

1857 AND ALL THAT KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES

(20th Century-Fox)

Four things greater than all things are—
Women and Horses and Power and War...

KIPLING, of course, wasn't thinking of Tyrone Power, but if we make that one slight correction the couplet stands as a pretty succinct summary of the box-office recipe for this latest CinemaScope extravaganza. If it proves a good recipe, as here presented by the Anamorphic lens and Stereophonic Sound, then I'm farther from the box-office norm than I thought I was.

The story—a somewhat free and easy adaptation, not of Kipling, but of Talbot Mundy—takes us back to one of those heroic passages in our Imperial history that Hollywood loves so much (they respond so well to Technicolor). It is 1857. Down in the sweating ports of India cases of the new Enfield rifles and their ambiguously greased cartridges are being unloaded for the Sepoys and soldiers of the Queen. Up on the North-West Frontier, mad mullahs and other wallahs are already in-

flaming the populace in the bazaars. In Peshawar, the garrison is sitting on a volcano; but they are stoics, these sahibs. However hot and bothered they may be underneath, on the surface they remain calm. The barracks resound as usual to the regulation bugle-calls, squadrons of lancers wheel and trot, despatch riders come and go, and Highlanders in anamorphic kilts blow lustily on their stereophonic bagpipes. Even the General's daughter thinks nothing of dashing off to town, solo side-saddle, without so much as a hiya to the ayah.

But history is on the march in the hills and the tribesmen of the Pass are flocking to the standard of Khurram Khan, a turbanned trouble-maker with an impeccable, if menacing, accent. Between the sahibs and the threat posed by Khurram Khan stands Captain King (Tyrone Power). He's not King of the Khyber Rifles yet—after all, the darned things are still in their packing-cases down in Karachi or Calcutta. But if Khurram is the pride of Afghanistan, King is the pride of the other 'alf. It is, however, not an unmixed pride. King is a frightfully decent chap, gets on jolly well with his men, even speaks their lingo. He's handsome, too, and he hasn't been a day in the mess before the General's daughter is making Khy-

ber passes at him. But, to let you into the dark secret—though a chap hates to say this kind of thing about a chap—he's not quite pukka. It turns out that he's, as you might say (if you follow me), er, *chichi*. In fact, he's a half-Afghan, or an Afridi—half-something, anyway. What's more, he is really half-brother to Khurram, and, dash it all, who wants to share quarters with a half-caste, anyway?

But enough of these vulgar fractions, there is the set-up. Captain King is a man of Two Worlds, pulled in two directions, and there's that great wide screen to show the tug-of-war on. On the whole it's a dull showing. A wide screen, unless it presents us with a reasonable solid story, only magnifies its own banalities, and *King of the Khyber Rifles* comes about 35 years too late for me. It's the kind of thing one used to read in *Chums* (less the soppy bits), and I doubt if the North-West Frontier rates much space in *Chums* these days. As for Terry Moore, the General's daughter—as Kipling said (forgetting what he'd said before), a woman's only a woman, but a good cigar is a smoke. Where Miss Moore is concerned I'm ready to settle for half an ounce of tobacco.

BAROMETER

OVERCAST: "King of the Khyber Rifles."
OVERCAST: "Father's Doing Fine."

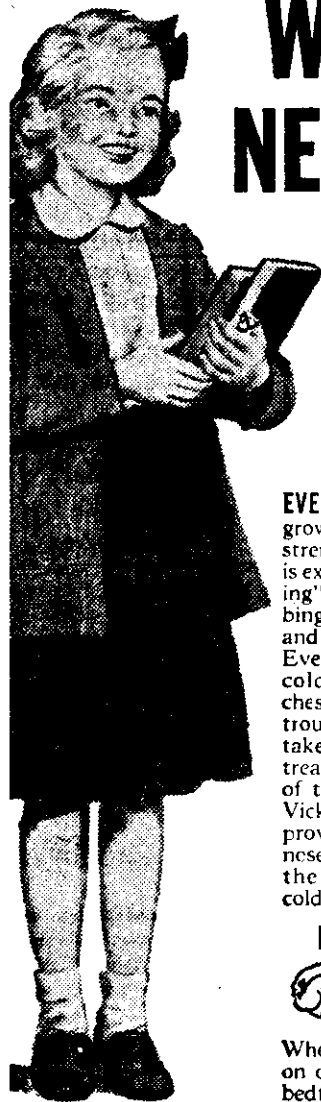
FATHER'S DOING FINE

(Associated British)

HUMOUR is a personal affair, and it is possible that there are filmgoers who will laugh as loudly as I groaned over this farrago of faded nonsense. I don't know what depressed me most about it. Perhaps I suffered some deep-seated psychic trauma at the sight of Heather Thatcher (one of the lush pin-ups of my adolescence) in the role of a feather-headed matron of uncertain age. Certainly I was depressed at the sight of Richard Attenborough and Noel Purcell squandering their talents in sub-standard farce. If you saw *Quiet Wedding* or *Quiet Week-end*, approach *Father's Doing Fine* with caution. The crazy family framework is common to them all. Beyond that *Father* is nothing but a heap of dust and clichés, without wit enough to keep it sweet (if I may crib a phrase from Dr. Johnson).

Correspondence

Sir,—Regarding the film of the Olympic Games at Helsinki, which is the subject of an inquiry in *The Listener* on April 2, I have sent a cutting of the issue containing your correspondent's inquiry, together with your footnote, to the editor of a provincial paper (published in the small town in Finland where I was born), with a view to obtaining some information about the film—and, if possible, the reason
(continued on next page)



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