

Is WALT DISNEY A

I RAN into Walt Disney's "Lullaby Land" one day, and those ogres took my eye and ear. How they shimmied over the landscape! And their blood-chilling yells! Lon Chaney might have yelled like that, if he had lived far enough into the talkie era. But those banshee bellows must have made Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi feel pretty cheap.

While all the "oo-oo-oo-ooing" was going on, a youngster in the audience started to cry. And kept on crying. A lot of shushing was needed to handle the situation, and the incident started my brain working, my mental boiling point being practically zero. What I started wondering was this:

How many other children have been frightened by this picture? How many have been kept awake or given nightmares by the Big, Bad Wolf, the wicked witch in "Hansel and Gretel," or the rats in "The Pied Piper?"

While I was still worrying about this, I ran into a Mickey Mouse comedy called "The Steeplechase." In the first half, the fun was based on a horse getting drunk; later, there was a shift to such humor as lies in collecting a large number of wasp stings. By this time my mind was working at such a rate that I was practically thinking.

I recalled that about twenty-five years ago, all the really nice people were up in arms against just that sort of humor in the comic strips, and wouldn't have it any other way than that such low stuff was ruining the future generations, etc., etc., etc. Well, as I said, pie-eyed horses and wasp stings were part of the stock in trade of the funnies when I was just a wee tot. But now this Disney, who frequently does the same sort of thing (you'll recall the Big, Bad Wolf's final exit) gets a medal for all he did for the kiddies in 1933. Times, as the boys say, change.

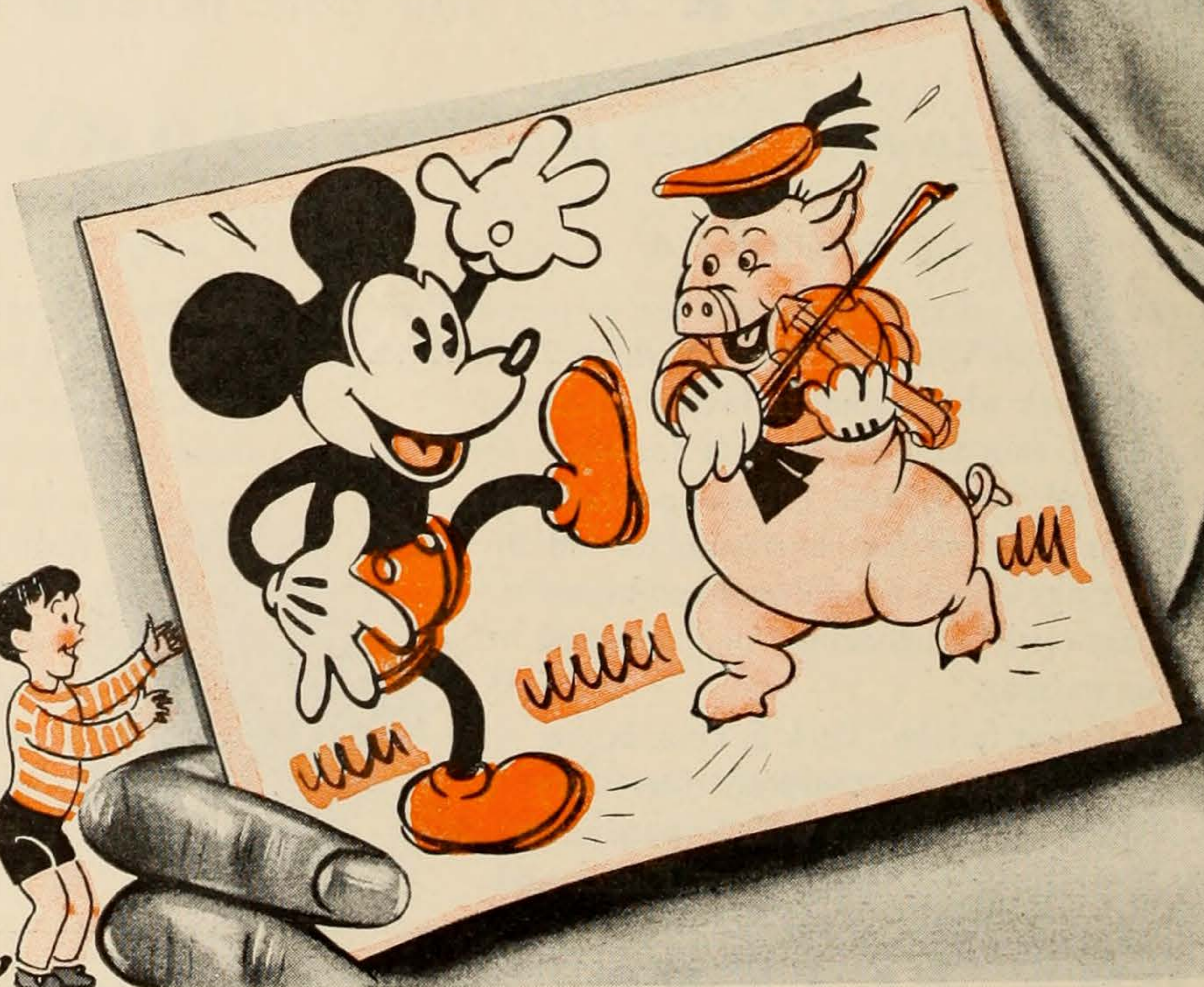
I asked a buddy of mine about it. He seemed a good bet, because he is the father of six-year-old twins, and has, now and then, in the course of his job, to pick films for children. This is what he told me. His own youngsters slept badly and had nightmares after seeing the B. B. W. Also, he has to reject for juvenile consumption about six out of eight Mickey Mouse films, for such reasons as the hipped horse and the wasps.

So I decided that I had better go out and discover if, by any chance, our more serious thinkers view of the great Disney with alarm, as some have, in recent years, viewed fairy tales and Mother Goose. It's the nursery rhymes and fairy tales that give Disney most of his material; and it's these nursery rhymes and fairy

If ogres and witches give the kiddies nightmare, as is said, shouldn't Walt Disney send 'em screaming into hysterics? Well, here's what eminent educators have to say about that

By David
Frederick McCord

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK DOBIAS



Is this Disney a sort of *Dr. Jekyll* who exerts a *Mr. Hyde* influence through Mickey Mouse?

MENACE *To Our Children?*



tales, we've been assured on academic authority, that create fear, primitive thought, subjectivity, the idea that things can happen by magic, and that, in general, unfit the victim for a happy and useful life in the shipping department.

The fight that breaks out periodically on this subject can always be depended upon to produce a good supply of horrible examples, such as that of the little girl who came to no good end just because her mother told her the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. And Heywood Broun is sure to chip in with the story of how Little Red Riding Hood practically ruined his youth.

"I'll look up Professor Harry A. Overstreet, the boss philosopher of the College of the City of New York," I mused. "A few years ago, according to quotations, the professor needed a sedative every time he thought of fairy tales."

Then—

"There's Dr. Alfred Adler, inventor of the inferiority complex. He felt the same way not long ago. He lives in Vienna. Will PHOTOPLAY pay my expenses over to interview him? Or shall I see Dr. Walter Beran Wolfe, his translator?" I asked myself.

"Hum, better see Wolfe," I concluded.

"I'll go up to Teachers' College at Columbia University. They had a fight just a few years ago over whether fairy tales should be told to children."

I was working myself up into quite a state of excitement.

"I'll go down to see Miss Irwin at the Little Red School House. I'll see Helen Ferris, who edits children's books for the Literary Guild. I'll interview Professor Charles Gray Shaw of New York University, who said that whistlers are morons.

"I see in the papers that the Detroit Board of Education has just turned thumbs down on fairy tale decorations in the schools. I'll write out there.

"In the meantime, it ought to be pie to get a snappy denunciation out of a nervous mother in some Parent-Teachers' Association. Merely child's play for a first-rate promoter of ill-will like myself."

I was having a grand conversation all by myself.

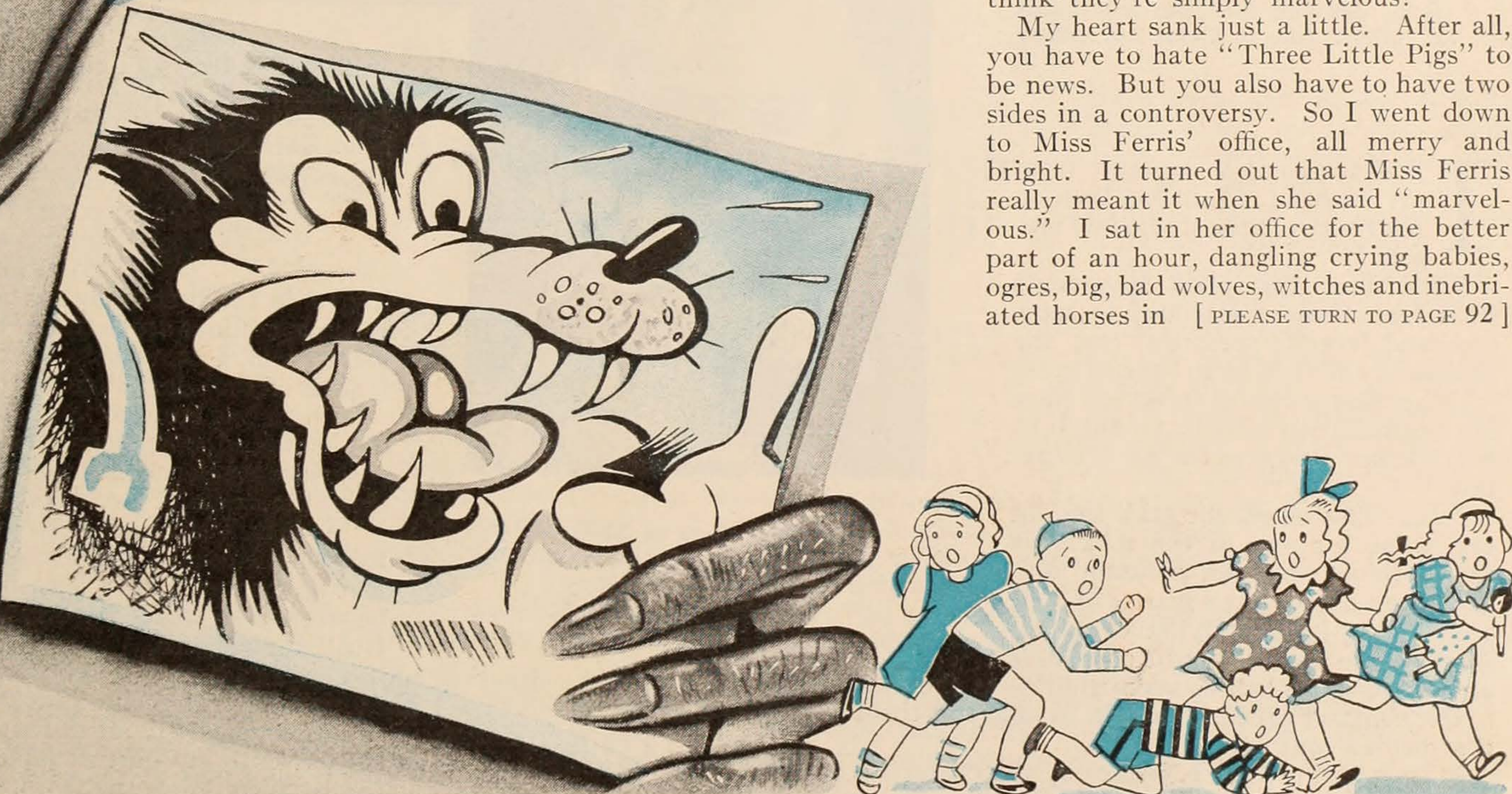
WELL, I've talked to all these people, and if you want a fight, I guess you'll just have to go out and sock a cop.

The news is that Walt Disney has changed the psychology of the child psychologists.

I called up Miss Ferris first of all. "I want to ask you if you think that 'Three Little Pigs' is a menace to American childhood?" I told her.

"Come right down," she answered. "I think they're simply marvelous!"

My heart sank just a little. After all, you have to hate "Three Little Pigs" to be news. But you also have to have two sides in a controversy. So I went down to Miss Ferris' office, all merry and bright. It turned out that Miss Ferris really meant it when she said "marvelous." I sat in her office for the better part of an hour, dangling crying babies, ogres, big, bad wolves, witches and inebriated horses in [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 92]



Are children affected by any lasting fear of the Big, Bad Wolf? Read what psychologists say

Is Walt Disney A Menace To Our Children?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31]

front of her like a trainer trying to prod a roar out of a lion. All I got for my pains was:

"The child who cried in terror at the sight of the smoke ogres in 'Lullaby Land' may have been an unusually sensitive one, or one much too young for that kind of story. The Big, Bad Wolf in 'Three Little Pigs' is really more amusing than terrifying. Much too ladylike, if you ask me."

And so on, down to Professor Shaw, the man who never failed a reporter in search of a good quote. He is ninth in descent from John Alden, Miles Standish's stooge, he reports in *Who's Who*, in which same volume you may read that on September 13, 1916, he walked from Philadelphia to New York in twenty-three hours and forty minutes. And what did I get out of the man who started the whistling moron feud? This is what I got:

"WHEN people criticize fairy tales as being bad for children, they think that they are living in the same world as the child. They aren't. As for the child who cried at the ogres, children are crying all the time. The emotional reaction amounts to very little. When grown-ups take more than a passing interest in fairy tales on the screen, it is a sign of infantilism." I wonder if that last was a wisecrack.

I am not very well up on such things myself, but friends who claim that they are, tell me that the Little Red School House, a private educational institution, is one of the most advanced and progressive schools for children in the country. Here, if anywhere, I figured, I should be able to unearth a good, ringing denunciation of fairy tales in general and the Silly Symphonies in particular, as Public Enemy No. 1.

I must admit that Miss Elizabeth Irwin, principal, did better by me than anyone else. Miss Irwin is not what you would call a movie devotee. But, at the same time, she is not particularly opposed to fairy tales, not even the scary ones. There was nothing about Sinister Symphonies or Mickey the Menace to be had out of her. But she did consent to damn Mickey and his pals with faint praise (or praise them with faint damns), when she said that these animated cartoons are the most harmless current motion picture fare.

THE next stop was at the offices of the United Parents' Associations of the Greater New York Schools, where I talked with Mrs. Henry S. Pascal, chairman of the board. I asked her:

1. Does her organization hate Walt Disney?
2. Does she, for goodness' sake, know of anyone who does, and will say so?

The answer was a decided "no" in both cases; and, in addition, I found out that the U. P. A. had just been sponsoring a special Disney program. Mrs. Pascal, incidentally, is delighted with the discovery of a form of entertainment that appeals equally to parent and child. So that was that, and I went on to Columbia University, where I blundered into a few wrong offices and finally wound up in the department of elementary education, where most of these fairy tale fights happen.

I had as nice a talk as you could ask with Miss Jean Betzner and Miss Alice Dalglish of the faculty, and Miss Annie Moore, a former

gliesh, for example, thinks that Mickey is a tremendous contribution—which is her privilege, of course, but by this time I was getting pretty sick of the chorus of praise. As a matter of fact, I caught myself muttering, "This guy Disney isn't so much, and if I had any kids, they'd go to see Mickey Mouse only over my dead body."

At this point it occurred to me that it might be a good idea to go to the library and see what I could find. So I nosed around a little, and the first I knew I ran into this Professor Overstreet again—I mean, some more dope on him. You'll remember that I had already

heard rumors that a few years ago he was going around town making cracks about fairy tales. Well, what I found now set me to singing "Happy Days Are Here Again!" This is just a sample—

"And now parents insist on inflicting this primitivism, this pathetic infantilism of the race on their children, forcing them to think uncasually, magically, miraculously, forcing them to habituate themselves to the technique of dreamy wish-fulfillment."

"Oh, boy," I told myself, "what the man who said that about fairy tales would say about Disney is just nobody's business!"

I CALLED the College of the City of New York. I got Professor Overstreet. And he was very, very nice. He said he would like to see me, but he was about to leave town. He was most sorry.

Somewhere I have read that fairy-tale hating gets you. I mean, after a while you can't let it alone. A confirmed fairy-tale hater will leave wife, home, family, friends, give up all if he sees a chance to hate fairy tales. So I thought I would tantalize the professor. I reminded him of past statements, and said that what I wanted to interview him about was whether that went for "Three Little Pigs," too.

I guess what it boils down to is that Professor Overstreet is not really a confirmed fairy-tale hater, because he didn't break down. I could actually feel him smiling over the telephone. Maybe I got him wrong. I was pretty much unnerved. But I'd swear that he replied, "Well, I may have revised my opinions since then." I've heard that "may have revised" line before. Maybe it didn't mean this time what it usually does, but I figured it would be a waste of time to check up. Was my face red? No. By this time it was blue.

But I was still game. After all, Professor Overstreet is just a philosopher.

I still had the psychiatrists to fall back on, and my experience is that psychiatrists are against [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 103]

Dr. Brill Analyzes Walt Disney's Masterpieces

HERE is the verdict of Dr. A. A. Brill, internationally famous psychiatrist, on the effects of Walt Disney's creations on both the child and the adult mind. His is the last word in modern psychology on the subject:

"I find that they [Disney's 'Silly Symphonies'] are enjoyed by grown-ups much more than by children. To children, they are a visual representation of their fantasies. Children look upon animals as other beings—I might say human beings—and to see these animals perform wonderful feats is a distinct gratification to the child. The situation is quite different in the case of the former; adults have long ago given up fantasy and they are forever bound to grim reality of routine life.

"The average person knows that he has to keep his feet on the ground, and that no fairy will put gold into his pockets. Nevertheless, the hilarity and wholesome outbursts of merriment at such performances on the part of grown-ups show that they, too, get an excellent outlet from Mickey Mouse. For the time being, the grown-up is, as it were, 'narcotized' by these performances, because they take him back to childhood. He then forgets all about his drab, routine problems and merges back into a period of life when everything could still be attained through fantasy. Temporarily, at least, he forgets all about inexorable reality and relives his childhood. As soon as the performance is over, he naturally realizes that it was nothing but fantasy.

"I feel that the Three Little Pigs furnish more entertainment than fright. To adults they stand for another Silly Symphony, etc. In children the Three Little Pigs may at first produce some emotional reaction of fear. I have not noticed it, although I have particularly watched children's reactions. On the contrary, they seemed to be amused. I can, however, imagine that some children might be a little bit frightened, but the effect can only be temporary. The average child in the movie is more than five or six years of age, and at that age no impression can be of a permanent nature."

faculty member, who was visiting that day. But they were all pro-fairy tale, pro-Disney, pro-Mickey, pro-Big Bad Wolf. Miss Dal-

Walt Disney

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 92]

almost everything. Representing this class, I had on my list Dr. Walter Beran Wolfe; and I want you to notice, from here on, the self-control I show in not making puns.

Dr. Wolfe wrote "How to Be Happy Though Human" (a good trick if you can do it), but he comes into this little drama of adventure as a disciple and translator of Dr. Adler of Vienna, who, as I have said, gave the inferiority complex to the world. And Dr. Adler, my researches told me, was apparently ready to take anything Professor Overstreet had said about fairy tales and double it. So I was still hopeful. In a world gone mad, I figured that Dr. Wolfe, as a pal of Dr. Adler, would be an ace in the hole. So—

"What, doctor," I asked, "do you think of Mickey Mouse? You don't by any chance think he is ruining American childhood, do you?"

"I think Mickey Mouse is a civilizing influence."

"What!"

"I think Mickey Mouse is a civilizing influence."

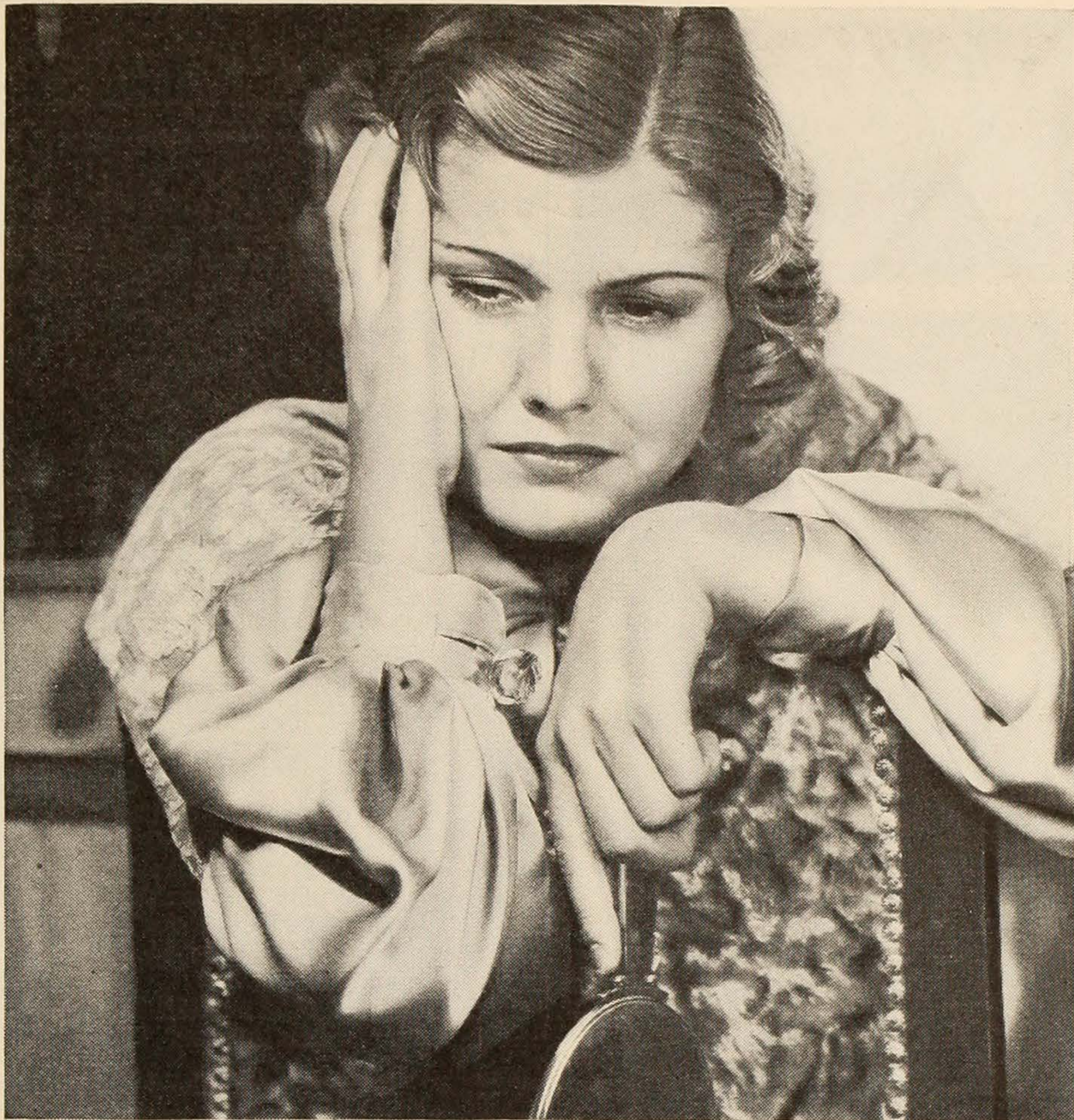
I was groggy, but I could still take it.

"Oh," I said, "you mean you think Mickey Mouse is a civilizing influence. But listen, doctor, don't you think that Mickey and the pigs and the wolf and all that sort of thing give children a false idea of the world, make them nervous, give them bad dreams, the idea that things happen magically, and maybe athlete's foot?"

I gather that he doesn't. In my daze, I seemed to hear some remarks about the whole thing being done so fantastically that even a child knows enough not to take it seriously.

I bowed out, more in sorrow than in anger. And now ay tank ay go home and get some rest.

I don't think I like to do these very active pieces. Next, I want to write something restful, like "The True Love Story of Harpo Marx."



Dear Lonely Heart:

Why have you lost your sweetheart? Your letter gives me a clue. Has anyone told you about the 7 stains — the stains that mar the beauty of teeth that might be lustrous and sparkling? It's sad, that so few women realize

POOOR broken-hearted little girl! Men are like that—they *do* detest stained, discolored teeth. But you can do something about it very quickly.

You can get rid of the stains on your lovely teeth—the stains that lost your sweetheart—in just a few days, if you will use Colgate's Ribbon Dental Cream.

What's that you say? . . . You've brushed your teeth faithfully? . . . Ah yes, but here is what's wrong. Your toothpaste had only *one* cleansing action. And no one action can remove all the seven kinds of stains that food and drink leave on your teeth . . . stains

that form so gradually you're hardly aware of them.

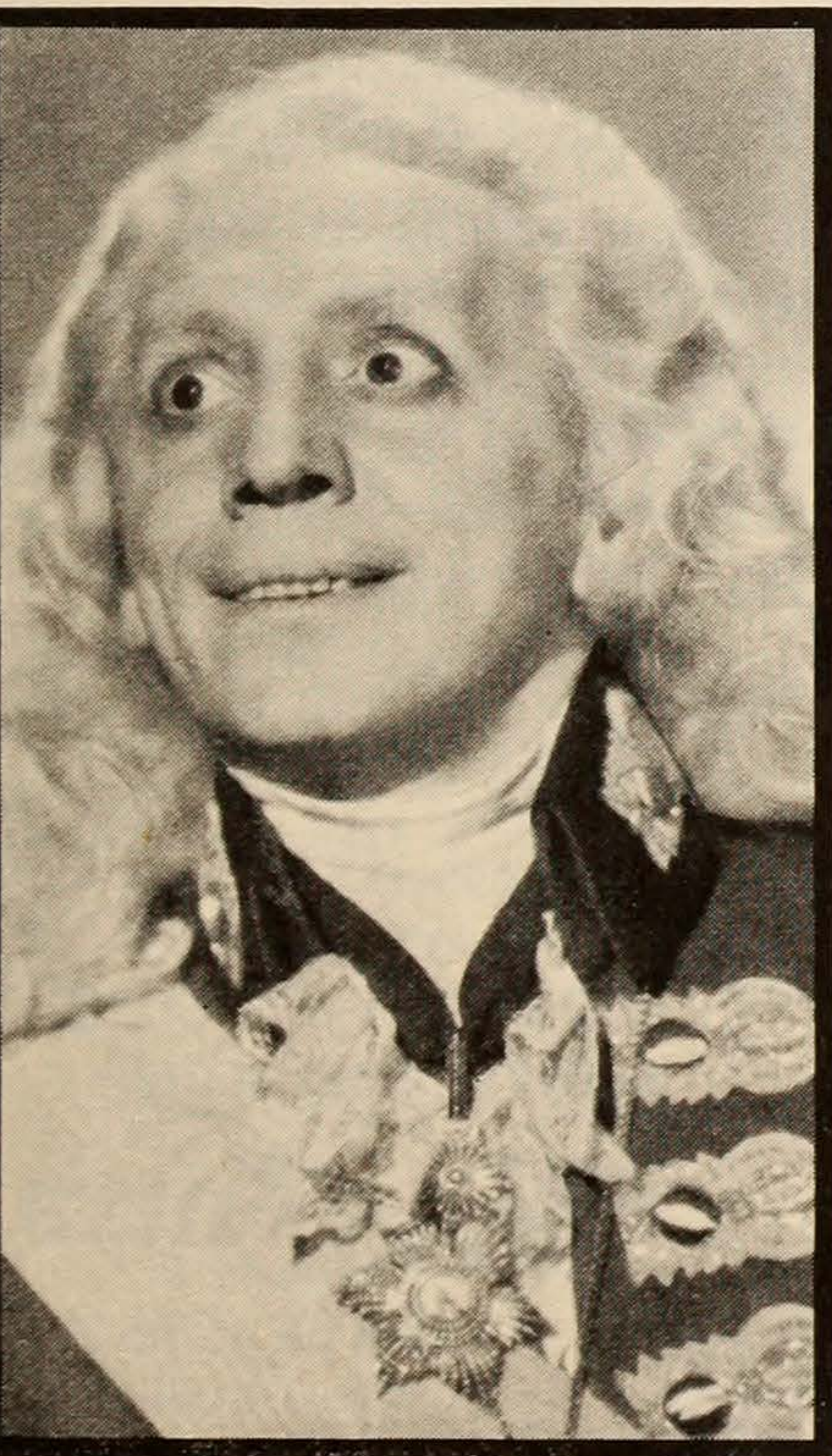
It takes *two* cleansing actions to remove all stains. And you get them both in Colgate's. One, an *emulsive* action, washes away many of the stains. The other, a *polishing* action, polishes away all the stains that remain.

Why, before you know it, Colgate's will restore to your teeth their whiteness and lustre. Make your breath sweet, too. Bring back your entrancing smile . . . maybe . . . your sweetheart.

It's really worth trying, isn't it? And Colgate's at 20¢ is the most economical of all good toothpastes . . . the least expensive of all beauty-aids.

If you prefer powder, Colgate's Dental Powder also has the *TWO* cleansing actions, sells at the same low price.

**All 7 Stains vanish
when you use Colgate's**



Oh, Peter, what big eyes you have! It's Sam Jaffe, from the Broadway stage, as the mad Grand Duke in "Scarlet Empress"

