

Document Citation

Title	Four feathers
Author(s)	
Source	<i>University of Illinois Film Society</i>
Date	1963 Jan 15
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	The four feathers, Korda, Zoltan, 1939

FOUR FEATHERS (British; 1939)

Producer: Alexander Korda

Screenplay: R. C. Sherriff

Director: Zoltan Korda

Projection Time: 115 minutes

Adaptation by Oliver P. Garnett from A.W.E. Mason's novel.

FOUR FEATHERS

Cast

John Durrance - Ralph Richardson
General Burroughs - C. Aubrey Smith
Harry Faversham - John Clements
Ethne - June Duprez
Lt. Arthur Willoughby - Jack Allen
Lt. Peter Burroughs - Donald Gray
The Colonel - Robert Rendell

Lubbock - Archibald Batty
Lt. Parker - Derek Elphinstone
Mahdi - John Laurie
Dr. Sutton - Frederick Culley
Mahdi interpreter - Hay Petrie
Greek doctor - Henry Oscar
young Faversham - Allan Jeayes

Kitchener - Major John Knott

Four Feathers received high praise from both American and English reviewers as an impressive spectacle and an authentic recreation of the decisive battle of Omdurman, where in 1898 Kitchener defeated the insurrectionists of the Khalifa and regained for the British Empire control of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The story, which had been filmed twice before (in 1921 and in 1929) relates, as the New York Times reviewer puts it, the adventures of "a neurotic scion who becomes a sort of Egyptian Lawrence to prove that he isn't a coward," and is undeniably "mad and romantic and bombastically British." The scenes in England (filmed at Denham) struck the London Times reviewer as excessively picturesque and "more extravagantly old English than one would have believed possible." But both American and British critics found the desert scenes so good as to redeem the rest. Most memorable of these scenes are the strange and lovely backgrounds of the Blue Nile country and the thrilling attack of the Fuzzy-Wuzzies on the British squares.

The Kordas made an impressive effort to achieve authenticity with this film and came up with a carefully studied period piece. After collecting documents of all sorts on native customs, sites, uniforms, battle procedures and so on, Zoltan went to Egypt with 140 packing cases of props and filmed the battle scenes on the actual site. 4000 native extras were employed -- many from the Fuzzy-Wuzzy tribe -- as well as 1000 soldiers and more than 1000 camels and horses. The British gunboats which one sees hauled up the Nile by slaves are the actual ships, preserved since 1898 at the Khartoum Yacht Club. Such procedures have no doubt become commonplace in the filming of spectacles, but have seldom proved so successful.

The story of Four Feathers was filmed again by Zoltan Korda in 1956 under the title Storm over the Nile (Columbia) and starred Laurence Harvey.

SEG