

## With a Pipe And a Manner

A QUITE REMARKABLE FATHER.  
By Leslie Ruth Howard. Illustrated.  
307 pp. New York: Harcourt, Brace  
& Co. \$4.75.

By LEWIS NICHOLS

AT cocktail time, it is the discussion of acting which most deftly separates the men from the boys, the women from the girls. O. K., let the young have Marlon Brando, Tony Perkins and—what's her name?—she's married to the playwright, Good performers, no doubt. But back in the Twenties, the Thirties—ah, the golden age, alas departed. Barrymore, Laurette Taylor, Tony's father, Osgood, and the man with the pipe and the manner, Leslie Howard. Best serve the dinner before growing too sentimental, particularly about this last.

It is almost sixteen years now since a commercial plane carrying Howard was shot down over the Bay of Biscay. Many actors have come and gone. Today's stage researchers, students of The Method, can see him now only in old movies, mainly on TV. They may perhaps wonder. But time has not dulled the memories of the ancients. They can recall "The Scarlet Pimpernel" on the screen or Leslie Howard as Alan Squier in Robert E. Sherwood's "The Petrified Forest." Say no more. There was an actor. But what manner of man lay beneath?

Leslie Ruth Howard, his only daughter, now provides detailed answer, in an affectionate portrait called "A Quite Remarkable Father." In brief, he was a maze of complexities. Professionally, he could be summed up, as the late Burns Mantle once did—"He can, given a stage and a pipe, inspire more interest and express more drama by letting those around him do most of the talking and practically all of the acting than four ordinary actors." A simple trick, that, requiring no more than genius. But his make-up away from the footlights was a compound of many things.

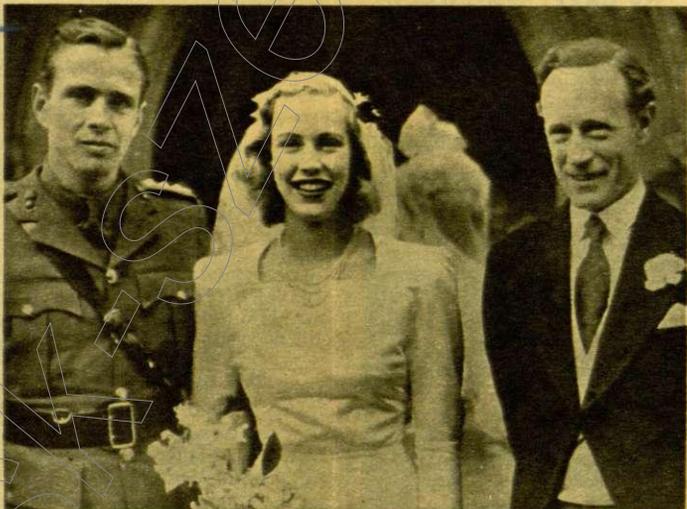
FIRST off, he was a "technical" actor. His daughter never saw him living a role five seconds after he had left the stage or the camera. He was a hypochondriac, never went anywhere without a battery of pills with which to combat fatal symptoms. He was vague, although his daughter can't say whether this was real or imagined. At any rate he played upon it, in order to get out of things he wished not to do.

He was shortsighted, using this much the way he did vagueness. "He could not see without his glasses, and if he always seemed to be without them when someone he wished to avoid appeared, he got them

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Leslie Howard and Raymond Massey in "The Scarlet Pimpernel," 1935.



At the wedding of Leslie Ruth Howard to Capt. Robert Dale-Harris, 1942.

on fast enough when a pretty girl went by." A matinee idol, he naturally was pursued by women, and once planned a separation because of one. Temporary only. He needed Ruth, his wife, who held everything together and gently directed the household—and Leslie Howard.

These sound like blemishes deliberately placed on a portrait grown more romantic through the passage of time. Calm yourselves, once stagestruck schoolgirls, now matrons. Like a good biographer Miss Howard is trying to get at the inner man, and sometimes she wonders if she has done so. A nice line in a nice book—"I cannot help feeling \* \* \* that he is laughing at me. I don't really mind—it was always the kindest laughter."

The name originally was Leslie Howard Stainer, but he dropped the last with his first professional acting job. This was in an English touring company of "Peg o' My Heart," where he rendered a stirring imitation of A. E. Matthews, then in the London company with Laurette Taylor. He came to America for the first time in 1920 for "Just Suppose," being announced by the stage doorman as "Mr. Howard of England is here." Thereafter he shuttled so between here, Hollywood and London that each had a tendency to regard him as a visitor from another place.

Active actors manage to play a good many parts, and lists of plays and films tend to slow

sometimes even so readable a biography as this one. But the men and women, if not the younger boys and girls, certainly will remember "The Green Hat" (a girl named Katharine Cornell started here), "Outward Bound," "Her Cardboard Lover," "Aren't We All?" "Gone With the Wind," "Berkeley Square." In 1936 he also played Hamlet, disastrously. Losing her detachment for once, Miss Howard says that "Hamlet" gave but one bad performance, that being the night the New York critics saw it. At all other times it was excellent, well liked.

A quite loyal daughter.

HOWARD, Leslie 1959 march



Painting by R. G. Eves

Just published—the intimate biography of one of the great actors of our time...

Leslie Howard...written by his daughter

# A Quite Remarkable Father

By Leslie Ruth Howard

Warmly personal, intriguing in its stories of the great stars of two spectacular decades, brimming with revealing family anecdotes, this portrayal of a fascinating man and beloved idol presents a rich reading adventure and a wonderfully evocative journey along memory lane.

Leslie Howard's daughter has at last recreated the exciting theatrical world in which her father starred and, at the same time, has given us a remarkably candid portrait of the man himself.

Illustrated with 44 photographs • \$4.75 at all bookstores

## Some of the dramatic milestones in the career of Leslie Howard

### Stage Plays

"THE GREEN HAT"

Katharine Cornell,  
Ann Harding, Margalo Gilmore

"THE CARDBOARD LOVER"

Jeanne Eagels (New York)  
Tallulah Bankhead (London)

"THE WREN"

Helen Hayes

"BERKELEY SQUARE"

Jean Forbes-Robertson,  
Valerie Taylor, Marie Lohr,  
Margalo Gilmore

"CANDLE-LIGHT"

Gertrude Lawrence, Reginald Owen

"THE ANIMAL KINGDOM"

Katharine Hepburn,  
Frances Fuller, William Gargan

"THE PETRIFIED FOREST"

Peggy Conklin, Humphrey Bogart

"HAMLET"

Wilfred Walter, Aubrey Mather,  
Pamela Stanley, Mary Servoss

"OUTWARD BOUND"

Margalo Gilmore, Alfred Lunt,  
Charlotte Granville

### Motion Pictures

"SMILIN' THROUGH"

Norma Shearer, Frederic March

"OUT OF THE BLUE"

Warren William,  
Reginald Owen, Gregory Ratoff,  
Eleanor Terry, William Gargan

"A FREE SOUL"

Clark Gable, Norma Shearer

"FIVE AND TEN"

Marion Davies, Irene Rich,  
Richard Bennett

"CAPTURED"

Paul Lukas, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

"THE ANIMAL KINGDOM"

Myrna Loy, Ann Harding,  
Ilka Chase, William Gargan

"SECRETS"

Mary Pickford

"THE LADY IS WILLING"

Binnie Barnes, Nigel Bruce,  
Cedric Hardwicke

"OF HUMAN BONDAGE"

Bette Davis

"THE SCARLET PIMPERNEL"

Raymond Massey,  
Merle Oberon, Nigel Bruce

"THE PETRIFIED FOREST"

Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis

"ROMEO AND JULIET"

John Barrymore, Basil Rathbone,  
Norma Shearer, Reginald Denny,  
Ralph Forbes, Edna May Oliver

"IT'S LOVE I'M AFTER"

Bette Davis,  
Olivia De Havilland, Eric Blore

"PYGMALION"

Wendy Hiller

"GONE WITH THE WIND"

Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable,  
Olivia De Havilland

"INTERMEZZO"

Ingrid Bergman

"THE FIRST OF FEW"

David Niven



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