

TALKING OF TALKIES.

Jew Suss — In The Royal Manner

Gaumont-British Turns Lion Feuchtwanger's Great Novel Into a Magnificent Film—Conrad Veidt at His Best—A Socialist Experiment That Nearly Failed.

WHEN it was first suggested that Lion Feuchtwanger's great book, "Jew Suss," should be brought to the screen thousands shook their heads and said, "It can't be done!" But it has been done—and done in a truly royal manner by that enterprising English company, Gaumont-British. It was no mean feat to compress a book of many hundreds of pages—pages packed with vital incident, too—into a film taking a little more than one hour and a half to run, but it is certain that the most ardent admirer of Feuchtwanger's work will find nothing to cavil at in this magnificent film.

Conrad Veidt is Josef Suss Oppenheimer, the Jew who rises to fame and ends his life "strung higher than the gallows." To say that he dominates every scene is to describe his magnetism and personality in very flat tones. He is somehow sinister and yet he is lovable—a man with a thousand years of Jewish persecution behind him—and in his alternating rages and calms he rises to great heights. Second honours must go to Sir Cedric Hardwicke who, as Duke Karl Alexander, the philandering, swash-buckling ruler, roused both feelings of contempt and admiration in the breasts of the onlookers. Benita Hume played the part of Magdalene Sibylle, the girl whom Suss sacrificed in his upward climb to power. I do not know the name of the girl who played Naomi, Suss's 15-year-old daughter, but she had one of the most beautiful faces that has ever flashed across a moving picture screen.

The picture opens with Josef Suss Oppenheimer's arrival at an inn in Wurttemberg. The Duke, too, is there, freshly returned from his victorious wars, and he is being feted by the people. But he is hard-pressed for money and Suss comes to the rescue. While he openly shows his contempt for the Jew, he fully recognises the man's ability as a financier and it is not long before Suss rises to the position of finance minister. But the Duke's fondness for women betrays him into pursuing the beautiful Naomi, who, in her terror to escape the maudlin caresses of her father's patron, falls from the roof and is killed. Suss swears vengeance—and he keeps his word. The Duke sends word that money must be raised by fair means or foul, and, by a clever means, Suss turns the people against the Duke. Karl, in retaliation, signs Suss's death warrant, but it falls into the latter's hands and he returns to the palace to face the Duke. The Duke is stricken with apoplexy and dies. In the meantime Suss is brought before a tribunal, his only crime being under a certain section of a 200-year-old and almost forgotten law: A Jew shall not have carnal relations with a Christian woman. The penalty is death—and Josef Suss Oppenheimer pays, preferring death to revealing the fact that

he was not a Jew but a Christian, and the illegitimate son of one of the greatest nobles in the land.

The settings in "Jew Suss" are almost staggering in their beauty. The scene where Naomi lies dead among the broken tulips is unforgettable. See "Jew Suss"—it is a definite contribution to the great works of the screen.

ONCE read a book called "Where Socialism Failed," and written, I believe, by a man well known in the Auckland newspaper world. It concerned a settlement in South America where everything was to have been run on socialistic lines. It succeeded for a while, but it was not long before the man who toiled in the fields began to envy the man who cut hair, and the girl who spent her days sowing corn envied the girl who had nothing to do but keep the camp tidy. In the end the whole scheme broke down and a sorry band wended its way back to England. It would seem that robots would make better citizens of a socialistic state.

"Our Daily Bread," which was privately screened in Wellington the other day, and has now opened at the New Opera House, is a film built on very similar lines. But in this case we are shown a near failure—and a smoothly functioning community for the last

fade-out. Tom Keene (once a star in Westerns) and Karen Morley are two young things in New York who are being rather roughly handled by Old Man Depression. Tiring of the continual spectre of the landlord's outstretched hand at the door, they accept a relative's offer to go on a farm that has recently been thrown back on his hands. The farm is in a sorry state of disrepair, and the young husband doesn't know the back of a cow from the front—which really doesn't matter, as there isn't such an animal on the place.

The young man has ideas, however, and soon he has established a socialistic community—every man doing what he can for the common good—and the farm looks well on the road to prosperity. But drought comes along and, just when things are ready to be "all bust up," the young man tears himself away from the cheap bit of peroxide blonde who has been vamping him and reasserts himself as head of the camp. The men work like Trojans to divert a small stream. They are successful, and the final scene shows husband and wife reunited and the fat and juicy heads of corn being brought in from the fields.

A good piece of work, this picture—and one to make you think.



BEST ENGLISH FILM OF 1934.—Here are Leslie Banks, Edna Best and Nova Pilbeam in a scene from the Gaumont-British production, "The Man Who Knew Too Much," due for early release in New Zealand. Mr. Alfred Hitchcock, who directed the picture, was recently presented with the gold medal of the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers which is awarded annually to the director of the English film which is considered by the institute to be the best made during the year.