

Broadcasting, Cinema and Drama Invade the Coasts of China

Radio Thrives in Shanghai: Less Scope in Hong Kong

(Written for the "Radio Record" by Muriel Lewis.)



THE first performance in the East of "Lady Precious Stream," the charming Chinese fantasy by S. I. Hsiung, which has been running at the Little Theatre, London, for more than a year, was given by university students in Hong Kong recently. Above is a photo of the cast—there was only one European in it—specially supplied to the "Radio Record."

RADIO on the China coast is one of the most important mediums of entertainment, coming directly after the cinema and the dance halls in the public favour. It far outweighs the stage, therefore, as the leit motif of such an article as this.

But it is difficult to write of radio here without entering into a long diatribe on its deficiencies. At present the Hong Kong papers are full of them. So large a percentage of the population cares for nothing but jazz, and says so at frequent intervals through the correspondence columns of the dailies, that the hands of the programme arrangers are tied to a considerable extent, and subscribers who care for better things suffer accordingly. And not in silence, either. For another thing, there is a very small number of professional musicians or speakers capable of the required standard of radio performance; which leaves the arrangers little besides gramophone records and hotel dance orchestras as a foundation for all programmes.

In Hong Kong, where ZBW and the Chinese section of ZEK are under Government control, limitations of all sorts obstruct development. This is easily understandable when you consider that though the population of the colony numbers 849,757, only 14,366 are British (counting the soldiers in the regiments stationed here and 494 Americans, and that of 4836 licenceholders only 1915 are Euro-

pean. It is as if people living in a small town were unreasonable enough to expect big-city radio.

IN Shanghai, which is served by several private stations, things are considerably easier, but, except for the music from the studios, it does not appear that the fare is much better. There, in the fifth largest city in the world, the radio companies are open to attractive offers from advertisers, and suffer apparently few restrictions, while in Hong Kong advertising is strictly prohibited, and an audition is even occasionally required. In the northern city they have the advantage of a very fine municipal orchestra, in which Pacci, the conductor, wields his baton over picked professional musicians.

The Canton radio station is run by the South China Government, and European sessions are seldom given. It is used when necessary for political propaganda; as when the mandate went forth last year that Cantonese women must return forthwith to the old conventions of modest attire, all the drastic restrictions were broadcast daily, with a list of punishments for offenders of different degrees.

The cinema is, of course, the principal means of amusement in the Far East, for both natives and Europeans, and dancing in the hotels and cabarets comes next. In Shanghai there is a Chinese theatre where the few celebrated professionals are regularly employed; but things theatrical are in a poor way at present, and most Chinese actors and actresses who cannot find employment abroad, or in the