

## TALKING OF TALKIES.

## Gracie Has a "Do" at Blackpool

"Sing as We Go," by J. B. Priestley, is Gracie Fields' Brightest Film Effort  
—"Man of Aran" Surprises Critics—Cecil B. De Mille Comes  
Back With a Super-Production.

IF Blackpool needed any advertisement, one might be forgiven for saying that "Sing As We Go," Gracie Fields' new film, is a grand advertisement for that popular seaside town. Gracie "does the sights" and with her goes the camera—into fortune tellers' establishments, into second-rate boarding houses, on switchbacks, into tents inhabited by human spiders and disappearing ladies, to an England-wide bathing beauty competition, with none other than the Mayor of Blackpool (no shamming this!) presenting the prizes. "Sing As We Go" bubbles over with that sort of merriment and human understanding that makes "our Gracie's" films so attractive. This latest film of England's most popular film and radio star was privately screened in Wellington the other evening and will be released in New Zealand in March.

J. B. PRIESTLEY wrote the story of "Sing As We Go," and he made a pretty good job of it. He puts



Gracie into a mill which is forced to close down "owing to the prevailing economic stress," as the daily papers so succinctly put it. But mill girls can't go home and live with the family—there's enough mouths to feed already—and Gracie sets out on a bicycle for Blackpool where she learns there is the chance of a job in a boarding house. Her adventures there are numerous and form the basis of the story. She sings, too, as only Gracie Fields can, several songs that are destined to become very popular. In the supporting cast are Dorothy Hyson, that attractive little actress, John Loder and Frank Pettingell.

SINCE it was awarded both the Mussolini Cup and the prize of merit by the United States National Board of Review, "Man of Aran" has been drawing big houses in various parts of New Zealand. At the time that it

was reviewed in this section of the "Radio Record" it had just concluded a season at the State Theatre, Wellington, and it had scarcely stood up to the Christmas shopping rush. But when it was released in Auckland last month it did better business than several widely advertised films that were showing at the same time, and it has since repeated its success in several provincial centres. It speaks well for the New Zealand public that it appreciates a film of the calibre of "Man of Aran." It has little or no sentiment but it will live for a very long time as a strong film, full of rugged beauty and sincerity.

THE depression is over! Cecil B. de Mille is back on the job in Hollywood with his marble baths, royal barges, Roman temples and bejewelled dancing girls. The producer whose wings were clipped when the great blight settled on America in '29, has been given a new pair and he's off to heights that would have made Hollywood's budgeteers turn pale with worry a couple of years ago. But all that economy nonsense has gone to the wall—ring up the curtain on "Cleopatra."

Claudette Colbert, Warren William and Henry Wilcoxon are the stars—and going back to their humble 30-roomed homes in Beverley Hills must have been a humiliating experience after working on the Paramount lot all day. But the publicity man is better at describing these super-super-productions than I am. Of Cleopatra's barge he says:

Around the banquetting salon were twelve couches decked with embroideries and cushions. Before each couch stood a table on which were dishes of gold, inlaid with precious stones and drinking goblets of even more exquisite workmanship. The original barge was four hundred feet long and could carry four thousand persons. It was propelled by four banks of oars, 100 in each bank, all of which were made of solid silver. The oarsmen were entertained by the groups of slave girls dressed as sea nymphs, who gathered around the helmsman, and near them a company of musicians played on their flutes and harps. At the head of this beautiful barge was Cleopatra's couch of ostrich feathers where she surveyed all this splendour. The beauty of the floor show which she presents for Marc Antony is inconceivably beautiful and words could not possibly do it justice.

And our advice to the love-lorn is: If you want to catch a man just buy a barge. Cleopatra's barge did for the strong men of Rome what Flit does for flies—and Marc Anthony much preferred a life on the ocean wave to the company of his fellow senators at Rome. But it's refreshing to see something big and really spectacular after simple little films like "Blossom Time" and "The Barretts of Wimpole Street."

THE story is told in Hollywood of a great studio executive who was watching production going forward on a colossal super-production. Expenses were hitting the ceiling and the picture

was barely half made. "There's too much waste going on round here," shouted the great studio executive. "Money is being tossed away for no reason. It's gotta stop I tell you!"

The G.S.E. looked at a young man making notes in a corner of the set. "Look at that young fellow," he roared,

## Essays on N. Z. Birds

## Closing Date Extended

THE closing date of the Essay Competition promoted by the Native Bird Protection Society has been extended to February 20. A first prize of £5 and valuable supporting prizes were offered for the best essays (of not more than 500 words) on:—

- (1) Personal observation of any native bird; or
- (2) The value of the native forest to New Zealand (Recognised ornithological experts are asked to refrain from competing.).

A number of entries has been received, but it is apparent that the fine weather throughout the holiday period has been a strong counter-attraction, and many children who intended to enter have not done so. However, now that the schools have resumed, the opportunity is given through this extension for late entries to be sent in. Entries should be addressed—Editor, "New Zealand Radio Record," C/o C.P.O. Box 1680, Wellington, and be posted to reach Wellington by February 20 next.

"doing nothing but standing there. Cut his salary right away!"

"But sir," protested the great man's secretary, "that young man doesn't get any salary. He's merely a student here for experience."

"Don't argue with me," roared the G.S.E. "Do as I tell you. Put him down for 20 dollars a week—and then cut him to 10!"

EXPANSION of studio accommodation is indicated by the B.B.C. in their purchase of houses on land adjacent to their new building. The corporation now owns nearly all the small island on which it stands outside London. It is expected that these properties will be built up into new studios soon, including, possibly, a vaudeville hall with seating accommodation for an audience of 500, and television studios.