

DALLINGER

Doubling in brash, the nation's No. 1 producer of box-office hits rattles off one of his verbal volleys to two secretaries who alternate taking notes and resting their arms for the next blast.

THE GREAT DICTATOR

By ALVA JOHNSTON

The saga of Selznick, producer of *Gone With the Wind*, who discovered that nobody can interrupt a memo successfully, so he dictated his way to success.

DAVID O. SELZNICK rose to the top in Hollywood by one of the most exasperating habits a man can have. He is a memorandum addict. The habit has grown on him to such an extent that, in producing *Gone With the Wind*, he dictated more than 1,500,000 words of memos.

He fulminates at two stenographers. The first takes notes until her arm is tired, then the second works until the first has recovered, and so on. Selznick is probably the greatest living orator for output. His only competitors are one or two pulp-fiction authors and an occasional filibustering senator.

His memos vary from paragraphs to book length. Clark Gable was routed out of bed at three o'clock one morning by a motorcycle messenger who presented him with what looked like a typewritten history of the world. It proved to be a memo

concerning the part of Rhett Butler to be read by Gable before appearing at the studio later that morning. Gable and others finally revolted and established a nine P.M. curfew on Selznick manifestoes.

Selznick was a child magnate when he contracted the memo habit. He used to work after school at the studio of his father, Lewis J. Selznick, a movie king of the silent days. In personal conferences with men two or three times his age, he suffered from self-consciousness. His typewriter became a sort of ambush. Hiding his immaturity behind the typewriter, he rattled off his ideas in showers of memos.

The men most admired by Selznick received some of his most savage prose. Alfred Hitchcock was brought from England by Selznick on a long-term contract and assigned to direct *Rebecca*. The British genius was astounded one day to receive an

arraignment in the style of Gladstone on the unspeakable Turk. Hitchcock had sketched a plan for a movie version of *Rebecca* which departed radically from the famous novel. To Selznick, this was like forging a will. One of his titles to a place in the cinema hall of fame is his discovery that a book can be filmed without throwing away the contents.

Selznick admits having been outmemoed only twice. In an argument over the publicity for *A Tale of Two Cities*, he received a memo longer and fiercer than his own from Howard Dietz, chief of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer exploitation. Dietz used to work on the *Bronx Home News*, which required its reporters to write four columns a day, and it was nothing for him to turn out a novelette-sized philippic before breakfast. Selznick hates to read memos almost as much as he loves to dictate them. In dealing with Dietz he was reduced to sending telegrams.

Vivien Leigh also took a decision over Selznick. She was startled one day to receive half a pound of rhetoric through the mail. She took ten days to reply, by answering every point; the producer wired a retraction. Usually, however, the Selznick memo is a self-closing incident, like a building falling on a man.

Selznick doesn't lacerate egos for amusement. Professions of esteem and regard are sometimes

introduced in the most vitriolic passages. It gives the effect, they say, of a district attorney apologizing to the defendant in the summing up at a murder trial. Selznick wrote his first memos partly because people interrupted when he talked to them. He still writes them for that reason. Nobody can interrupt a memo. A man is sure of a full and fair hearing when he soliloquizes.

By nearly a quarter of a century of practice, the producer has developed the rhythm and rounded eloquence of the parliamentary orator. He would make a figure in the halls of Congress if he could get over the habit of announcing the punctuation. A fanatical grammarian, he mentions all the commas, periods, semicolons, exclamation points and question marks. His memos are not always in the mood of Burke on the wrongs of India, but their leading characteristic is deadly earnestness. Every detail of a motion picture is a life-and-death matter with him. He is stirred to the depths, stricken to the soul, by what most people would consider mere trifles. Seized by what the old writers would call a demoniac possession, he has to dictate or die.

Anything will bring on one of these seizures. Last fall a producer in a competing company asked Selznick if he would look over the script of a picture and telephone a comment or two. Selznick started to read the script at home on a Sunday morning, expecting to spend half an hour on the subject. Soon he was calling for a stenographer like Richard for a horse. Every hour or two he would stop dictating long enough to cancel some appointment. At six P.M. he had finished an 8000-word memo. He apologized for its brevity and offered to go into detail if his broad suggestions were adopted.

Selznick has another trait almost as aggravating as the memo habit. He has no sense of time either in the form of hours or years. *Gone With the Wind* was scheduled as one year's work; it took more than three.

Early one September, Selznick asked King Vidor to be ready in two weeks to direct *Tom Sawyer*; the famous director declined the assignment because he had a three weeks' vacation planned. Exactly a year later Selznick again asked Vidor to direct *Tom Sawyer*. Instead of two weeks, it had taken a year and two weeks to do the preliminary work on the picture.

The division of the twenty-four hours into day and night means as little to the producer as to an Eskimo in the Arctic winter. The clock is an unsuccessful invention, as far as he is concerned. His studio keeps the office hours of a fire department. Members of his staff are likely to receive calls any time up to and after dawn. Charlie Chaplin and other neighbors once signed a petition begging Selznick to show a little humanity; the producer had formed the habit of viewing pictures in his home theater between midnight and eight A.M.; the neighbors stood it for a long time, but protested when he began showing himself gangster pictures with police sirens and machine-gun blasts. Selznick made peace by soundproofing his projection room.

Relaxing With Might and Main

HE PUT in stretches of seventy-two hours without sleep in making *The Wind*. For a time he was, with medical permission, on a daily ration of benzedrine pills and six or eight grains of thyroid extract—enough to send many a man to heaven. Rather than yield to fatigue, he occasionally left his office at two or three A.M. and went to a gambling house.

This was an expensive cure for drowsiness, but after a few hours of roulette he would return to his office refreshed and wide awake, with all the fatigue toxins cleared out of his brain.

According to King Vidor, it is safer to work for Selznick than to relax with him. When Selznick was head of RKO studio, he became conscience-stricken one day at the drawn faces around him. Packing his staff into a bus, he announced that they were off for seven days of sleep, fresh air, high altitude and sunshine. After a bruising journey over rocky roads, the bus finally arrived late in the evening at Arrowhead Lake. After dinner the nervous wrecks played billiards until daybreak, and then all tumbled into bunks in one smoke-filled room.

Full of the idea of forcing health into them, Selznick got them up two hours later for a hike in the snow. Most of them turned back after thirty paces. Ernst Lubitsch walked a few yards, muttering, "Who thought up this idea?" Vidor and a few others tottered about a mile. On their return they were received with shouts to hurry.

The rest cure had been temporarily sidetracked, as Selznick had decided to take everybody to San Bernardino for the preview of *King Kong*. The invaders, wearing fleece-lined boots and Arctic outfits for the cold of the high altitude, found themselves a few hours later in the blazing desert. Vidor had been rapidly cracking up before he arrived at San Bernardino. At the preview, a four-year-old boy sat in front of him. The child's parents made him turn around and look backward to avoid seeing *King Kong*, and he fixed his eyes on Vidor with a relentless, soul-probing stare. Between the big monster on the screen and the little monster in front of him, the director became confused and escaped to the smoking room. There the first thing he thought he saw was a midget with an eight-foot hayrake. He was relieved to discover that it really was a midget with an eight-foot hayrake, the rake bearing a sign advertising the county fair next week. A few minutes later Vidor heard Selznick cheerily announcing that the health farm was starting immediately for Palm Springs for a night of relaxation. The bodies were repacked in the bus. They arrived at the resort at two A.M., and the patients relaxed at a night club until daybreak. After forty-eight hours with practically no sleep, the rest cure was discontinued by unanimous consent.

Many of the able men in Hollywood are willing to work for Selznick in spite of strange hours and interoffice philippics. His regular staff bears him an almost belligerent loyalty.

On receiving an overture from Selznick, Nunnally Johnson wrote: "I should certainly like to work for you, although my understanding of it is that an assignment from you consists of three months of work and six months of recuperation."

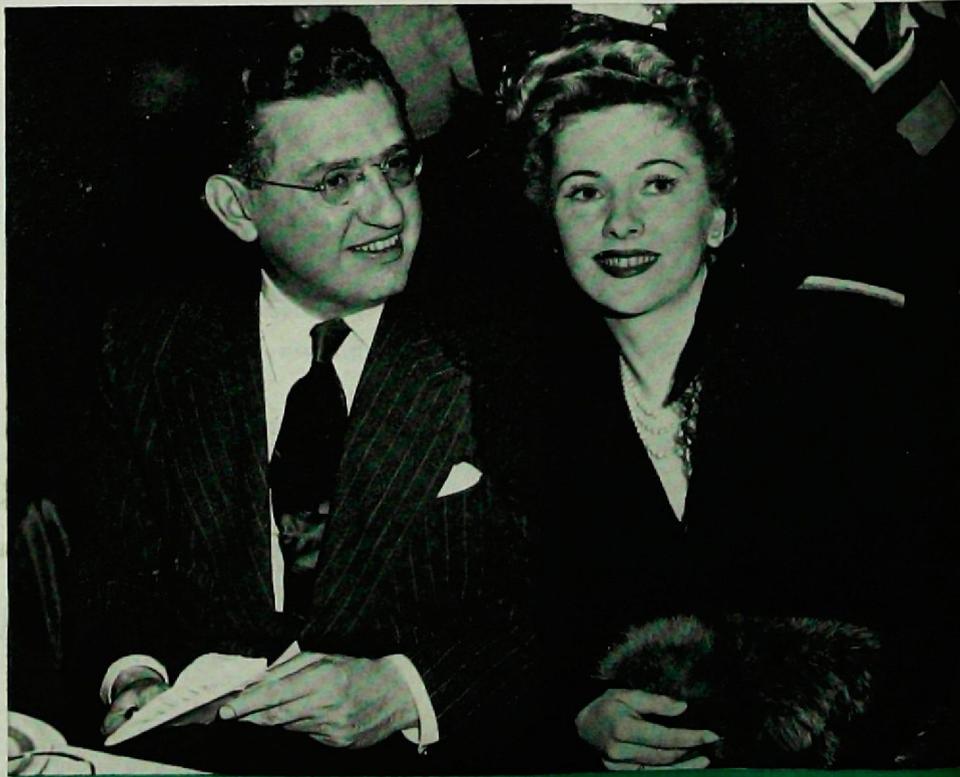
A Hollywood saying is that "Selznick eats directors, writers and secretaries." Ambitious men take their chances, however, because prestige is to be gained by association with Selznick. For ten successive years the motion-picture exhibitors of the country voted him the No. 1 producer of box-office successes.

David learned the business from his father, L. J. Selznick, who ran away from a farm in the Ukraine and came to this country as a boy. A born promoter, L. J. had organized a national bank and three jewelry stores before he was

(Continued on Page 38)



Selznick's instinct wasn't wrong when he picked Vivien Leigh to play Scarlett. She's the only woman in or out of Hollywood who ever made him eat his words.



Joan Fontaine is Selznick's latest Oscar-winning protégée. He introduced Hepburn to the screen, transformed Myrna Loy from a yellow peril to a white girl, and put Mickey Rooney into his first feature.

PHOTOS BY DALLINGER

"Your Ma's a CRAB!"



How right is he, mother?

Are you cross and shrill when the day's work has worn your nerves to a nub? Then, about mid-afternoon, get into the tub with a cake of Ivory Soap.



Freshen up in an IVORY BATH

What a relief from worry and weariness to smooth New Ivory's lavish velvet suds over every inch of your body! How gratefully your skin responds to the gentle baby-care of the lovely Ivory lather from that big white floating cake. Like a new woman with a new skin, you step out.



A Fresh Start for the Day's Best Hours!

You're in love with life all over again after your Ivory Bath. That fresh, clean "Ivory" smell leaves you fresh, dainty. And with a delightful disposition . . . ready for fun. Ivory lathers faster than any leading toilet soap. An Ivory Bath is one of life's most inexpensive luxuries . . . never fails to give you a Fresh Start. Enjoy one every afternoon!

99⁴⁴/100% PURE • IT FLOATS

TRADEMARK REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. © PROCTER & GAMBLE

For a FRESH START... Take an IVORY BATH

THE GREAT DICTATOR

(Continued from Page 10)

twenty-four years old. Coming to New York about 1910, he opened the world's biggest jewelry store, which crashed quickly. Some months after this disaster he came home one night and announced that he was going into the pictures. He had just met an old friend who had made a fortune in them.

"He's the dumbest man I ever knew," said L. J. "If he can make money in the pictures, anybody can."

As fast as he learned the picture business, L. J. taught it to his sons, Myron and David. While still in grammar school, David organized the first "credit" system known to the pictures. This was a card-index record of writers and directors, showing their successes and failures. It was used by the Selznick organization as a major book of reference in assigning writers and directors to work. Before he was out of his teens, David was something of a magnate himself, playing a large part in directing the affairs of the Selznick Corporation, which had grown to be a \$60,000,000 business.

Being loaded with enormous responsibilities years before he was old enough to vote, the youngster gained unlimited confidence in his own ability. He has always been ready to back his judgment against all Hollywood. This complete belief in himself, cultivated in boyhood, made him a successful pioneer and experimenter. His first great defiance of the aggregated wisdom of Hollywood came when he started to make faithful versions of classic novels, following their loose meandering narratives, instead of reducing them to standardized melodrama. His cocksureness was again vindicated when he made a four-hour *Gone With the Wind* in spite of the prevailing theory that two hours was close to the limit of audience endurance. Selznick is now experimenting at the opposite extreme; he is filming short stories without padding and with fidelity to the original text.

What's in a Name?

When he began to learn showmanship under his father's guidance, David became convinced that the sound and typographical appearance of a name were important. He is not a fanatic on the subject; he has never contended that a certain combination of syllables makes a great man, but he argues that a name which has the right ring in the public ear may accelerate one's rise in the world. He became dissatisfied with his own designation, which was plain David Selznick, and felt that a middle initial would help. He experimented scientifically, testing the sound of every letter in the alphabet, like a song writer trying out musical notes. O was the best. It had a strong, broad sound; it was necessary to pause in pronouncing it, and it gave a more impressive rhythm to the name. As soon as he felt sure that this would stick in the public memory better than any other of the twenty-six letters, he became David O. Selznick. This has registered so well that some of his mail comes addressed to David O'Selznick.

Without being superstitious about it, he continued his interest in the subject of personal nomenclature throughout his later career. He has never discovered any fundamental laws governing the arrangement of vowels and consonants for a prosperous career. Some-

times a lead-off initial is good, sometimes bad. J. Edgar Hoover, for example, is a name to make the world turn pale, but could John E. Hoover have inspired so much awe? Selznick questions, however, whether the creators of Tarzan and Van Bibber would have made such a mark on the public consciousness if their respective authors had been E. R. Burroughs and Richard Davis. Sometimes the change recommended by Selznick is from the ornate to the simple. After screen-testing Jacques de Bujac, the producer gave him a contract under the name of Bruce Cabot. Selznick sat in at an MGM conference once when the question arose of renaming Arlington Brough, a new boy who had just been signed up. The executives were in a hurry to get back to their offices and wasted little time on the problem. Somebody suggested "Robert Taylor," and it was accepted. Selznick regarded this as a singularly uninspired choice, but he later came to doubt whether Taylor would have caused more emotional cyclones if the conference had worked up a romantic name for him.

Down the Ladder

L. J., who was in poor health, planned to retire and leave his business to his two sons while they were in their early twenties, but the plan was never realized. In 1923 the Selznick Corporation became overextended and got into difficulties. Following the good custom of the pictures business, his competitors combined against Selznick and put him out of business.

After the crash, L. J. demobilized his servants and moved from a twenty-two-room apartment on Park Avenue to three furnished rooms where Mrs. Selznick did the cooking and housework. All the family's possessions, including Mrs. Selznick's jewels, had been swept away.

The adjustment was unusually painful. In his home, L. J. Selznick had always preached the homely virtue of extravagance. He advised thrift and hard work for men in general; extravagance and extra hard work for men of exceptional ability. His theory was that inexpensive habits did not usually lead to the cultivation of energy, but that heavy spending forced a man to exert himself and to develop his potentialities. In his prosperous days he had practiced his own philosophy, not only by living well but by losing heavily at poker and giving largely to charity.

With unbounded confidence in the abilities of Myron and David, the elder Selznick spared no expense in rearing them as prodigal sons, so as to insure them against contentment with a middle station in life. Myron, placed on an allowance of \$1100 a week at the age of twenty-one, made satisfactory progress along the primrose path to responsibility. David, placed on an allowance of \$300 a week at eighteen, was a disappointment at first; he was found to be putting money in a savings bank. Later on he straightened up and did credit to his father's dogmas.

The Selznick crash was a severe setback to this system of character discipline. Three or four years elapsed before the sons started spending their way up the ladder again. David, trained to ambitious dreams, could not abandon himself to the thought of becoming a salaried employee. The family thought

only in terms of coups, strokes of genius, big ideas, dazzling projects.

The Selznick psychology made it inevitable that David should attempt to become an independent producer. This was a difficult line for a man without capital. It took several weeks for him to promote a bank roll of \$2000 for his first production, a one-reeler entitled *Will He Conquer Dempsey?* His star, Luis Firpo, demanded a salary of \$1000 a day. David put Firpo through one prodigious day's work, photographing him on rooftops and in Central Park, for lack of a studio. The net profit was \$2000. He then earned an equal amount by filming a beauty contest in Madison Square Garden presided over by Rudolph Valentino in honor of a leading complexion mud. But opportunities of this kind were scarce. David's experiences as an independent finally reconciled him to the degrading idea of a salary. He went to Hollywood.

There he found himself a victim of nepophobia, or inverted nepotism. It is as disastrous to be related to the wrong people as it is fortunate to be related to the right ones. The picture industry was just getting over a civil war. L. J. Selznick had lost out in a fight against the rest of the industry. The mention of Selznick in Hollywood had the effect of a rebel yell on a G.A.R. convention. No company wanted any part of any Selznick.

The reigning magnates were congratulating themselves on the fall of L. J. for personal as well as business reasons. He was always hurting their feelings. Many of the magnates regarded themselves as industrial geniuses and creative artists combined. The elder Selznick was constantly destroying this cheerful illusion by telling reporters: "There's no business in the world in which a man needs so little brains as in the movies."

Bruised vanity and fear that the resourceful Selznick might rise again caused something like a blacklist against all bearers of the name.

Finally, however, David obtained a small position with MGM. At the sight of the name on the pay roll, L. B. Mayer, David's future father-in-law, struck it off.

"Nobody named Selznick can work here," he said.

It happened, however, that David had once done an important favor for Nicholas M. Schenck, president of MGM's parent company. Schenck had promised to repay it, if he ever got the chance. He induced Mayer to give young Selznick a two-week tryout at fifty dollars a week.

David was already a specialist at dictating sensational memos. His only hope of adhering to the MGM pay roll was to discover material for an earthshaking memo. His assignment was really that of finding something radically wrong with Irving Thalberg and Louis B. Mayer, two of the brainiest studio chiefs in the country. He succeeded in finding the materials for his memo among the bewildered writers on the MGM lot. Some of them, like the hero of *Once in a Lifetime*, were the world's most expensive forgotten men, drawing incredible salaries for months without being called on to write a line. Others, long since recognized as hopeless, had been grinding out scripts year in and year out for a small public of wastebaskets. The studio, sometimes forgetting that it had already assigned a set of writers to a story, assigned a new set to the same story; occasionally it also forgot about the second set and assigned a third set. Poets of tender passion were called on to bastinado their souls for gags. The saddest case was that of Tourzhanski, a Russian genius who, after being hired because of his European reputation for morbid realism and fantastic symbolism, had been put to work on Westerns. In spite of all this, MGM was the most brilliantly managed company in Hollywood and made the best pictures. The studio relied on its proved writers; the others were collector's items, who had been accumulated like rare stamps or coins.

Selznick wrote a memo arraigning the management of MGM in the style of Pitchfork Ben Tillman. The document created more surprise than resentment. Writing had become almost a lost art among the MGM executives. They distrusted paper because they

(Continued on Page 42)



Good Lighting Prevents Accidents

SEE YOUR GUIDE DEALER

Among other wartime responsibilities, it is your duty to help prevent unnecessary traffic accidents. Drive safely—keep your car in good condition—and *make sure your lights are right.*

The Guide dealer in your neighborhood is prepared to give prompt, competent light service on new cars and old. Guide original equipment parts to replace lenses, reflectors, gaskets or other parts insure original equipment efficiency for older type headlamps.

For '40, '41 or '42 model cars with Sealed Beam Lighting, your Guide dealer has a supply of sturdy Guide Sealed Beam units for replacement for all makes of cars.

See your Guide dealer today, and drive more safely tonight.

Guide
LAMP
Division of General Motors Corporation
Anderson, Indiana



WORLD'S LARGEST MANUFACTURER OF AUTOMOTIVE LIGHTING EQUIPMENT



"My man expects to be jailed immediately. For murder."



**TAKE GOOD CARE
OF YOUR CAR**

GET "NEW CAR" SHOCK ABSORBER PERFORMANCE

If you are not getting a generous share of that smooth, restful ride you used to tell your friends about when your car was new—see the United Motors man. He knows all about shock absorbers. He can tell you whether they are low on fluid, and if they are, he will fill them with the right amount of the right fluid. He can determine quickly whether the bushings or links are worn, and rebush them, replacing the worn links at the same time. In fact, he knows a lot about your car that will help you get the most out of it during these critical days. And since his place of business is near you, he has a neighborly interest in giving you your money's worth. Moreover, he has the experience, the tools and the service information to do it, too. Why not drive in and see him today?

**SEE THE
UNITED MOTORS
MAN**



LOOK FOR THIS SIGN • IT'S RIGHT NEARBY

United Motors Service is a nationwide organization of selected independent service stations authorized to sell and service these products:

DELCO Batteries
AC Fuel Pumps, Gauges
and Speedometers
INLITE Brake Linings and
Clutch Facings
DELCO Radio Parts
HYATT Roller Bearings

DELCO Auto Radios
HARRISON Heaters
DELCO Home Radios
NEW DEPARTURE Ball
Bearings
HARRISON Thermostats

DELCO Shock Absorbers
GUIDE Lamps
DELCO-REMY Starting,
Lighting and Ignition
KLAXON Horns
HARRISON Radiators
DELCO Hydraulic Brakes

(Continued from Page 39)

couldn't get their emotional fervor down on paper. Communication of ideas was by conference only. In these circumstances the Selznick memo had enormous novelty value. The studio chiefs had no modern experience in dealing with a memo. They had even forgotten how to throw one away. So they simply read the thing and acted on it. Writers were fired by the dozen. A system devised by Selznick was installed for measuring the progress of every man in the writing department. The memo saved hundreds of thousands of dollars for the company. Selznick was soon head of the writers' department, and then assistant producer.

Always dissatisfied with his progress, Selznick pleaded for a chance to show what he could do. He wanted to produce something, anything; he finally got a chance to make Westerns. The MGM Westerns had been previously turned out by an able producer, and there was no chance of improving their quality. Determined to make the studio take notice of him, however, he hit on the idea of making two Westerns at the same time. With the same general location and the same technical staff, but with two sets of actors, he delivered two Westerns costing \$60,000 apiece, although the budget allowance was \$90,000 apiece. This established him as a great "cost-cutter," and he was assigned to produce *White Shadows in the South Seas*.

Selznick was jubilant. He thought his name was made. He visualized the picture as the tragedy of a race, the slow death of the Polynesian under the pressure of Western civilization. His enthusiasm was suddenly dampened when a superior advised him to dismiss these lofty concepts and to concentrate on stimulating the Peeping-Tom instinct of the public with a formidable panorama of dusky South Sea bosoms.

The Man Who Came to Lunch

Before he had recovered from this shock, Selznick learned that two directors had been assigned to the picture—Robert Flaherty and W. S. Van Dyke, II; Flaherty as an authority on nature, and Van Dyke as an authority on human nature. Selznick admired each man separately, but not the two in combination. From their differences in temperament, he correctly predicted that they would clash almost on sight. He protested vainly to his bosses. Having no other access to the head executives, he appeared as an uninvited guest in their private lunchroom—a social outrage equivalent to One-Eyed Connolly's crashing the Court of St. James's. Here he argued with Irving Thalberg about the folly of the double-headed directorship of *White Shadows*. As Thalberg remained unmoved, Selznick became vehement. Finally Thalberg picked up his napkin, threw it on the table and walked out. Selznick finished his lunch with the other executives in the general atmosphere of a death-house inmate among turnkeys. A few days later he met Thalberg in a corridor.

"I want to talk to you, Irving," he said. "I've got a great idea for Norma, and —"

"That reminds me that I want to talk to you," said Thalberg. "I'm not accustomed to the kind of insubordination I had from you, and I think I am entitled to an apology."

They went to Thalberg's office and talked it over. Selznick declined to

apologize. He argued that he had been in the right. He was, at twenty-four, too young to know that it was a double offense for an underling to be noisily in the right. It was agreed, without hard feelings, that the young man, after completing his work in hand, should seek his fortune elsewhere. Selznick left MGM with the rating of a smart young fellow of Communist tendencies—"a professional aginster," as the type is called in Hollywood, where it is particularly difficult to live down the reputation of being arrogant and overbearing with your superiors.

The Film That Caught Dillinger

Selznick obtained his second start in Hollywood on a make-good-in-two-weeks basis at the Paramount studio. He wanted to reorganize writers again, but found them perfectly organized already. He investigated the other departments, but discovered a distressing efficiency in every branch of the studio. With the two weeks nearly up and disaster facing him, he happened to see an announcement of a prize contest for seventeen projected pictures. He saved himself by thinking up the winning titles in all seventeen contests.

Three years after joining Paramount, Selznick was second in command there. He was dissatisfied. Twenty-eight years old, he felt that he was getting nowhere, so he quit and tried to go into business for himself. He was blocked, however, by his father-in-law, Louis B. Mayer. Mayer had a sound idea that, if bright young executives went into business for themselves, the big studios would be disorganized.

He ran the RKO studio for one highly successful year, during which he introduced Katharine Hepburn to the screen and changed Myrna Loy from a yellow peril into a white girl.

After becoming good friends with Mayer again, Selznick returned to MGM in 1933. It was whispered that he was being groomed as successor of Irving Thalberg, who was in poor health. For a time the studio seemed to be on the verge of revolt. Writers and directors made excuses to avoid working for the son-in-law. This was a shock to Selznick, who felt that for ten years he had seen nothing but the seamy side of nepotism. Father-in-law Mayer had erased his name from the pay roll on sight, opposed his marriage, and blocked his plans for an independent company. Selznick had to bring in his own staff to make his first MGM picture, *Dinner at Eight*, which was an enormous success and tended to reverse the opinion that he was nepotism's masterpiece. His *Viva Villa* and other successes changed the attitude of the studio toward him.

Selznick, who is a ping-pong fan, was watching a boys' tournament at the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles one day.

He became fascinated by the personality of one of the players and chose him on the spot to play Clark Gable as a boy in *Manhattan Melodrama*. The player was Mickey Rooney, who had appeared in pictures as Mickey McGuire. Selznick restored his name to Rooney and introduced him to feature production. In the same picture Selznick brought William Powell to the MGM lot in spite of strong protests to the effect that Powell was washed up. *Manhattan Melodrama* is famous as the picture that caught Dillinger. In the film the gangster goes to the chair. Dillinger was so eager to get a preview of his own probable finish that he quit

(Continued on Page 44)

It's Time to Give Your Car Extra Care!



YOUR CAR has to last. So give it every care that will cut down wear and protect the engine.

Automotive engineers agree that most wear is caused by "dry starts" and internal corrosion from water vapor.

So help protect the upper cylinders of your engine. Put Mobil Upperlube in the



gasoline. This reaches the cylinders as a vapor and its special ingredient produces an adsorbed film on the metal surfaces. This film guards against scuffing wear during periods when the regular oil supply may be inadequate. It guards against corrosion from combustion moisture.

Buy Where You Buy Mobiloil or Mobilgas.



MOBIL UPPERLUBE

OTHER MOBIL SPECIALTIES:

MOBILGLOSS • MOBILWAX • MOBIL HAND OIL
MOBIL RADIATOR FLUSH
MOBIL STOP-LEAK • MOBIL WINDOW SPRAY
MOBIL HYDROTONE • MOBIL SPOT REMOVER

BY SOCONY-VACUUM

(Continued from Page 42)

his hiding place and was killed in an encounter with the FBI.

Selznick broke into cinema history in 1935 when he made David Copperfield. This was an important landmark, because it was the first convincing demonstration that a great classic can be made over into a successful film without throwing most of the original out the window.

Selznick's preparation for making David Copperfield began when he was seven or eight years old. L. J. Selznick had read David Copperfield when he was learning the English language. He knew the novel almost by heart and liked to discuss it with his son paragraph by paragraph. In preparing himself for these literary conferences, the boy read with a dictionary at his elbow. He made painfully slow progress, pronouncing not only each word but the commas, semicolons and periods. It took him months to read it, but in the end he had every character elaborately pictured in his mind and much of the dialogue memorized. By reading Copperfield and many other novels in this fashion, he got into a life-long habit of reading slowly, dwelling on every word as if decoding a cipher message. He can skim through some things to get the general idea, but when he is reading an important script or book, he still absorbs it a word at a time, like a new pupil in a moonlight school.

He was regarded as a reckless experimenter when he made David Copperfield. There was at that time a strong prejudice, based on disastrous experiences, against classics and costume pictures; there was also a superstition of the theater to the effect that Dickens was unactable. It was considered a wild gamble to make Copperfield at all; it was considered mere lunacy to make it according to Selznick's plan of faithfully following the careless, wandering construction, or lack of construction, of the book. The orthodox treatment of a classic then was to select a few of its characters and incidents, mix them with new materials and pour the whole thing into the mold of a three-act play.

Selznick regarded this as a fundamentalist would regard a project to jazz up the sacred text. Through his photographic method of reading as a child, Copperfield already existed in Selznick's mind as an enormous motion picture; he believed that millions of Dickens lovers had similar mental projection rooms in which they could see the tale unfold itself as originally written.

Flicker Philosophy

Aside from his own feelings, he regarded it as sound business judgment to give undiluted Dickens to this legion of experts. These principles were followed as far as possible in telescoping an 863-page book into a two-hour film, and the picture was one of the greatest of the time. After Copperfield, Selznick had a long series of successes with classics. In one of his memos reproaching writers for tampering with a great contemporary novel, Selznick set forth his philosophy as follows:

"The millions of people who have read the book and who worship it would very properly attack us violently for the desecrations which are indicated by this treatment; but quite apart from the feelings of these few

million, I have never been able to understand why motion-picture people insist upon throwing away something of proven appeal to substitute things of their own creation. It is a form of ego which has drawn upon Hollywood the wrath of the world for many years.

"I don't hold at all with the theory that the difference in medium necessitates a difference in storytelling, or even a difference in the basic construction of individual scenes. The only omissions from a successful work that are justified are omissions necessitated by length, censorship or other practical considerations. Readers of a dearly loved book will forgive omissions if there is an obvious reason for them, but they will not forgive substitutions.

"Obviously, we cannot photograph the entire book, but there are ways and means that we have learned of preserving at least the appearance of photographing the entire book, and of capturing the same formula as the original.

"Nor can we hold with the theory that stories should be changed for motion pictures because they fall into a

John Hay Whitney and others came to his rescue, setting him up in business in Selznick International Pictures, Inc. Norma Shearer invested in the company on the recommendation of her husband, Irving Thalberg.

The Golden Wind

The history of his *Gone With the Wind* is probably the best-known chapter of American history since the Battle of Bunker Hill. In the beginning Selznick regarded himself as a daring gambler when he paid \$50,000 for the movie rights, a record sum for an unpublished book. His next gambling stroke was his decision to make a picture of unheard-of length at a cost far beyond the resources of his company. This was made possible by Whitney, who had become enthusiastic when he read the novel in manuscript and guaranteed financial backing to any extent. In America alone people paid \$32,800,000 to see the picture, according to the latest count. Theaters have paid something more than \$20,000,000 for the right to exhibit it.

Gross figures of income, however, are useful nowadays only for soapbox statistics. The picture, which was directed by Victor Fleming, cost \$4,250,000. The cost of the Technicolor prints, advertising and distribution run this above \$8,000,000. Knowing that Selznick would not consider anyone except Clark Gable for the part of Rhett Butler, MGM exacted a half interest in the picture mainly for his services. MGM's share in the profits exceeds \$6,000,000, making Gable the greatest grease-paint bonanza of all time.

Next came the taxes of the world, nearly every nation taking a hack at the gross. Of what is left Morgenthau gets the lion's share in corporation taxes, income taxes and capital-gains taxes. Selznick's personal return is considerably less than \$2,000,000, and out of this the Government takes further huge cuts and a batch of unpublicized charities takes still more. It is still a handsome figure, but it represents three years of a man-killing grind which turned his hair a bit gray.

Last year Selznick International, Inc., was liquidated with enormous profits. Selznick then formed the David O. Selznick Productions, Inc., in which his only partners are executives who have been with him for many years. Last October the new company became 25 per cent owners of United Artists, which Selznick is now reorganizing.

Selznick has a vault containing nearly 1000 novels, plays, biographies and original screen ideas on which to draw in the future. Some of them are waiting for the advent of new Hollywood personalities. Others are waiting for a change of popular taste. He is now engaged in making Jane Eyre, *The Keys of the Kingdom*, *Claudia* and two "anthologies."

The anthologies are Selznick's newest experiment. From 1000-page novels he is switching to short stories. His first two anthologies—*Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, and *Tales of Passion and Romance*—are scheduled to go before the camera this spring. Each anthology will consist of from three to eight faithful versions of world-famous short stories or novelettes, the total running on the screen somewhere between two and a half and four hours.

TONIGHT MY HEART IS ON THE HILL

By DANA BURNET

TONIGHT my heart is on the hill

Where walks the gray cat, slow and still,
Where close to earth the new moon goes,
Light as a girl in dancing clothes.

Wild lilac and black walnut tree
Stand out against the phantom sea
Of mist that sweeps the rising ground
Like a white wave where day is drowned.

Drowned also is the day's distress,
The striving and the loneliness.
The world is water, and my soul
Is washed in it, and I am whole.

At peace, I stand upon the crest
And watch the moon dance down the west,
And watch the gray cat, slow and still,
Stalking the beauty on the hill.

so-called narrative classification. I have made too many classics successfully and faithfully not to know beyond question of doubt that, whether a film is narrative or dramatic in form, it will succeed in the same manner as the original succeeded, if only the same elements are captured and if only as much as possible is retained of the original—including alleged faults of dramatic construction. No one, not even the author of an original work, can say with any degree of accuracy why a book has caught the fancy of the public; if it were this easy, the author of an original could duplicate the elements and duplicate the success, which we know very few authors of successful works are able to do. The only sure and safe way of aiming at a successful transcription of the original into motion-picture form is to try as far as possible to retain the original."

In the meantime, Selznick was fretting and fuming. Hollywood's infant prodigies were springing up on all sides, while he had reached the great age of thirty-four years without even getting to be head of his own company.