

# Shakespeare parted his lovers and tragedy ensued so Vivien is following HER Romeo

## No SWEET SORROW FOR THIS JULIET

Across the Seas to Brave Adventure and Even Death Go the Modern Romeo and Juliet Together!

By Jeanette Smits

THIS is the story of a heartsick but resigned Juliet who was transformed by a scrap of paper into a resolute Scarlett O'Hara, determined to risk bombs and bullets at her sweetheart's side rather than suffer the anguish of parting from him—

The story of America's best-known young actress, who read a cablegram from England and decided in the twinkling of an eye to renounce her meteoric career so that she might go overseas with her future husband and serve her country in war-time—

The story behind Vivien Leigh's recent decision, which startled even blasé Broadway and sent Hollywoodites scurrying around, seeking possible motives other than the simple, powerful one of a love that rose to heights in a crisis and triumphed over both ambition and fear.

Vivien, who is both Juliet and Scarlett in real life as well as professionally, created a sensation when she suddenly announced her plan to throw her theatrical future overboard and accompany Laurence Olivier, her Romeo, to England on an undivulged war mission.

For the beautiful, slim-waisted star with the stormy grey-green eyes and the chestnut hair was at the pinnacle of her fame. In the two short years since her arrival in this country, she had progressed from triumph to triumph—starting with the coveted role of Scarlett O'Hara and winding up as the tender, tragic Juliet in the Shakespearean classic with her sweetheart as co-star and producer.

Fighting against the prejudice of countless movie fans against the importation of an English girl to play the Southern belle in the most talked-of picture of this decade, she had made them like her and cry for more. She'd had her delicate features displayed in newspapers and magazines the length and breadth of the land and her gowns eagerly copied by thousands of admiring girls and women.

At the very moment when she made her dramatic announcement, she was enjoying a distinction to which even the most ambitious actress wouldn't dare aspire.

She was appearing simultaneously on



Broadway's Loss Will Be the 'Tommys' Gain if Vivien and 'Larry' Entertain the Troops at the Front.

Broadway in three movies and one stage play. While she listened to the impassioned wooing of Romeo-Olivier on the stage of the 51st Street Theatre, her screen image was gazing soulfully into the eyes of Robert Taylor, in "Waterloo Bridge," across the street at the Capitol. Down the street was the monumental G. W. T. W. and a few blocks away, "21 Days Together," a picture she made with Olivier in England before they became famous.

And while the critics were lukewarm toward the Leigh-Olivier interpretation of "Romeo and Juliet" (she herself said the notices "couldn't be worse"), the public responded enthusiastically. Hordes of fans waited for hours at the stage door, hoping for an autograph—or at least a glimpse of the petite Miss Leigh.

Her Hollywood future was a dazzling prospect, too. David Selznick, to whom she was under long-term contract, had great plans for her when she returned to the Coast in the fall. In addition,

Even Such a Catastrophe as a War Couldn't Separate Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier, Who, Shown Above in a Romantic Scene from Their Stage Production of "Romeo and Juliet," Refuse to Emulate in Real Life the Tragedy of Shakespeare's Lovers Who Were Parted—Only to Die!

Vivien had visions of herself interspersing her screen activities with occasional reversion to her first love—the stage. As she said jubilantly, when "Romeo and Juliet" played Chicago:

"I'd like to do a series of Shakespearean heroines."

She dreamed of appearing in several of the Bard's most colorful and exciting feminine roles—as fateful, fascinating Cleopatra, for instance, in "Antony and Cleopatra," and as capricious Rosalind in "As You Like It." Lady Macbeth, however, left her cold—she and Olivier decided she wasn't old enough for the part.

Vivien—and Olivier, too, only a few short months ago—thought American audiences would be responsive to a sort of permanent Shakespearean repertory

theatre, in which half a dozen of the plays would be offered in rotation. This could be arranged, said the slender young actress, to coincide with rather than interfere with her movie-making work.

"In fact," she explained, "it couldn't help but benefit acting in America if motion pictures and stage productions were both centered in the same city."

Without question, Vivien could have gone on triumphantly to even greater heights, basking in the warmth of her popularity and enjoying the very lucrative rewards of her labors.

But—with one sweeping gesture she knocked over the whole carefully-built edifice and sent it toppling into ruins. And an innocent-looking cablegram was the cause of it all.

The cablegram came from Alfred Duff Cooper, head of the British Ministry of Information, and it was addressed—not to Miss Leigh but to the darkly handsome Mr. Olivier. It asked that he hold himself in readiness to go to London, where he would be assigned to an unspecified war mission.

Olivier wasted no time in responding. Still in the tights and velvet jacket of his Romeo role, he issued an announcement that the play would close in a week—and he would book passage on the first boat available for England.

"There's nothing heroic about it," he protested. "It was just a question of volunteering for war duty and being accepted."

No one was greatly surprised at his action. True, he had, like his partner-in-love-and-theatre, reached a peak in his career. He had scored hits in such pictures as "Wuthering Heights" and "Rebecca" and achieved the status of a native idol in "No Time for Comedy" and "Romeo and Juliet."

But in forsaking a promising career to risk his life in the service of his country, he was only doing what other imported actors had done, even earlier in the game. Charles Boyer was one. He volunteered, was accepted, and then sent back to this country on the theory that he'd be of more value to France here than in the trenches.

Besides, it had been known ever since the beginning of the latest crucial period in the war that the stalwart Olivier yearned to do his bit for his beloved England. When the show opened its tour in San Francisco, he registered with the British Consulate and asked to be called when he was needed.

But with Vivien, it was different. She threw a bombshell when she suddenly announced that she, too, was going overseas along with her Romeo, to brave whatever dangers he faced and to assist in whatever way she could.

"The war has to be won, doesn't it?" she said resolutely. "And we feel it is up to us to help as best we can. I hope we will be asked to entertain troops at the front. We'd both like to do that."

Though she mentioned her six-year-old child, Suzanne, who is "somewhere in England," she said not one word about the love for Olivier which, in addition to her patriotism, prompted her to make the decision.

Nor did she reveal, for publication, an important fact which friends and associates swear to be true—

That up to the time the fateful cablegram arrived, definitely ordering her sweetheart to be ready for service, she hadn't made up her mind to accompany him into the maelstrom of war!

For weeks, pretty Miss Leigh, who should have been the happiest young actress in America, lived under a dreadful shadow—the shadow of impending separation from the man she loved.

Backstage visitors found her moody, distraught, drooping and willowy as the youthful Juliet she played. And some of them suspected that perhaps a measure of the tears she shed on the stage were real.

"One's personal life can hardly be of importance," she told one interviewer. "The troubles abroad so completely overshadow anything we personally can do..."

And as she went on to talk of her plans, she added, despondently, "Who, however, actually knows what's going to happen?"

Because she dislikes speaking of her private life, particularly her love for Olivier, she didn't mention what must have been on her mind—visions of her "Larry," thousands of miles away, braving death, perhaps to be parted from her forever even before their marriage could take place, which won't be until next fall, when their divorces from their respective mates become final.

But the role of Juliet, which she played so appealingly on the stage, was not to her liking.

Juliet, who spoke the immortal line, "Parting is such sweet sorrow," wept over her banished Romeo—but apparently never thought of accompanying him in his exile (which would, of course, have ended the play in the middle of the second act)!

Vivien could be a wistful, clinging-vine Juliet but she could be a Scarlett O'Hara, too. Scarlett was made of sterner stuff. She'd never, if she could possibly help it, permit circumstances to part her from the man of her choice.

And little Miss Leigh, herself, had never done so before. At the outset of their love, she was married—and so was he. Eventually, both mates agreed to a divorce and the way was smoothed for a happy culmination of the romance. Two years ago, Olivier was forced to leave Vivien behind in England, coming to America to fulfill a Hollywood contract. Undaunted, she caught a plane and flew 6,000 miles to join him. Throughout the making of "Gone With the Wind," the romance continued, though they were warned it might be damaging to Miss Leigh's budding career (which happily turned out to be a false prediction).

Now, after triumphing over one obstacle after another, was she going to let even such a stupendous thing as the war block their final happiness—together?

No one will ever know exactly what happened, but a few hours after the cablegram arrived, Miss Leigh suddenly became very busy. She started to see what arrangements could be made about her Hollywood contract—called off appointments for pictures and interviews which had been made with a view to future stage and screen activities—and excitedly discussed details of the sailing with Romeo-Olivier.

And though she realized the perils she had willingly chosen to encounter, her piquant features were aglow with happiness.

A scrap of paper had transformed Juliet into Scarlett O'Hara—and was Vivien Leigh DELIGHTED!

Now, after triumphing over one obstacle after another, was she going to let even such a stupendous thing as the war block their final happiness—together?

No one will ever know exactly what happened, but a few hours after the cablegram arrived, Miss Leigh suddenly became very busy. She started to see what arrangements could be made about her Hollywood contract—called off appointments for pictures and interviews which had been made with a view to future stage and screen activities—and excitedly discussed details of the sailing with Romeo-Olivier.

And though she realized the perils she had willingly chosen to encounter, her piquant features were aglow with happiness.

A scrap of paper had transformed Juliet into Scarlett O'Hara—and was Vivien Leigh DELIGHTED!