

QUEEN OF HEARTS, MISTRESS OF THE SEAS

When Young Gallants Died for the Aging Elizabeth, Were They Serving Woman or Ruler? Was She Seeking England's Good or to Gratify Her Own Powerful Whims? ... Screen Gives the Answer in "Fire Over England"; A Sequel to "The Private Life of Henry VIII"

WHAT was Queen Elizabeth's strange hold over the hot-blooded, adventure-loving youth of her day?

Did the Virgin Queen let them adore her out of feminine whim, or to mask shrewd policies of state?

Was it a need of her nature to have them protest their devotion—even to death? And was her coquetry merely an instrument whereby to force the young men to death-defying deeds that older heads would shrink from?

Queen Elizabeth's reign is strewn with incredible loyalties by stripplings who revered her. Boys in their teens were fascinated by this woman, and henceforth dedicated their lives to her. She had her favorites, and they were replaced with the years. But there was always a generation of young men anxious for the privilege of laying down their lives for her.

A smile from her, a word of praise, and they were her slaves. Men like Drake, Hawkins, and Frobisher, scoured the Spanish Main to bring back rich frigates and golden galleons in their free-booting expeditions. They knew that if they mischanced and were captured, the worst, most brutal tortures ever conceived awaited them. They took the risk because of their burning desire to deserve well of Queen Bess. And by their doughty sea deeds they won the skill which made them admirals ready to attack the large fleet of the Armada.

It was this aspect in the Queen's character, no less than the colorful aspect of the whole Elizabethan era, that has now persuaded Alexander Korda to devote his most ambitious costume film produced for him by Erich Pommer, to this liveliest of all rulers. Good Queen Bess, he reasoned, was a worthy successor to Henry VIII, whose daughter she was. The film is "Fire Over England," with Flora Robson as Queen Elizabeth—an aging woman, but still capable of calling forth the utmost devotion from the gallants in her court.

There was no doubt that Elizabeth had an eye for comely youth. The way to glory and wealth lay in being praised by her. But once they were noticed by her, they had to deserve her faith. Otherwise, the Tower of London awaited them for a single blunder.

He Shook a Lively Leg

The haughty Queen saw a lad, Christopher Hatton, and liked the way he disported himself in dancing. Forthwith, titles were heaped on him. He became Lord Chancellor, was rewarded with land, and became a power over the Queen.

Then, tiring, she transferred her



Queen Elizabeth... a Contemporary Portrait

favours on Robert Dudley. He even presumed to hope she would marry him, and plotted and intrigued in this direction. He was a dashing young fellow who knew how to wear his gay silks or bright armor with an air, turn a pretty phrase, or resent an insult. He was equally at home in the ballroom, the boudoir, the tilt-yard, and the hunting field. Common gossip linked their names together as lovers, and the affair became the greatest scandal of the times. Dudley, become Lord Robert, had an insatiable ambition to be the first man in England. It is said that many of the bitterest intrigues at Court and the many efforts expended to getting Elizabeth married, rose from the desire of his rivals to end

The court of Queen Elizabeth, as Mr. Pommer sets out to show in his

"Fire Over England," was a man's court, and every man was out for himself. They were anxious to dazzle the impressionable Queen, whose throne was surrounded by a bewildering maze of waving plumes, perfumed beards, jeweled swords and gaudy-colored hose.

These young men wanted power, command over ships and soldiers, the right to earn her gratitude by their exploits on the field. They paid her extravagant compliments which she swallowed. They played on her feminine weakness. But always behind the woman was the Queen, who knew how to exact loyalty, devotion, and sacrifice.

Raleigh's Gesture

The gesture that worked was always sure to make a man powerful at Court. "Everyone knows the story



Raymond Massey As Phillip of Spain

Virginia. Then disgrace befell him, and another favorite took his place.

Sir Francis Drake, the English admiral, also owed his favor to the Queen. At twenty he was already a freebooter, having obtained a regular privateering commission from Queen Elizabeth. He inflicted much damage to shipping and towns along the Spanish Main, brought back booty, and presented it to his Queen. She knighted him. He was the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe. On hearing that the Spaniards were building an Armada, designed for England, he went to Lisbon with a fleet of thirty sail, then penetrated the bay of Cadiz and burnt upwards of ten thousand tons of shipping—the feat which he humorously called "singing the King of Spain's beard." He was one of the bravest of Elizabeth's young men, and managed never to fall out of favor.

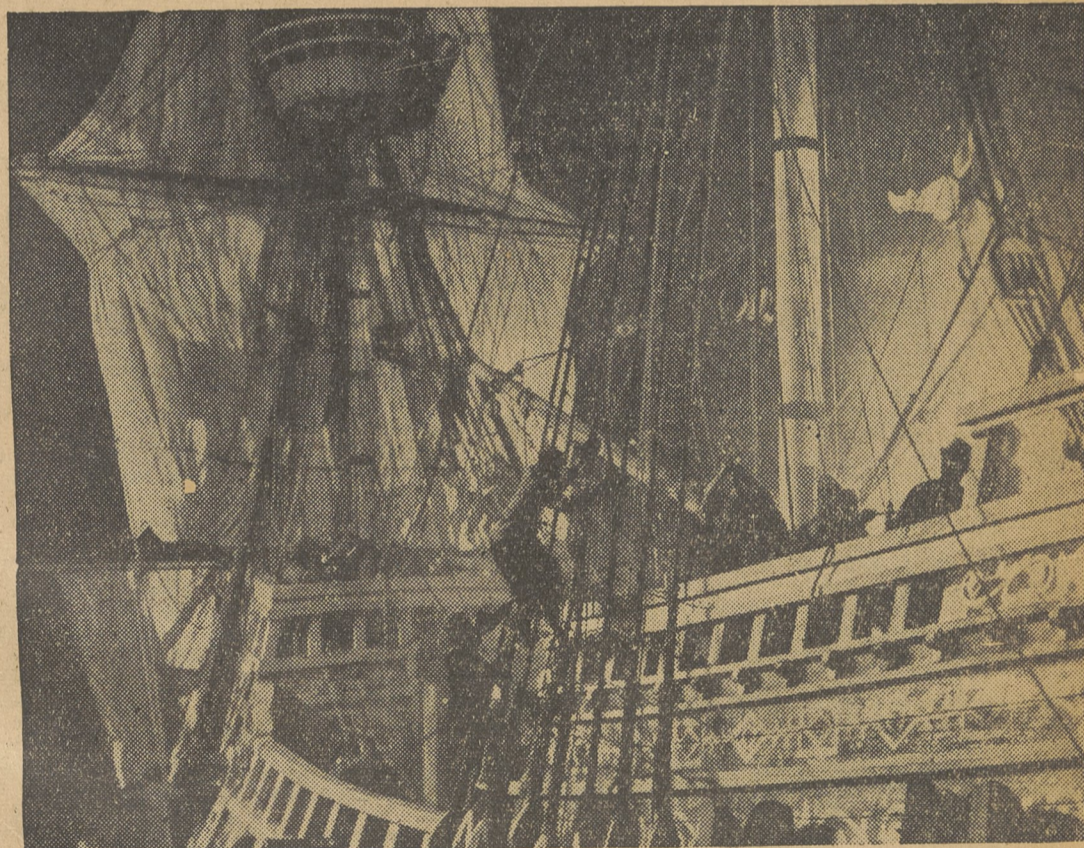
Most important of her favorites, at Devereux, Earl of Essex. The Queen and he were never apart. She was fifty-three and he was not yet twenty. Within ten years, he rose to be the power in the land second only to her.

The affairs of State went on in a fandango of sighs, ecstasies, and protestations." He adds that "she eagerly absorbed the elaborate adorations of her lovers, and, in the same instant, by a final stroke of luck and cunning, converted them—like everything else she had anything to do with—into a paying concern."

She was a great ruler, and it is no wonder that countless books have been written to attempt to explain her. She could be stern, shrewd, suspicious, and the next instant posture and coquette like any light-headed girl just feeling her oats with men.

The Great Armada

A lover of spectacle, of the massing of great forces, Erich Pommer has in the drama of the Armada a superb subject for his powers. It represents the supreme duel for power between England and Spain. King Philip of Spain finally wakes up to the fact that unless he clips the wings of England, she will continue to plunder his proud ships. He spends 3,800,000 ducats to outfit the Armada. All England awaits the oncoming of the 131 vessels. If Spain should



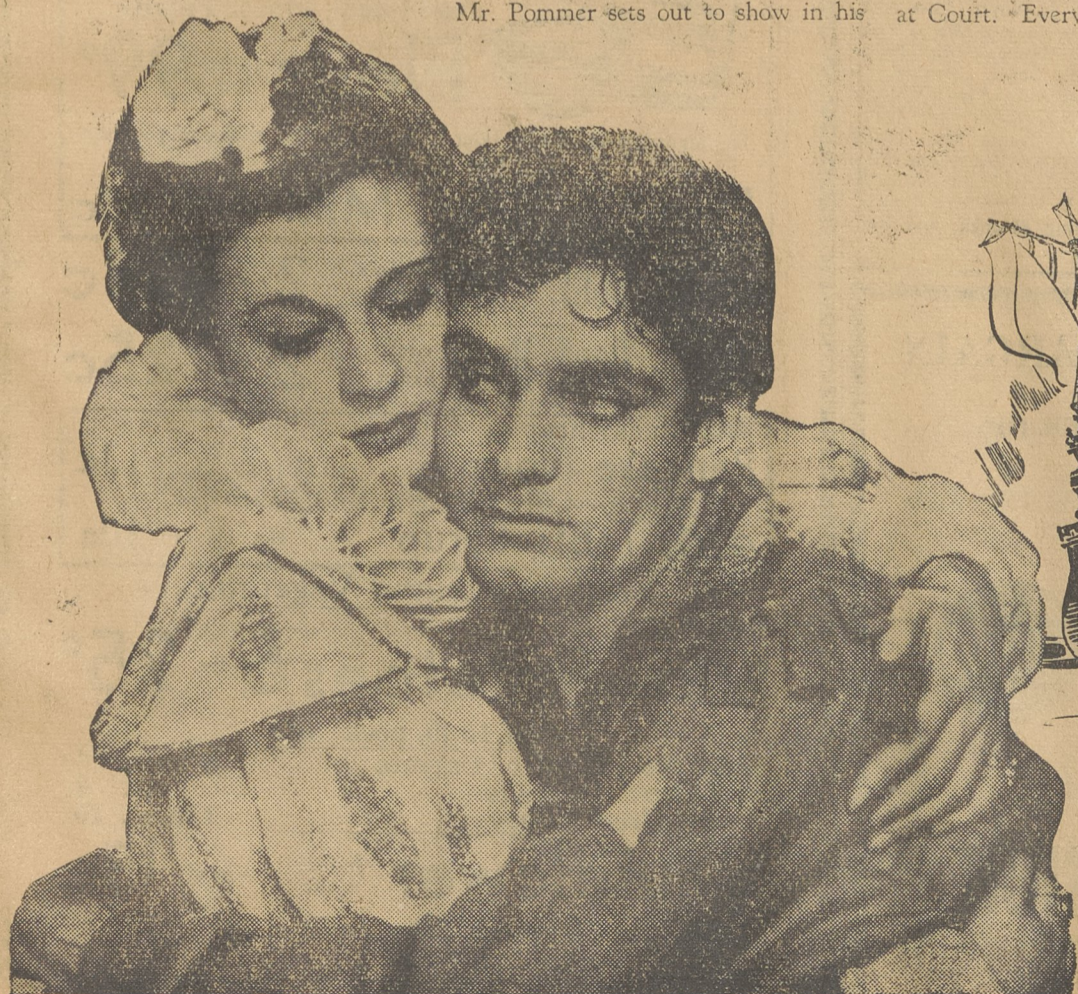
Destruction of the Spanish Armada... Scene from "Fire Over England"

conquer, England would become a mere vassal. Elizabeth would become a prisoner; perhaps her life would be forfeit.

A wind scattered the mighty fleet, pursued by the English. Fire ships spread havoc in the running fight of ten days up the Channel. The English boats were lighter, their commanders had greater sea skill. The Spanish ships were bulky and antiquated for the new style of sea fighting.

The Spaniards cut loose and sought safety by sailing north, in the hope of making west and then tacking back to Spain. Only half of the fleet ever returned to Spain. The rest perished, and their crews, landing on the coasts of Scotland and Ireland, were put to the sword.

It was Spain's last gesture as a world power. After that was the decline, slow but sure.



Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier in a Love Scene from "Fire Over England"



of Raleigh who threw his mantle on the ground to help the Queen walk dry-shod over a puddle. His tall and handsome person, his caressing manners and quick wit pleased the Queen, who showered rewards on him. He was knighted, lands were transferred to him, and he received grants permitting him to colonize

But he, too, fell with a crash into disgrace, because he believed he could sway the Queen and command her. The end of her reign, was Robert According to Lytton Strachey in his "Elizabeth and Essex," men felt, when they came near her, "that they were in a superhuman presence. No reverence was too great for such a di-