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ALEXANDER KORDA
presents

FOUR FEATHERS

IN TECHNICOLOR

Directed by **ZOLTAN KORDA** with
RALPH RICHARDSON • C. AUBREY SMITH
JOHN CLEMENTS • JUNE DUPREZ
Adapted by **R. C. SHERRIFF**
From the novel by **A. E. W. MASON**
Released thru UNITED ARTISTS

Recommended by
Censor for Adults

KING'S, Wellington
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FILM REVIEWS

(continued from previous page)

Richardson plays this part for everything it is worth, but never over-does it. Old Aubrey Smith is there, too, in another of his typically red-white-and-blue roles, but this time there's comedy as well as the grand manner in his performance.

But ultimately, as with nearly every good picture, one returns to the director. Zoltan Korda is more at home on the plains of the Sudan than on the parade-ground at Sandhurst or at table with England's ruling classes. We don't need the publicity boys to tell us that Korda really went to the Sudan to get his pictures; the evidence is there in every scene of sun-baked desert, in every glimpse of dry, cracked water-holes, in every shot of vultures wheeling over a battlefield. The photography—it is all in colour—is so good that you can almost feel the heat in the air. Often the simplest effects are the best: in the silhouette of a black profile surmounted by a blacker mop of hair waiting in the shadows there is all the menace in the world.

This is the fourth time "The Four Feathers" has been made as a film. Producers of the future may well hesitate before they seek to improve on it.

THE BEACHCOMBER

(Universal)

If you wanted to find faults in this film you would have to look for them; and looking for them would be much less fun than looking at Charles Laughton. For Laughton has done it again, with help from his wife, Elsa Lanchester, director Erich Pommer, and author Somerset Maugham. The supporting cast would have crashed the headlines in any picture in which Laughton did not appear. With Laughton in the picture even their excellence fades into anonymity—yes, even the dog, even his flopping spaniel ears and funny spaniel tail.

The first scene: A flabby body face down on verandah boards, under a tropic sun. If you did not know the story came from a book of Maugham's, if you had not been told that the island was in the "Eastern Archipelago," if you had not heard the title, you would still know somehow from the pose, the indolently sprawling legs, the head askew, the flesh flaccid on the planks, that this was Laughton, and that he was a beachcomber, a remittance man, a down-and-out, a scrounger, a patch upon The Flag, a blot upon the Empire's escutcheon. For that is the art of Charles Laughton.

The last scene: You'll be surprised by it, unless you have read Maugham's "Vessel of Wrath." That is what his book is called but, in this country and some others, it has been changed to "The Beachcomber" for the film.

And in between: Tears and laughter, and despair and hope, for the Mynheer, for the missionary-medico, and for Miss Muffitt, as they find that the incorrigible beachcomber on their small island demands attention.

The ending is one of Maugham's most cynical gestures, and does not come so

convincingly from the screen as from his carefully-ordered pages. But the director must have anticipated the danger even if he could not quite avoid it, and he has cut the finale to something very close to the right length.

The Beachcomber's father was a vicar. Miss Muffitt's died of drink. So he became a trouble to his family. She was never even faintly pink.

Elsa Lanchester is the Miss Muffitt, a model of virtue, so concerned with the salvation of the beachcomber. With her brother, she must forever be reforming or forgiving. But Edward Claude Wilson, the beachcomber, has no more wish to be reformed than forgiven. Somerset Maugham did not, however, intend that the prudes should be just plain prim. He wanted them to be unctuous as well as pure, so that we could make fun of them, and show them off against the boozy beachcomber. I think the film does visually as much as he did in print—or even more.



Not four daughters but three sisters: Anita Louise, Bette Davis and Jane Bryan in the Warner Bros. production "The Sisters." Errol Flynn is the man. Whose? We don't know—we haven't seen the picture yet

Between the extremes of virtue and vice is the consul-general or whatever his title is. This is an excellent part, full of the subtlety of seeming contradiction; and everything there was in the part has been brought out.

Yet I can't talk about this film without coming continually back to Laughton. I think I could recall for you every one of his gestures, every astonishing look on his astonishing face: his alcoholic stupidity, his painful sobriety, his witlessness, his cunning, his simplicity, or the twinkle in his eye. But you all know Laughton almost as well as I do. Not quite—you haven't yet seen him as "The Beachcomber." Go to it.

FURY OF THE TROPICS

(Universal)

The fury of the tropics will be as a gentle zephyr compared with the potential fury of the person who pays good money to see this one. The principal scene of the action is a natty little jungle, with a natty little Napoleon-complexed dictator, two girls, one fair and t'other

swarthy, one wheezy optimist, swarms of half-breeds, and what have you?

Best scenes: None that you'd notice.

Best acting: It's all rather like high-school Shakespeare, but Andy Devine thaws out a laugh occasionally.

POISON PEN

(A.B.P.)

Flora Robson's name appears above the title of this one. She is good, but not so impressive as the dozen or so characters lined up by Paul L. Stein to make a convincing display of the effects of scandal-mongering on village life. Sam, you will notice, comes close to perfection as one of the yokels affected by the anonymous letters showered on the village from the poisoned pen of someone the Vicar believes to be insane. The Vicar is right, but it will be a long time before you guess who. "Poison Pen" is an interesting picture. Stein has done for the villagers what Pen Tennyson did for Londoners in "There Ain't No Justice."

There are some faults, mainly in a lack of conviction in the work of the leading players, and partly in the photography, which is generally good but marred here by too much sky in an outdoor shot, there by the omission of a focal point in an interior. But this examination is not intended to decry the film; rather to point out that its many good points earned it a right to a little more polish.

STUNT PILOT

(Monogram)

This is another "Tailspin Tommy" picture, with stunting aeroplanes more or less successfully bolstering up a flimsy story and the superficial acting reserved for such films. It is second rate, but it is not dull, and there is some good aerial photography.

ONE HOUR TO LIVE

(Universal)

Charles Bickford in a story about a crooked Police Commissioner who almost gets away with murder. He's not the only one.