

TALKING OF TALKIES.

Dickens Defies The Film Industry

"Has Had the Laugh Over Film Industry For 15 Years, and Has it Yet"
New Zealand's First Talkie Previewed — Cole Porter's Stage
Hit Coming to the Screen—Garbo's Leading Man.

CHARLES DICKENS, says a writer in an English paper, has had the laugh over the film industry for 15 years—and he has it yet. Ever since Norma Talmadge appeared in the first long-ago version of "A Tale of Two Cities," the studios have been struggling to make a profit out of this popular series of scripts. The incorrigible Dickensian, Thomas Bentley, once made film versions of all the more familiar novels. Ten years ago a Scandinavian director named Sandberg, of the Nordisk Company, brought several of the stories, including "David Copperfield," to the screen. There has been more than one film version of "Oliver Twist" and "A Tale of Two Cities." "Dombey and Son" was used not so long ago as the basis for a talkie with George Bancroft, called "Rich Man's Folly." Few of these films have proved to be either remarkable artistic successes or outstanding money-makers, while recent history does not record any very great box-office activity as a result of "The Old Curiosity Shop" and "Great Expectations." In fact, the net result of the latter is to cut down the size of the author's name in all billing relating to the company's next Dickens picture, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

ALTHOUGH not quite up to the standard of the talkies produced by the major concerns of the film world, "Down on the Farm," the first talkie to be made in New Zealand, is surprisingly good, and is indeed a very bright first effort. Naturally the story deals with farm life, and the photography of typical New Zealand farm scenes is splendid. However, the film is far from being merely a scenic attraction, and in parts is most amusing. Stewart Dick, as Orance Hopkins, undoubtedly made the show, and proved himself to be a clever comedian who should be quite capable of taking roles in much larger productions. He and Bert Nelson, as Bill Petrie, acted excellently together, and should be very popular with the public. Although she was not given a great deal of scope, Daphne Murdoch, who is well known in Dunedin for her stage work, showed a considerable amount of talent and made the best of her part. Every member of a large supporting cast acted equally well, to make "Down on the Farm" a film which is a credit to New Zealand.

WORK has been started in Hollywood on the film version of Cole Porter's Broadway hit, "Anything Goes." When Mr. Porter was in Wellington some weeks ago he told the "Radio Record" that the script of his musical comedy had been bought by Paramount and that Bing Crosby was to play the lead, with W. C. Fields supporting him. The big hit of the show—and the song that all New Zealand will be singing in a few weeks—is "You're the Top."

Mr. Porter has now completed the show that he was working on when he visited New Zealand aboard the *Franconia* and it will be presented on Broadway shortly with Eddie Cantor in the lead.

EVERLEY GREGG, the English actress who gave a talented performance as the capable but shrewish Katharine Parr in "The Private Life of Henry VIII," has been signed by Paramount to play with Noel Coward in "Miracle on 49th Street," which Hecht and MacArthur are producing in New York. Miss Gregg, who studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art with Charles



NOT A MILLIONAIRE.—When Katharine Hepburn arrived in Hollywood it was rumoured that she had a private fortune of £3,000,000—a statement that was wide of the truth. Miss Hepburn, having completed the film version of Barrie's "Little Minister," has started work on "Alice Adams," a Tarkington story.

Laughton, has appeared in many West End stage productions, including "Private Lives" (which Coward himself wrote), "Grand Hotel" and "Behold We Live." Alexander Korda "discovered" her for films by giving her the role of Henry's sixth wife in "The Private Life of Henry VIII."

GYLES ISHAM, who plays the comparatively small part of Castle-rough in George Arliss's British film, "The Iron Duke," has been offered the role opposite Garbo in "Anna Karenina." Isham, who is 32 years old, is a son of Sir Vere Isham, and was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. He made his first appearance on the stage in "And So to Bed," and later played in the same piece in New York. He was a member of the Stratford Festival Company for some time.

EDMUND LOWE is scheduled to play in "Dr. Dynamite," which is said to be another "Thin Man." Lowe has one unfortunate fact attached to him. He was the first to use the phrase "Sez you" in the *Flagg* and *Quirt* films. The world did the rest of the work in popularising it. He holds an M.A. degree, attends church regularly, and is acknowledged Hollywood's best-dressed man.

THE novelist, Hugh Walpole, is reported to be returning to Hollywood in July to take up a permanent executive position on the writing staff of M.G.M., under the direct supervision of Louis B. Mayer.

COLUMBIA are hoping they have found another Grace Moore in Lily Pons, the celebrated opera singer. Her first picture, "Love Song," is now being written by the authors of "One Night of Love."

RUMOURS are floating backward and forward that C. B. Cochran has signed Mae West to appear in a London revue. Mr. Cochran says the reports are premature. Mae doesn't say anything.

CONRAD VEIDT is going over to Alexander Korda and will play the part of Liszt, for London Films, in a picture based on the life of the composer. Meanwhile, one of the roles formerly intended for him at the Gaumont-British studios has been offered to a Hollywood actor. His coming translation to the Korda fold presumably alters his plans for the year, and indicates his desire for a "new deal" in pictures. "Korda understands me, and knows the types of parts which suit me," he is quoted as saying.

CROWDS, the size of which were unprecedented in the history of the Majestic Theatre, Wellington, endeavoured to gain admittance to see the Paramount picture, "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer," on Easter Saturday and Monday. Despite the fact that the seating accommodation of the theatre—one of the largest in New Zealand—is 2400, more than 1000 persons were turned away, the management reports. More than 9000 people saw the picture in the two days mentioned.

A THRILLING police siege of a house in which Nihilists are at bay is a highlight of Gaumont-British's "The Man Who Knew Too Much," which was presented to the London Press recently and which represents a directorial triumph for Alfred Hitchcock, who makes a striking come-back after a period of inactivity. Finely acted by a strong cast in which Leslie Banks, Peter Lorre and Nova Pilbeam are the principal players, the picture deals with attempts by a gang of political crooks to assassinate a distinguished foreign diplomat at an Albert Hall concert.