

## OUR COVER BOY

**R**EPORT to Regimental Depot Immediately — Adjutant.” That cable arrived one day in 1939 at the Goldwyn lot. It was addressed to actor David Niven, and had been sent by his brother Max in Scotland. There was nothing for the studio to do but to release him to the British Army. Not until six years later did Sam Goldwyn discover that the whole thing had been a Niven plot. David had instructed his brother to send this seemingly official message, so that his enlistment in the army could be accomplished with a minimum of red tape and delay.

David Niven's military career contributed only one group of experiences in his active world. His life reads better than most screen adventures. As one studiomaniac remarked: "David, they could make a picture of your life, and star Errol Flynn." He has been a world traveler and adventurer . . . the hard way.

Niven came to this country via Canada from England. His first job was that of a lumberman at 16 cents an hour. Later came articles on Canadian fox hunting. Then there was a depressing little scene in New York where Niven delivered the laundry bundles for his own Chinese laundryman. Next came a bit of winetasting for a London firm in New York. After that, and to add a pinch of extra drama, Niven taught some Cuban revolutionists all about machine guns. He departed hurriedly one unhealthy day, which was also pay-day.

In the next act, we find David Niven on a Japanese freighter, the only one at hand, and bound for San Francisco. Once in the Golden West, he wended his way easily into Scriptland. Here he stayed until his enlistment.

His actual entrance into Hollywood and the movies wasn't a planned or organized affair, however. Niven wasn't jerking sodas, nor was he loitering about Hollywood High when a talent scout happened by. He continued in his usual unorthodox manner. He went aboard the *H.M.S. Norfolk*, ran into some friends, and when the ship slipped anchor off Santa Barbara, David was among those present. Being a naval ship, it was important that the *Norfolk* get rid of its extra passenger, so the first ship that was contacted received Mr. Niven. This happened to



be the *Bounty*, MGM flagship, at sea complete with Charles Laughton, Clark Gable, and Frank Lloyd, director. Trips to the studios began shortly after, and within a fairly reasonable time, David Niven was getting his foothold in the acting business.



NIVEN IS BACK in Hollywood now after six years of war. He isn't talkative about what happened to him during that dark period. He says his outlook has changed some. Even the gayest and most lighthearted can't participate in a ghastly war without some mark being left. The fight with the Nazis has made David Niven conscious of other things than the drama pages.

Army life in England was full and awfully close to reality. Niven saw to that. He first served with the British Army, then joined up with the Commandos. After that came three years with the highly secret Phantom Reconnaissance Regiment. Finally, there was the Normandy beachhead, France, Belgium, and Germany. In August, 1945, he was demobilized, a full colonel with many decorations.

Our Cover Boy's first civilian role in Hollywood is a gay one. He is costarred with Loretta Young in Paramount's "The Perfect Marriage." This smart comedy (a Hal Wallis production) brings out all the natural sociability and charm of Niven. His native wit and interest in life flow both on and off the set. At Paramount, he is already filling the atmosphere with his humor, in dialects of many types and colors. Furthermore, he is once again the most sought-after house guest. Niven is comfortable to have around.

The rest of the David Niven family still remains in England. Mrs. Niven and the two youngsters are awaiting their turn to come to California. Niven is anxious to have his family share in the orange juice and native vitamins of the Great Southwest. Mrs. Niven, incidentally, was a former WAAF who fell into the same trench with David during a nasty air raid back in 1940 not far from Canterbury. They were married ten days later.

And so, as our ex-Colonel on the cover dips his fingers once again into the grease paint, the ex-buck sergeant on this end of the typewriter climbs gaily back into his Levi's, and rejoins the Scripters.

—E. Maxwell