



CLARK GABLE as Rhett Butler
There was never any doubt about him

IT took Margaret Mitchell seven years to write her marathon novel "Gone with the Wind"; it took David O. Selznick two years to find a girl to play Scarlett O'Hara and then three years to make the film.

In those five years, millions of words of publicity were flashed round the world until "Gone with the Wind" had become the most thoroughly publicised film ever made in Hollywood, until the

technicoloured action). Many of them will know by heart the love story of Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler.

The Story Begins

The story of the filming of "Gone with the Wind" begins when Selznick received from his story editor in New York a telegram: "We have just air-mailed detailed synopsis of 'Gone with the Wind' by Margaret Mitchell, also copy of book. I beg, urge, coax and plead with you to read this at once. I know that after you read the book you will drop everything and buy it."

Selznick read the synopsis, but with the fate of "So Red the Rose" in mind,

successful plays ("The Silver Cord," "Yellow Jack," "Dodsworth") into successful pictures. After reading once through "Gone with the Wind," Howard arrived in Hollywood in 1937, and with Selznick and George Cukor (to supply the director's angle) immediately settled down and wrote a preliminary script.

This contained 30,000 words and would have taken five and a half hours to run if it had ever been filmed. Another was written. Then Selznick himself made another, and the following year nine different script writers had a finger in the "Gone with the Wind" pie, including such famous writers as John Van Druten and Ben Hecht. But next to Sydney Howard's work, the bulk of the final script was done by Selznick.

Not Anxious to Finish

Having made a serious start, Selznick suddenly decided that he was in no hurry to complete the job, reasoning that the novel was still too fresh in most people's minds, and that they would be hypercritical of even the best film version.

Moreover, he still had no one to play Scarlett O'Hara. And so for two years, to the accompaniment of much ballyhoo and beating of drums, he searched for a

heroine. Polls were held all over the U.S., talent scouts combed the country, a play was even written about the search.

No One but Gable

But if there was almost complete lack of unanimity over Scarlett O'Hara, one thing was apparently firmly fixed in picturegoers' minds—the man to play Rhett Butler was Clark Gable, and no one else would do. Accordingly Selznick had to make a bargain with M.G.M., to whom Gable was under contract. The terms arranged were: First, M.G.M. to have exclusive distribution rights for "Gone with the Wind" and a good-sized share of the profits; second, M.G.M. to finance the film to the extent of 1,250,000 dollars; and third, Gable to start work for Selznick in February, 1939, and not to be kept beyond a reasonable time.

This settled, the next thing was to find Scarlett O'Hara. By a remarkable piece of luck for the publicity-writers, the discovery happened to coincide with the first shots filmed of "Gone with the Wind," the burning of the city of Atlanta. This was shot on a back lot of Selznick Studios which for years had been piled up with old sets. The sets were filled



HAPPY DAYS AT TARA: The young Scarlett (Vivien Leigh) and her father, Gerald O'Hara (Thomas Mitchell)

ability of an English actress to play Scarlett had apparently become more important to millions of Americans than any "Lease-and-Land bill ever put through Congress"; until even in New Zealand there are thousands of picturegoers who have made it a main topic of conversation.

They will know, in all probability, that it cost 3,850,000 dollars to produce, more than any other film except "Ben Hur" (4,500,000 dollars) and "Hell's Angels" (4,000,000 dollars). They will know that it is one of the longest pictures ever made (three and a-quarter hours of

he was in no mood to rush in and pay 50,000 dollars for another Civil War book. When a business associate offered to buy the book on his own, Selznick said "I'll be damned if you do," and closed the deal. Then he took the book on an ocean voyage to Honolulu to see what he had bought. It required a week's concentrated reading to finish, and the first thing he realised was the impossibility of making a film of usual length.

First job was to reduce the 1,037 page novel to a workable script. Selznick went to the late Sydney Howard, one of the ablest writers ever to turn his own suc-



PASSION by Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler (Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable)