

## TALKING OF TALKIES.

# Barnum Receives a Royal Command

"Greatest Showman on Earth" is Summoned Before Queen Victoria—Wallace Beery in Film of Barnum's Life—New Zealand-made Talkie is Now Being Sub-edited For Premiere Screening.

WALLACE BEERY has played many roles in the last two years—the vulgar rich man in "Dinner at Eight," the simple and yet ferocious Pancho in "Viva Villa," the drink-loving husband in "Tugboat Annie"—but he has probably never played a role better suited to him than that of Phineas T. Barnum, the greatest showman on earth. "The Mighty Barnum," which will have a simultaneous premiere at the Regent Theatres in Auckland and Wellington on Friday, March 15, shows all the phases of this lovable humbug's amazing career.

There is a story told of Barnum and Queen Victoria. Barnum went to England with another hope and another hoax from his series of smart frauds in America. On the streets of Bridgport, U.S.A., he had found an undersized youngster playing—a kid of five, who had the size of a newborn baby. Phineas T. bought the services of the midget, and, stealing an idea from some mediæval minstrel, called him General Tom Thumb. At his American museum in New York he built up Tom Thumb, and made him a genuine attraction—with only a little helpful lying as to age and dimensions. Tom Thumb was an extraordinary little person. He spoke well, wrote fairly well, and had

genuine histrionic talent as a very young boy. Barnum exploited it to the utmost. Society took up Tom Thumb, and the powerful Baroness Rothschild made him a household pet. Then came the call from the Queen. A brilliant scene, Barnum carefully rehearsed by a major domo, to talk to her Majesty only through a third person, and to bow himself out backwards from the royal presence. Victoria Imperatrix herself conducted Tom Thumb about her picture gallery. The little fellow danced and sang for her, and gave his famed imitation of Napoleon. The major domo was amazed. He was even more amazed when he turned around, to see Barnum chatting familiarly with the Queen. Phineas T. had been busy. He had begged or bribed the editor of the Court Circular, to print a large item about General Tom Thumb's visit to the court. This was done, and England began to talk about Tom Thumb. But Barnum held back. He let him continue appearing at high-toned parties—at ten guineas a time. This was the build up. To his astonishment the Queen commanded Tom Thumb to appear before her again. Did Barnum exploit this? Indeed, indeed! Lord Wellington was there—the Iron Duke himself, with his iron chin. He watched Tom Thumb, give

his famous imitation of Napoleon.

"You look unhappy in that imitation," said the Duke.

"I'm Napoleon thinking of you," said Tom Thumb to the hero of Waterloo. The whole world was informed of that stroke of wit—perhaps Tom Thumb's only quoteable comeback.

Thumb became the rage. Barnum took him to Paris, where they nicknamed him General Tom Pouce, and he became the toast of the Boulevards, and a favourite of Louis-Philippe, the then reigning monarch. But Phineas T. was fair. He gave the lad a decent cut after he had gone over big, and Thumb retired rich, ending his days in comfort.

THE time has come when New Zealand has launched out into its first talkie, and New Zealand Feature Productions are to be congratulated on their enterprise in producing as their first effort "Down on the Farm." The production, which is being sub-edited by Mr. R. L. Grant, New Zealand manager for British Empire Films, promises to be a great success, and does not in any degree smack of the amateur. Daphne Murdoch, who is very charming in her role of Mary Hickmot, is a well-known Dunedin girl, who for some time past has taken a very active interest in amateur theatricals. Her acting has the grace and ease of an experienced actress, yet her performance has a youthfulness that is indeed refreshing after the sophisticated sirens of Hollywood.

The whole picture is such a fast-moving collection of laughs that it is difficult to give one scene more prominence than another, but the wrestling match between Horace Hopkins, the "Cockney Killer," and Bill Petrie, the "Woodside Terror," is so thrilling that it is unforgettable. With the grace and elegance of a pair of walruses, the two heroes push and pull themselves, the referee, and half the spectators backward and forward across the ring. Your eyes may be running, your sides aching, but still you laugh as Orance and Lizzie move across the screen, or Miss Erpington-Erpington frigidly presents herself before you.

(Continued from Page 22.)

Montrose, to the surprise of many of his Scottish friends, shows himself loyal to Charles. He joins the King at Oxford, and eventually sacrifices his troops to Charles's nephew, Rupert. He returns to Scotland disguised as a groom and with only two friends "to raise Scotland."

Here is a book that has its faults, but it is, above anything else, a work in which the characters live and breathe in an atmosphere redolent of the Stuart days.

"The Prond Servant," Margaret Irwin. Chatto and Windus. Our copy from the publishers.

## Sydney B Station Operating On 24-hour Schedule

### 2UW Creates a World's Record

STARTING a few days ago, the well-known Sydney B station, 2UW, is now operating on a "round the clock" schedule, starting at sun up one morning and concluding the day's programme at sun up the next. This station, which is popular with New Zealand listeners, thus creates a world's record for length of operating time. There is a station in Melbourne, 3AK, that operates from 11 p.m. till 5 a.m., and several American stations that operate all night, but, as they have not got a daytime schedule, they do not come anywhere near 2UW's record.

In New Zealand the public may question the wisdom of this all-night service, but in Sydney numerous low-powered amateur stations operate after midnight and secure a very large fan mail, besides numerous telephonic requests, and, by providing a bright dance programme from midnight to 3 a.m., 2UW should be very popular indeed with those people who run parties and depend upon radio for entertainment. From 3 to 5 a.m. the programme will be devoted to re-broadcasts of overseas transmissions, news items, and so on intermingled with a musical programme. Five to 6 a.m. will be a country man's breakfast session, giving the farming community news of the day before they start working, whilst from 6 to 7 a.m. will be the early morning listeners' breakfast session.

Already this station has received numerous congratulatory letters concerning their enterprise, so it would seem that they are filling a want. Programmes from 2UW are published weekly in the "Radio Record."