

SINGING with savage and bitter pride, "Scum, scum, scum of the earth, Here we come," Author P. C. Wren's French Foreign Legionnaires, who marched on to the films some years ago, now march on to the air. Radio's version of "Beau Geste," to be heard from the four N.Z. commercial stations, is a good production.

By

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ON THE SANDS AT BONDI.

... Australian Radio Players who posed for this photograph are much more real on the air.

AS regular as the economic cycle of boom, burst and depression, there is a steady procession these days of book, film and radio. The book booms, the film, in the hands of some gargantuan producer like Mr. de Mille—whom God preserve, since he has given us some of the funniest work on the screen since Charlie Chaplin—the film, one may say, sometimes bursts, but the radio version fortunately does not always end in depression.

Latest work to fail into line and go through the march of this cycle of book, film and radio version is "Beau Geste," by P. C. Wren, noted author, who left Oxford to become sailor, navy, tramp, schoolmaster, journalist, farmer, labourer, explorer, hunter and slum-dwelling costermonger.

STILL finding life dull after all this, P. C. Wren first joined a crack British cavalry regiment, and then enlisted with the French Foreign Legion. Thereafter life became a good deal less dull for many other people in the world.

For, years later, when he was wounded in East Africa fighting with the British forces in the World War, he began to write his famous series of stories on the Foreign Legion.

RAUDIO'S version of "Beau Geste," the most famous of these tales, is now to be heard from the Commercial stations in the four New Zealand centres. It begins at 1ZB and 3ZB on July 4, and at 2ZB and 4ZB on July 11.

Judged by the episodes I heard in a radio preview last week, it will be as keenly followed in the radio as it has been in print and on the films. Produced by an Australian cast and script-written by Hal Percy, it makes a first-rate thriller, faithful to the text and to the book's exciting spirit.

THERE is even a pale reflection of film-land's hustle (compare Gordon Mirams's recent "Record" story of Sam Goldwyn saying "Get me Budapest" to the telephone operator in New York) in the manner in which the radio version began.

P. C. Wren is a world traveller. The Australian radio producers for station 3AW wanted the radio rights of "Beau Geste" in a hurry to replace the serial "For the Term of His Natural Life." They had trouble in finding him.

By a stroke of luck he was not week-ending in Patagonia or Tibet or the deserts of Morocco. He was found in England.

Two days after the first cable had been sent from Melbourne, P. C. Wren's reply was received, Hal Percy had written the script for the opening, and "Beau Geste" was in production for its early debut.

IN spite of the suspicious speed with which the making of the production was begun, it is not possible to fault it.

Hearing the preview in the bitter weather of last week, one could not help but feel something of gratitude to the Commercial service for choosing the

tale of heat and desert sands for our New Zealand winter rather than a story of Antarctic exploration.

THE technique is literary, the scene changing from place to place and from time to time, as freely and easily as in a novel, and, happily, without any confusion to the listener.

At first one is in the train with Major de Boujoullais, of the French Foreign Legion, and his friend, Colonel Lawrence. The bells ring and the engine whistles, and then, as the long journey goes on—and the train rattles most convincingly over the sleepers—the Major begins to tell his friend a tale of mystery, of a handful of stricken men in a North African fort, and an "officier, mon ami, who lay dead in the hour of victory, most strangely murdered . . ."

IF this doesn't make you prick your ears, told in the fascinating voice of Major de Boujoullais, with a few French words like "officier" thrown in that makes you think your knowledge of the French language is pretty good after all, then you are missing something which can give you a fine amount of enjoyment.

The fascinating voice of the major fades out, and the scene flashes back to that strange business in the desert. The major is leading his legionnaires to the relief of a French fort attacked by Arabs. After a forced march he sees the fort through his field-glasses, with men manning every post at the embrasures in the walls. The men do not move.

Two shots sound from the fort, but still the silent men do not move. And then, through his field-glasses, the major sees the kepi of one of (Continued on page 37.)

LEGIONS OF THE LOST