

ELIZABETH TAYLOR knows a lot about men—but apparently she still has much to learn about Richard Burton.

Otherwise, she would not have permitted their relationship to become a headline affair. She would have enjoyed the attention shown her by the man whom many call "the most exciting personality in show business." But she would not have expected it to be anything more than a temporary romance.

Many beautiful women have flitted through Burton's life, but as an old friend of his says:

"Nothing really counts with Dick except his marriage and his work. He adores his wife Sybil and their daughters, Katherine, 4½, and Jessica, 2½. And you should see how the little girls love him and his impudent sense of play. He is so amazingly adept with them, much more so than most men are. Why, he even bathes and feeds them."

People who know Burton well are sure he never made any false promises to Elizabeth. They point out that one of his dominant characteristics is a blunt, almost cruel, honesty.

He is even honest about his weakness for women. "The instant I see a lovely girl, I start telling her the nicest possible things, meaning to please her," Burton has said.

Until his misadventure with Elizabeth in Rome, none of his momentary romances has had a serious effect on his family life.

The Burton-Taylor scandal broke because Elizabeth is an exceedingly self-indulgent and strong-willed woman who never before had encountered a man who was unattainable to her. And never before had Richard become involved with a woman who reacted so violently when he displeased her. Her anger culminated in stretcher junkets to a clinic, where her hysterical didoes were variously reported as resulting from exhaustion, food poisoning, and an injured nose.

The difficulties were compounded when these events threatened the production of "Cleopatra," the movie that brought Richard and Elizabeth together in Rome. More than \$30,000,000 has been invested in the troublesome film, with the very future of the 20th Century-Fox empire at stake.

A Woman to Be Reckoned With

Another factor was that never before had a rival underestimated Sybil Burton, a striking woman of well-bred charm, vivacious humor, and prematurely white hair which is dramatically beautiful against her flawless complexion.

Sybil is a woman to be reckoned with. She is recalled vividly by Bernard Hart, stage manager of "Camelot," the Broadway musical in which Burton starred before going to Rome. "Mrs. Burton never came to the theater much; she was not a stage wife," Hart says. "But when she was there, she didn't fade into the scenery. She was never just 'somebody's wife.'"

The Burton marriage was never conventionally idyllic. But whatever outside problems may have beset it, it was always basically strong.

Until Elizabeth threatened the marriage, Sybil could always dismiss Richard's flirtations with the remark, "He would be just as charming to an eight-year-old girl or an 80-year-old woman."

Sybil Williams met Richard Burton while they were playing in Emlyn Williams' "The Last Days of Dolwyn." Twenty-two-year-old Richard was the juvenile lead. Eighteen-year-old Sybil had a bit part. Five months later, on Feb. 5, 1949—at 8:45 a.m.—they were married.

After a wedding breakfast at a friend's flat, Sybil had to rush off to do a matinee of "Har-

Burton and Liz in tense scene from "Cleopatra," the movie that brought them together in Rome.



The truth about the tempestuous Welshman is: he likes the ladies —his wife most of all



In spite of the much-publicized Roman romance, Burton seemed as devoted as ever to wife Sybil.

vey." Richard and his brother stayed on at the flat to listen to a championship rugby match between Wales and Scotland. She was not a bit disturbed because her husband of a few hours did not escort her to the theater. The matinee was something she had to do. The radio broadcast was, for rugby-mad Richard, something he had to listen to. If she had wanted simply a conventional husband, she would have married someone else.

Sybil likes to tell about her return from the

theater that day. Richard and his brother were slumped in their chairs, close to tears—Wales had lost the game. As Sybil walked into the room, Richard lifted his face from his hands, glared, and demanded, "Well, woman, what do you want?"

What Sybil wanted, has always wanted, and apparently still wants is Richard—with all of his strange contradictions of modesty and a need to be "on stage," his devotion and his shocking errancy.

"She's mad about him," her friends say, as with one voice.

Hollywood, however, was not so mad about Richard when he arrived there in 1952. The blasé film colony is not easily shaken by the eccentricities of actors. But it was taken aback by one Burton peccadillo—his frugality.

He and Sybil horrified the town when they moved from the penthouse a friend had rented for them into a smaller place totally lacking in chic. Soon they also deserted the high-priced Chasen and LaRue restaurants, which had been recommended to them, for a little place where the food was good and the prices modest.

Sun-Bathing for Free

The Burtons were invited to join the expensive clubs where the Hollywood elite swim in heated pools and sun-bathe in the most abbreviated attire. Instead, they chose to bask in the sun while seated on the curb outside Richard's dressing room. A studio executive found them there one day, Richard in rumpled slacks and a T shirt, Sybil in the simplest cotton dress. He was horrified.

This behavior alone would have been enough to give the Burtons a bad name in Hollywood. But there was more. During an interview, Richard called attention to the socks he was wearing and announced that he had "swiped" them from the studio wardrobe department. "They have so many!" he said. Then he added: "I don't spend a penny unless I have to; I'm the meanest man in the world."

Neither statement, of course, is really true. When he feels like it, Burton can be very cavalier about money. And, as many persons know from personal experience, he can be the soul of kindness and generosity.

Last Christmas, he turned down fantastic sums for guest appearances on the Dinah Shore and Perry Como television shows. Instead, he appeared elsewhere to read the work of the late Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas—for which he received no pay.

The stage is Burton's favorite métier. He went into the movies, where the big money lies, only after seeing the best parts on the stage go to actors who had screen credits. He wanted the parts and believed he should have them.

As to Burton's kindness, it can be attested to by an English girl who fell ill while working as a technician in a Hollywood studio. She was well known to all of the town's British colony. But it was Richard who gave her money, visited her regularly, and when she was unconscious, sat beside her quoting Bible verses.

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