

From 1935...



At least de Havilland had been the female lead in three pictures by the time *Captain Blood* came along. Flynn had only been a bit player in Burbank up to now, but he *had* spent years bluffing his way through jobs and did it again now. "We would sit very quietly in our canvas chairs, saying very little to each other," said Livvie of their experience on the soundstages. Here Guy Kibbee, playing Hagthorpe (the role for which Flynn originally had tested), mugs for the uncomfortable pair during a break on Stage 8. (John McElwee Collection)

lived under the rule of a smothering parent. So the cultured girl from Saratoga falls for the Australian roustabout, and Flynn is knocked loopy as well. He has had many women and he knows how to get what he wants; when a woman has had many men, the seducing is mutual. In Flynn's experience, a proposition is made by one or the other, usually by her, and they retire to the nearest bed or quiet corner. This is different, because Olivia gives the impression she has *not* been around, and Flynn doesn't know what to do. She will open up for short stretches and flirt with him, but always she will back off and he is forced to stammer; worse, he is reduced to politeness!

To Flynn, de Havilland is a puzzle. She is wide-eyed, with a radiant smile, and her handshake is firm, like a

man's. She blushes easily, and it's utterly charming when she does so. Her hair is baby fine and always a mess under a scarf when she arrives in the morning. She brushes her teeth obsessively, after she eats anything, and sometimes when she eats nothing. She sketches quietly as she waits for her calls. She can withdraw as she sits there and suddenly be lost over the horizon, a hundred miles away. The way her eyes get sometimes, and the way she withdraws sometimes, it's as if she has been off to the wars, and is now back home living with dark remembrances. The ol' Flynn charm doesn't work, and he simply finds her "distant." She is a closed book.

Livvie has a secret that Flynn doesn't know; one that takes her years to figure out herself. As she puts it in retro-

spect: "I have a fear of being unloved, or of believing I'm loved and finding out that I'm not." She traces it back to her father's move with the maid when Livvie and Joanie were infants. "It has profoundly affected my life."¹⁷ Especially now, when she is knocked off her pins by Errol, the second male of the species, after Peter, to have such an effect on her, this part of her psyche will *protect* and keep a guy with such potential power over her at arm's length.

As a result, Flynn is alone at Warner Brothers, a newly minted leading man with no friends, no advisors except Damita—and there are already cracks in that relationship. Now that he has landed the role of Blood, his wife (he can't believe he has been cursed with a wife!) has grown unpleasant, short-tempered, and often just plain angry. He has no idea what this is about. He thinks back to his mother and her similar moods. Beatings. Recriminations. Vague awareness of other men about, as if to punish the child and break up the family with extramarital sex.

Livvie sees the intimidating little French diva around, casting dark-eyed daggers. Damita is making a picture on another soundstage, so she has ready access. The youngster backs away. She fails to understand what goes on, but knows on instinct not to become involved. It seems she has walked in on adults speaking a different language, looking past her, over her head. She goes home to the Chateau des Fleurs and tells Mother about the days as they go by.

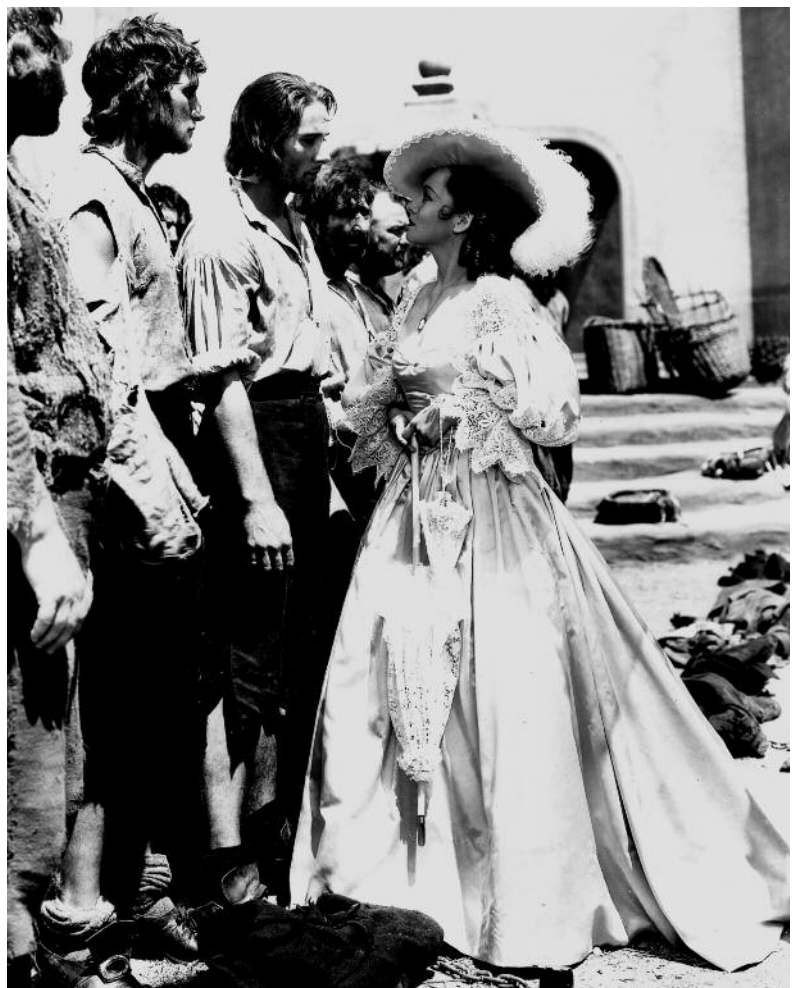
Both stars are told to fix their teeth—Livvie prior to the first day of shooting, and Flynn a couple of weeks in. It is an interesting exercise to watch Flynn's teeth in various scenes, mostly straight and white, but once in a while discolored and broken. Over the years, he has acquired the habit of curling his lips over his teeth to hide them. He can't quite get used to his new choppers and has to be encouraged to show his now-pearly whites.

The studio is in his mouth and in his head—a head that is spinning, trying to memorize his lines, learning how to hit his marks and how to react to the dialogue of others. He must deal with lights everywhere, relentless, hot lights. And the sweat

they produce, sopping sweat that drenches his costumes. The high-pitched Curtiz produces sweat as well. Studio executives watch from behind the lights, staring, judging. "I worked as hard as I knew how," says an earnest Flynn, who learns to keep his head buried in his script.¹⁸ "We would sit very quietly in our canvas chairs, saying very little to each other," Livvie will remember years later.¹⁹

The shoot proceeds roughly in continuity, beginning in early August 1935, with a petrified Flynn, the guy who can talk his way out of any jam, finally meeting his match on a Warner Bros. soundstage under the direction of Curtiz. Much is shot that later must be reshot because of the paralysis of the star.

The first meeting of Arabella Bishop and Peter Blood in the slave market, wherein she purchases him to spite her uncle, was shot on the old Prospect Avenue Vitagraph backlot on a blazing August day, but Wallis disliked the results and ordered a reshoot. Flynn failed to convey the coldness of a slave, and de Havilland displayed none of the impetuosity required of the moment. The reshoot was blocked with Flynn pulled away from the other prisoners so he and Livvie could play their introductory scene without dozens of extras close by.



From 1936...



Hair and makeup tests are never fun for the talent. Here 19-year-old Livvie tries on her “older self” as the mistress of Napoleon in *Anthony Adverse*. Crew members are routinely misspelling her name, even after *Captain Blood*. (John McElwee Collection)

similarities are rising to the surface now, after the release of *Captain Blood*, when Flynn doesn’t have to try so hard to please, doesn’t have to work so damn hard, because he finds work to be loathsome, and he can enjoy his time away from his oppressors, namely the Boss and his henchman, Mike Curtiz.

So Flynn writes his book and wrestles with his hellcat bride in the sack—and bickers with her everywhere else—while Olivia de Havilland is immersed in a different kind of passionate opportunity. The film is *Anthony Adverse*, based on the immensely popular 1933 historical novel by Hervey Allen that had been written in brooding Victor Hugo style—noble child is orphaned and grows up poor, only to learn of his lineage later in life, meet his true love, part from her, suffer the torments of the damned, and then

find her again years later—only to learn that the love is doomed. Livvie is cast opposite popular 38-year-old leading man Fredric March, who is a 1932 Academy Award Winner and yet no Errol Flynn when it comes to adventure pictures. In a role Flynn was born to play—virile young man with a chip on his shoulder—the middle-aged March stumbles along, while Livvie’s role is truly minor. She will receive second billing, but show up only sporadically, at first to win Anthony’s heart and then later to break it when he learns that she has become the mistress of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The role of a fallen woman forced by circumstances and loneliness into such a sordid life is ill-suited to a 19 year old, and between the miscast hero and the miscast heroine, *Anthony Adverse* will not stand the test of time. It does, however, prove to be a splendid training ground for a young actress, working with Academy Award-winning leading man March and director Mervyn LeRoy, veteran of *Little Caesar*, *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, and *Gold Diggers of 1933*. LeRoy is an actor’s director, and Olivia likes him. March is a lecherous wolf of the highest order, which she learns to appreciate not at all—another kind of training ground for a starlet.

Livvie is seen by the executives as a decent find at \$250 a week, who plays far more regal in makeup than her years. Soon after she finishes *Anthony Adverse*, Wallis wires Warner: “Some weeks ago Olivia de Havilland contacted us, as you know, and talked about an adjustment. I think it would be a very wise move at this time to call her in and make an adjustment with her. A year of her contract is already passed, and if we wait too long it is going to be difficult to make a deal.”²⁸

J.L. proposes a set of numbers for de Havilland: \$450 a week for the first year, bumped to 550, then 850, 1,000, 1,400, 1,750, and finally 2,250. The Boss knows he’s low balling, and if the kid goes for it, fine. If not, no harm done. On all star contracts, each year the talent works 40 weeks, with 12 weeks unpaid on layoff.

Then Livvie pulls a surprise and hires professional actors’ reps of the Ivan Kahn Agency as her mouthpiece, hearing of Kahn from her first leading man, Joe E. Brown.

This 19-year-old plays rough. On March 28 Ivan Kahn rejects J.L.'s salary numbers and presents the studio with a counteroffer. She will agree to a five-year contract starting at \$600, a six-year deal starting at \$750, or a seven-year deal that starts at \$1,000 a week and ends at \$4,000 in the seventh year. Those are numbers that clear the sinuses of Jack Warner and Hal Wallis in an instant.

Studio legal head R. J. Obringer presents J.L. with Kahn's salary proposal. The Boss is used to stealing the lunches of "movie stars" on these contracts, but dishy little de Havilland has a conniving head on those pretty shoulders. J.L. sits in his office, picks up a pencil, and scribbles on a notepad a new set of numbers: 500 750 1000 1250 1500 2000 2500. Nice round numbers.^{FN}

Ivan Kahn advises Livvie to take the deal. She is learning how to play the contract game and also learning hard

truths about the picture business, including the truth about Errol Flynn pictures, in the bargain becoming a self-professed Hollywood snob. Flynn has no pedigree as an actor; therefore his pictures earn no respect from people in the know at Warner Bros., and elsewhere. One features writer says of the way Flynn had backed into pictures, "Flynn is far, far from the conventional actor. He has none of the mannerisms, ideas, ideals, aims, thoughts and looks of the average actor. He's an accident to the acting profession, pure and simple and Hollywood resents it."²⁹

Flynn himself shows a growing lack of appreciation for the regimentation of his studio. He adopts a nonchalance that J.L. finds alarming. "It's a job," says Flynn with a shrug. "First you get them and then you lose them."³⁰

In the 1940s de Havilland will look back on this period and say with a sigh, "I most painfully grew up."^{FN}

Lights can heat up the set ten degrees in five minutes, so they're killed for rehearsal as Luis Alberni stands on an apple box to deliver his lines to Fredric March and Olivia de Havilland during production of *Anthony Adverse*. Mervyn LeRoy slumps in his director's chair to watch; Director of Photography Tony Gaudio (in trademark driving cap) and crew look on gangster-like from the other side of the camera.

