneliest girl in the world.

Her mother looked after her. She scarcely ever went outdoors without her mother; or, at least, her grandmother or her duenna. Her mother always inspected everyone who came to see her, before the princess was permitted to know them. That way, of course, she missed meeting an awful lot of interesting people. She was given beautiful books to read; beautiful books—that is, the covers were pretty. The insides were all about science, or art, or literature. While all the time the princess would love to have read some French novel.

Ever since she was a baby, her life had been lived by rules. Certain standards were set; she couldn't do this and she couldn't do that, because she was studying to be a queen and her life was, therefore, not her own. She was to be great—and lonely, and miserable.

But once in a while the gates were let down. Persons with passes and certificates were let in to talk to the princess. Once, one of these persons was even permitted to see her alone; to spend a day—several days—with her alone. When there were no mothers and grandmothers and duennas; not even a maid!

MARY MILES MINTER had been working hard. She probably works harder than any young girl of her age in the world. She is, perhaps, one of the most envied children in this or any other country. And she is the loneliest.

I saw her one day—one rainy miserable day. It was the middle of the week, and Mary, just returned from a tedious location trip, had been working for three nights to catch up on interiors. I had, I was told, arrived at the wrong moment; Mary was busy on the floor, and Mary's mother and grandmother were away. Mary was all alone. So I watched her work a while.

I think Mary is much more than the ingenue many people think she is. Her life has always been mapped out for her; the sunny-haired child has always taken dictation. And she has managed, somehow, to keep within herself a separate shell, which holds her own little individuality, her distinct personality—a personality few know about, a whimsicality few suspect, a depth which would surprise you. Mary Miles Minter is subtle.

She is one of the best actresses I know. She has the greatest art—that which conceals art. To the casual observer, she is a pretty child, very much intent on “getting there” but not quite knowing what she is going to do when she does arrive. There, I think they are wrong. When Zukor took her under his managerial wing, she made up her mind she would not only come up to his expectations, she would exceed them. She is working night and day to do this.

But between times, Mary comes to. To herself, the real, little, lonely girl. She, of all the acting women I have known—and she is a woman, with a woman's mentality, a woman's sanity, and the physical aspect of young girlhood—has two selves—one, for her work; the other, for herself.

She had a white house on upper Fifth Avenue while she was working in New York. She had attendants, personal and domestic, galore. She had a million-dollar contract, which brought her the blue car, and the jewels, and the dresses. Yet, none of these were really hers. Her mother signed her contract, and holds it. Her mother draws her salary. She has no car of her own. And all this is because she wishes it to be so. Of her own volition, she turns over to Mrs. Shelby her earnings; of her own volition, she has nothing of her own beyond a few essentials.

She dresses, except on rare occasions, in the simplest possible fashion. Her tastes are luxurious; so she permits herself only the simplest things.



Like Mary Pickford, Mary Miles Minter was a stage child. Even then she was gifted with poise.



Her success seemed to come so easily that the professional world unconsciously cherishes a resentment.



She deliberately denies herself; subjects herself to rigorous campaigns of spartanism. Understand, she has the longings and the inclinations of all young girls, for other youth and youths, and a good time. She loves pretty things—she loves them too much, she says. She is a virginal youngster with a woman's understanding. But she does not believe in revealing herself; therefore, she is unpopular.

If you would take an inventory, she would find how few people in her profession,—pictures—know her. They have heard about her; she is a subject for speculation. Prejudiced against her beforehand, the young women of that somewhat exclusive “younger set” of the film world pass her up. Mary is super-sensitive. She would never set out to win anyone's regard if she thought they mightn't like her. She does not share the activities and the gayeties of the Hollywood colony; she keeps to herself and earns the reputation, only half-just, of being “particular” and “a little snob.” She isn't. But she knows they say that, and the knowledge hurts her.

Within her is the spark that means success. She could be happier perhaps in some other profession. It is quite within the realm of possibility that she might marry before she is thirty, and settle down to raise babies. She loves babies. She was intensely interested in making baby-clothes for her namesake, Juliet Whitney, wee daughter of her secretary, Mrs. Charlotte Whitney. Mary is a domestic little soul; she actually loves to sew and does make very nice things—for other girls' babies.

She would have made a good school teacher, too. But from her first thinking moment, she has been of the theater. She was a real stage-child. She loves it, and she could never do anything else.

She has never dreamed, either, of ever being anything but a star. It is

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The Lonely Princess

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not conceit. But consider that she was New York's best-known child star in "The Littlest Rebel," with these Corsican brothers, William and Dustin Farnum. She was in other classics of the old legitimate with such stars as Mrs. Fiske, Robert Hilliard and Kalich. But if you think Mary never had any but an easy row to hoe—

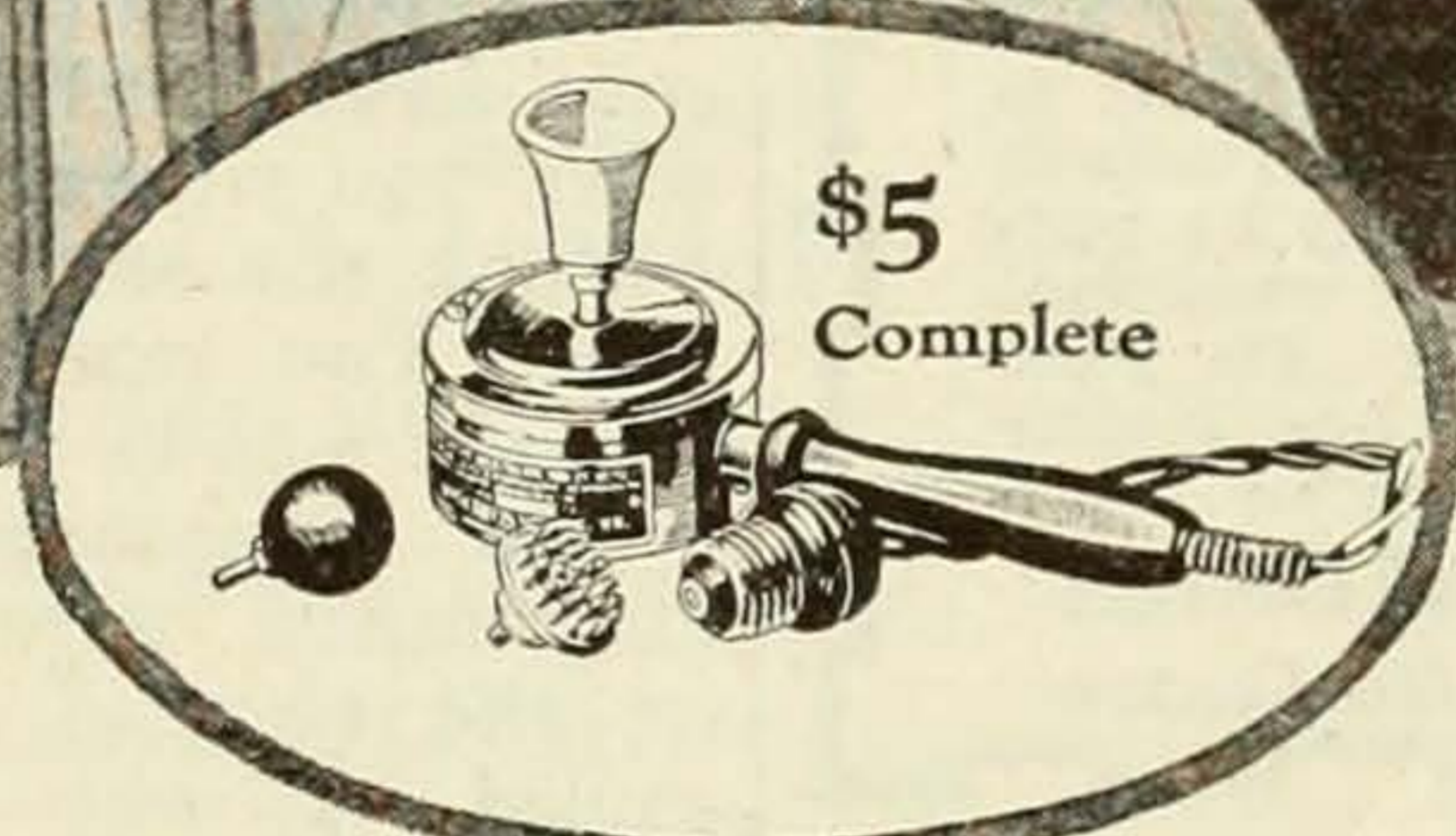
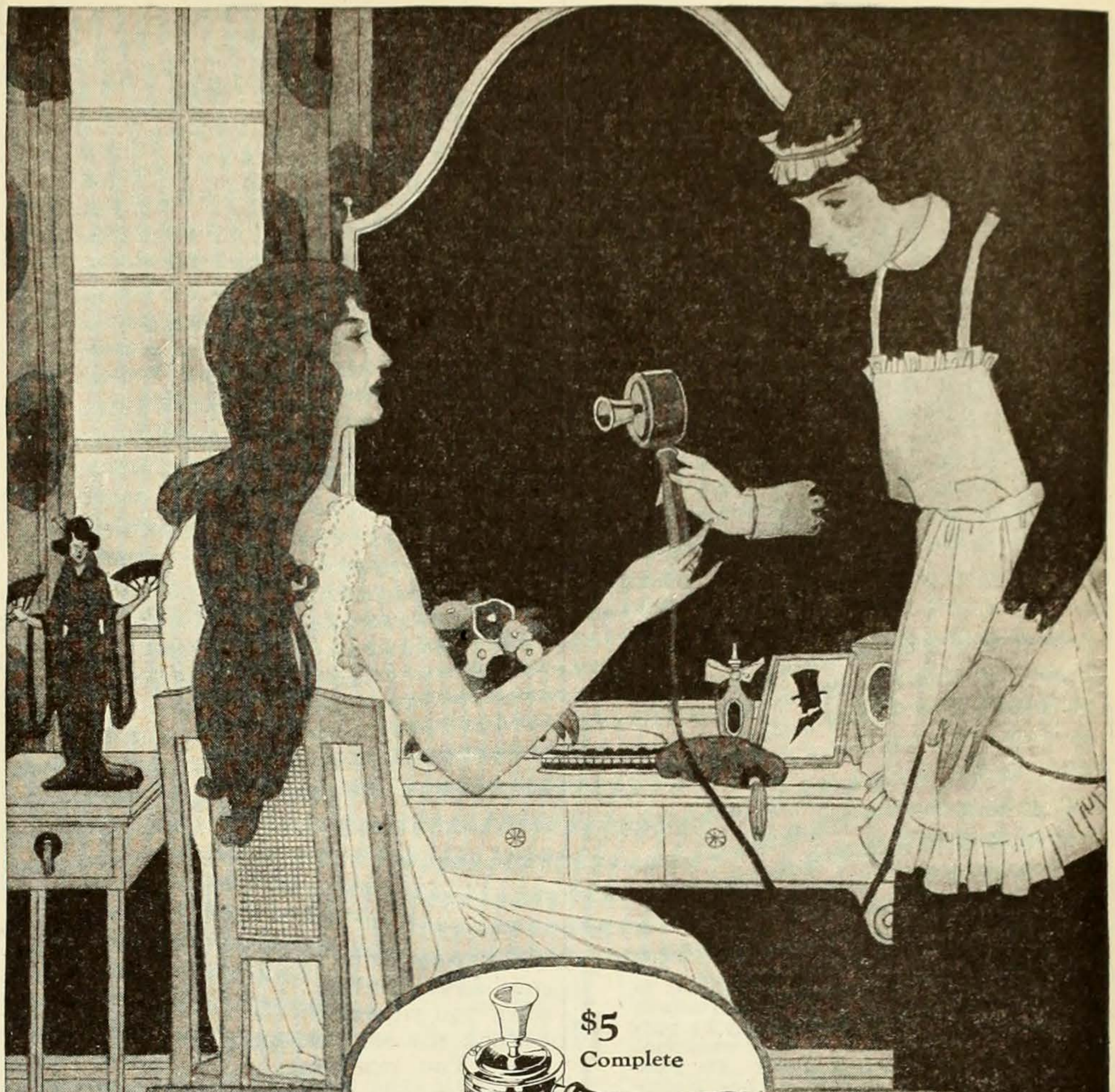
Mary's only real hobby is her sister, Margaret Shelby. Mary is convinced she will some day be a singer in the Metropolitan. Margaret is to go abroad, to study music. The things Mary herself would love to have, has dreamed about and denied, turned over and over in her serious mind, she has given to Margaret. Last Christmas, she gave her an automobile she wanted herself. She admires Margaret for her sense of humor and her youthfulness. Mary herself, the personification of youth, is not young at all. Of course if she were really young, she could not portray youth so well.

An odd little mind she has, too. She knows more about the law than some lawyers. She knows her ancient history, her medieval and modern history. She can give you dates and statistics. Talk to her, for an hour, and you will leave her feeling that it must have taken more than a hundred years to learn all that she knows. She has a well-oiled mind, but she is not a parrot. Anyone can recite dates and statistics; not everyone can argue about them.

The world in general, particularly the professional world, unconsciously cherishes resentment against Mary Miles Minter. Her success has seemed to come to her; she has risen so easily. She has never gone through a period of theatrical idleness; her services, once she was established, have always been more or less in demand. And she has always been guarded, cherished, protected. But don't think that she has not struggled—though her "struggles" may have been mental. It has been harder for her, surrounded and protected always by a good and devoted mother and family, to keep her own viewpoint, her own individuality, than it would have been had she starved to succeed. She has a fine mind; she has her own ideas—not for the world; she has protected her personality even as her mother protected her material being. That she has succeeded up to this point would seem to mean real success; she is well on the way to do some good honest work, to attain some good honest ambition.

She may never be great; but when I sit and talk to her I feel that there is in her the indomitable quality which makes for greatness. Such a tiny little girl—and such a fund of knowledge, of common-sense! Fluffy ingenue she is not; that she acts the part now does not mean that she will always act it.

Her career is pretty well-known; besides, it is not with Miss Minter's past performances with which we are concerned. She has proved her place in the theatre and in the films. It is with her future—the future of the girl in whom Adolph Zukor has such faith that he predicts for her a throne like Mary Pickford's—that we are concerned. Will she be a future queen of the movies? Will Mary Miles Minter live up to the prophecies made for her? Or will she, like our conventional princess of the fairy-tale, listen to the wooing of some future fairy prince (note: he will *not* be an actor) and ride off with him to a conventional kingdom of her own and live happily ever after?



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