

What Happened to Mary?

By Jane Dixon

Seven years ago, Mary Miles Minter was the screen's symbol of Cinderella. Then came the Taylor murder, the first of a series of misfortunes



Mary and her mother, Mrs. Charlotte Shelby, at the height of their glory

Today, Mary is a voluntary exile in Paris. The golden child has grown into a mature woman. Read this story of a vanished star

ONCE there was a little girl with golden hair, blue eyes and a face that was fashioned for the camera. For the most part she was a good child; a little selfish perhaps, slightly wilful and not particularly clever. She didn't have to be clever, because she was beautiful and she had a shrewd mother. But she wasn't bad or vicious or mean.

For a few brief years, she had a most amazing run of luck. She received one of the highest salaries ever paid to a star. By careful publicity, she became the living symbol of innocent, happy girlhood. Her future was so bright that she was hailed as the successor of Mary Pickford herself.

Then, at the height of the fairy tale, the clock struck twelve

and as strange a series of misfortunes descended upon Mary Miles Minter as ever befell a human being.

And after these calamities, Mary Miles Minter faded away as completely as a discredited myth.

First there was the William Desmond Taylor case—Hollywood's one classic murder. Taylor was found dead in his bungalow with a bullet through his back. In the investigation that followed, love letters, silly and pathetically girlish, were discovered written by Mary on butterfly-crested notepaper.

Mary's name became inseparably linked with a particularly sordid and sinister murder. The mystery never has been solved and stalks about even now, like a restless ghost, to haunt those who were even remotely connected with it.

Then Mary left her mother and brought suit against her for an accounting of the money that the mother, as Mary's guardian, controlled for her. Not a pretty spectacle—a girl suing her [CONTINUED ON PAGE 132]



Miss Juliet Shelby of Paris. The famous curls are bobbed. Mary has grown plump. "People aren't interested in me any more," she says. "They don't remember me. My name is forgotten"



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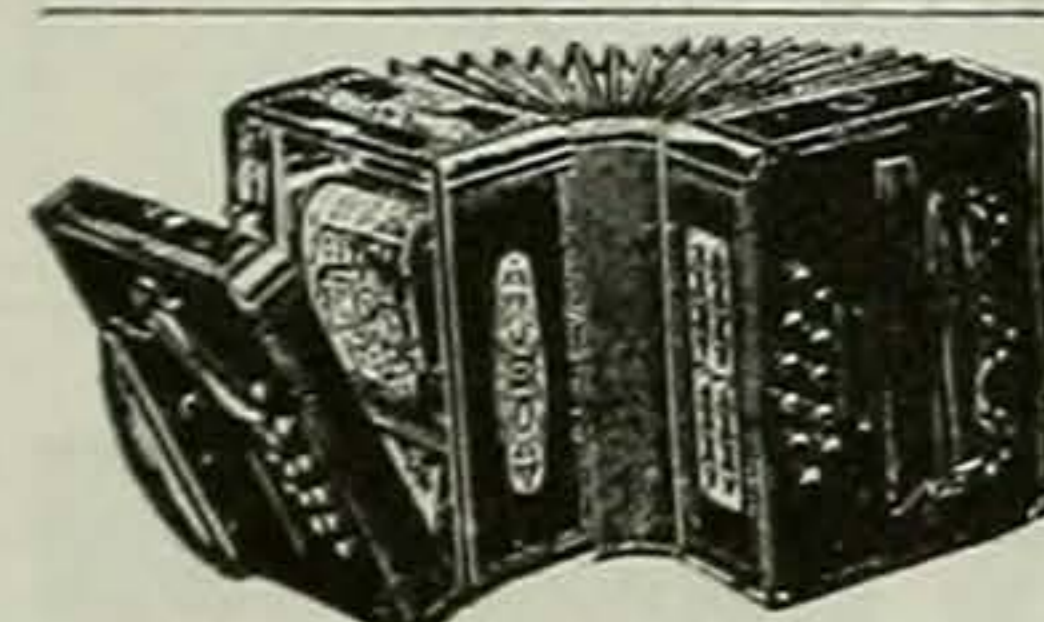
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What Happened to Mary?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29]

mother over money. Even when the case was adjusted by a reconciliation between Mary and her mother, the memory of it hung in the public mind.

Other suits followed. Mary was named as the corespondent in a divorce suit. The United States government found that Mary and her mother owed money for income taxes. The movies turned a cold shoulder on Mary. The public heard that the slender child had turned into a plump young woman. Pursued by all the malevolent demons, Mary fled.

How and where is Mary Miles Minter living?

WHAT becomes of a star when the gleam of it is cut off by clouds that scurry along between the eyes of earth and its stellar orbit? Perhaps the star goes on gleaming. At any rate, Mary Miles Minter goes on living.

First, the place: In an unostentatious hotel in a quiet street just off the fashionable Champs Elysees in Paris. On the top floor.

When I asked a hotel official to be shown to the apartment of Miss Shelby, he denied all knowledge of any such person. I assured him that no longer than an hour before I had telephoned Miss Shelby and had been invited to visit her.

The official shook his head. His suspicion was by no means appeased. He

retired through a door, which he closed securely behind him. After fifteen minutes he returned, summoned an attendant, whispered a long string of instructions and motioned us toward the elevator. We proceeded upward under escort.

In the beginning I rather resented this escort, who insisted on keeping uncomfortably close to my elbow. Later I was grateful for his familiarity with the terrain. Never, otherwise, could I have found my way through the labyrinth of service halls, storerooms, unexpected turns and blind passages leading to a heavy gray door which gave no indication of what might go on behind it.

The attendant knocked on the door. A staccato knock of dots and dashes that sounded like a signal. The whole thing struck me as being ludicrously like a scene in a mystery play.

THE door was opened by a slender, bird-like woman with searching eyes, straight set lips and a crown of reddish hair. The woman was Mrs. Charlotte Shelby, Mary Miles Minter's mother.

Yes, Mary is living with the mother she once accused of appropriating her salary and whom she sued for approximately one million dollars of those earnings.

Mary and mother are playing a sister act. Love me, love my mother. Love me, love my Mary.



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London papers please copy ac

“God only made one Mary,” says Mrs. Shelby.

“A girl’s best bet is her mother,” says Mary.

Just like the good old days, when Mary was at her crest.

There are those who contend that Mary and Mother Shelby are living in a state of armed neutrality. I cannot say. There was no evidence of any hard feelings during my visit.

Mary was suffering from the temper of a balky tooth. Mary’s mother was full of solicitation for her daughter. Mary must partake of tea and toast even if she had to dip the toast in the tea. Mary must have an orange shawl thrown across her couch so she would not get the draught from an open window. Mary, Mary, and again, Mary!

SOME there are who claim remembrance of Mrs. Shelby when, as Mrs. Homer Reilly, she was the elocution teacher in the then small but vigorous town of Dallas, Texas. She taught the young folk to speak their pieces for the church festivals and the Christmas charades, it is said, and the pride of her motherhood was baby Juliet Reilly, now Mary Miles Minter.

When there came a parting of the ways between little Juliet’s mother and father, the elocution teacher resumed her maiden name of Shelby and Juliet Reilly became Juliet Shelby. Then Mrs. Shelby took her two little daughters to New York where, it was believed, she cherished hope of realizing stage ambitions for herself.

Her interest, however, centered around little Juliet who, being a precocious youngster with an unusual doll-like face and winsome manner, soon came into demand for child parts. Juliet’s success was so marked that Mrs. Shelby submerged her own ambitions in those of her daughter.

Little Juliet became Mary Miles Minter, the two latter names belonging to her grandmother.

What a tortuous road the elocution teacher and her daughter have travelled from Dallas, Texas, to the secluded, guarded apartment in Paris!

And what does Mary look like now? No use denying that the little girl has grown up into quite a husky woman. Not even her most ardent admirers dare claim that she touches on or appertains to the fashionable silhouette. Added weight gives her a mature look, but it is not altogether unbecoming. She gives the impression of being healthy, fond of the fleshpots, but none too happy over their effect on her.

THE golden curls that once were to rival Mary Pickford’s are now bobbed into a chic Parisian head-dress.

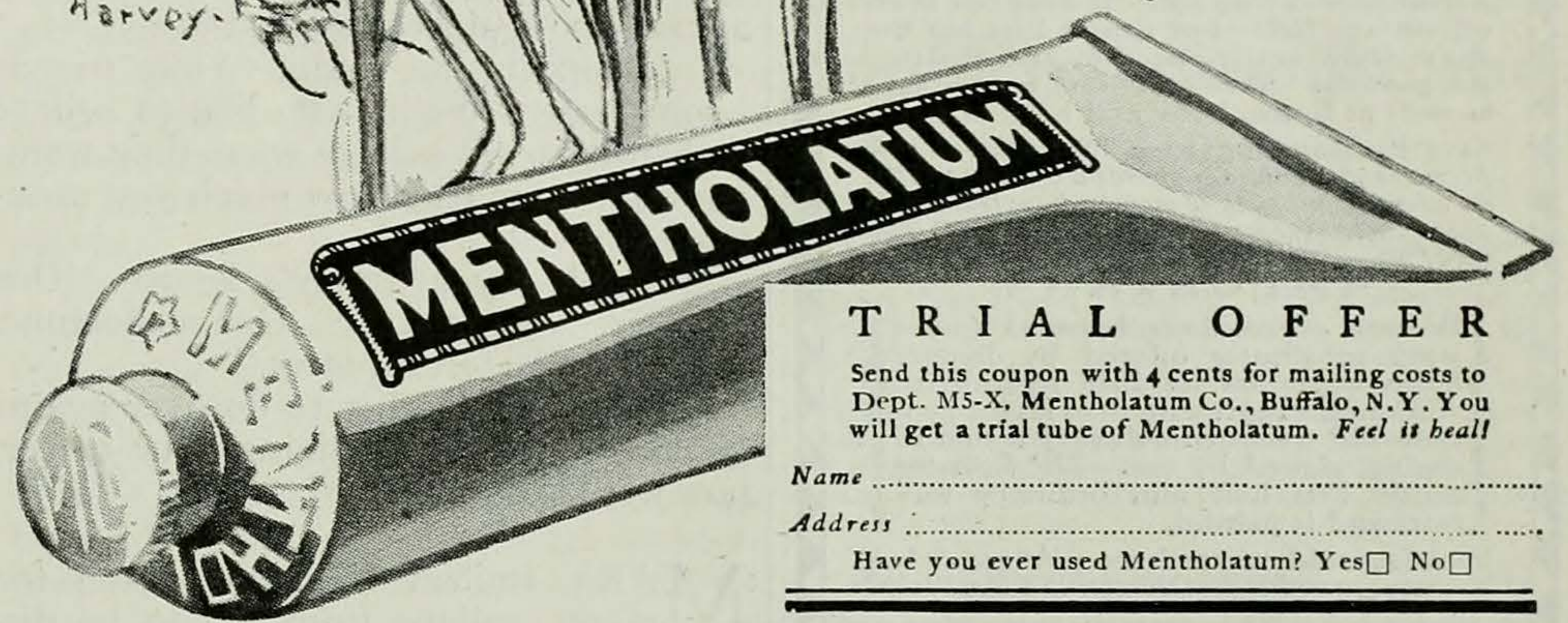
“Please, must you say anything about me?” Mary pleaded. “People are not interested in me any more. They don’t remember me. My name is forgotten.”

“Nonsense, Mary,” expostulated her mother.

“Well, then,” said the shorn lamb, “I am studying. Music, mostly. No, I don’t play. Not even a jewsharp. But I can hear music, and I can love it. I want to make music my friend instead of a mere passing acquaintance.”



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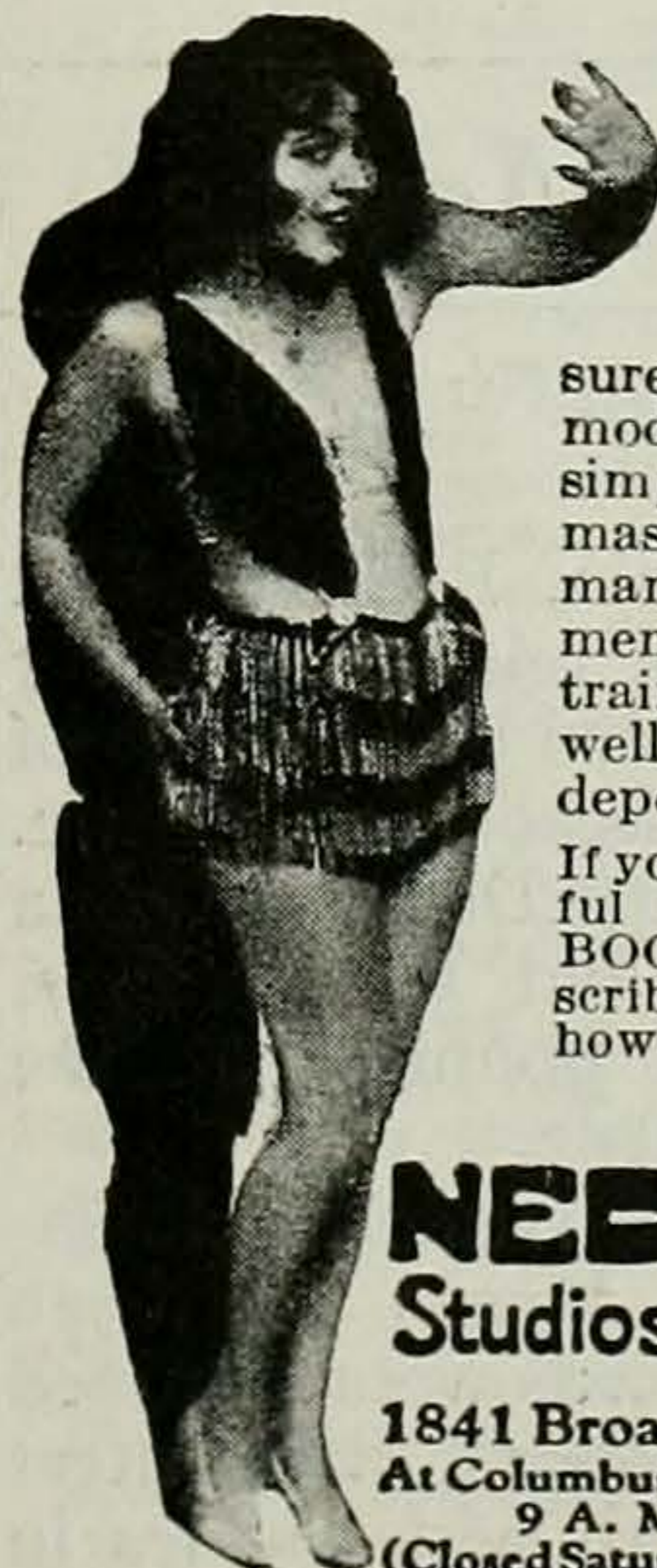
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"Have you taken up philosophy?" I inquired. Philosophy is so modish. And psychology. And psycho-analysis. The refuge of the misunderstood.

"You're getting deep," laughed Mary. "I have philosophy only so far as I have lived it. And," she went on, "I haven't read a newspaper or a magazine story about myself since 1923. What's the use? One blunder, one mistake, one misfortune, and fame becomes infamy. The climb to public favor is sweet. The fall is swift. The return journey is interminable.

"Not long ago, I was named as correspondent in a divorce case. A man I had met only in a casual way. When the news reached me, I was in Italy with my mother. Investigation brought out the fact that the wife of the casual acquaintance had selected my name as being the most sensational one on which to base a divorce suit.

"I wanted to sue the wife who had taken recourse to such unfair methods in order to win her freedom, or whatever it was she hoped to win. My attorney advised me against such procedure.

"Drop it," he said. "Your friends know better. Folks who like to believe such things will believe what they want, anyway, no matter how much you exonerate yourself."

"I took my attorney's advice. One blunder. One mistake. One misfortune. The fireworks forever after."

"And if you had it to do over again? If you were just beginning your career, how would you plan it?"

MARY smiled. She has taken too many wallops from life to be disturbed by a powder puff.

"I would NOT go into the movies." Take that, you youngsters and you oldsters with young ideas.

Not that Mary turns thumbs down on the movies. How can she? But, according to her own confession, she has seen ten movies, aside from those in which she appeared, in her lifetime. Two of the ten were Chaplin comedies.

"Moving pictures," confesses Mary, "are a wonderful art and a wonderful industry. But—not for me.

"I should have remained true to the speaking stage," sighs Mary. "I made my first appearance at the age of four. The play was 'Cameo Kirby' and Nat Goodwin was the star. Perhaps I will return some day, somehow. Who knows?"

Amateur Movies

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 70]

secretary to her cousin, Richard Dix. Another high school release is "Over the Goal Line," produced by students of the Cleveland High School of Seattle. The cast includes Betty Dettore, Leona Surman, Lew Smith and Ray Willers. The picture had its premiere at the Mission Theater in Seattle.

The Movie Club of Western Massachusetts (Springfield, Mass.) has been very active. Film records were obtained of the New England flood; a film contest was staged by the club with entries in

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