

STATIC

by
"SPARK"

THE many old residents of China now resident in New Zealand would not have been greatly surprised to hear Mr. C. S. Macpherson (1YA), when speaking of the "Domestic Life of the Chinese," state that it was estimated that Canton had a population of 15 millions. When I knew this human warren first, 25 years ago, I was told that it had 20 million inhabitants. When I came to know it better, and came in contact with more creditable informants, the number evaporated considerably, and in the 20 years that I knew it I doubt if the population ever exceeded one and a half millions. The most amazing thing about Canton is that so few can make so great a stretch, but probably working upon the lines the Chinese do with some of their comestibles, that "more stink more better," they may have tried to make Canton the most alluring city in China. I cannot see a Canton with so large a population increase in a few years. It is because the hive cannot grow much that the Cantonese are found in every part of the world. He has to emigrate to live, and he would be just as much a foreigner in other parts of China as he is elsewhere! There are few cleaner in their person than the Chinese, but they do love a fearful smell.

MR. MACPHERSON asserted that many wealthy Chinese had eight to ten wives. That's a new one to me, and I am unable to picture the immutable East changing so rapidly that the strict marriage customs are no longer observed. I know many very wealthy Chinese—some of them sterling multi-millionaires—who have more than one wife and a number of concubines, but I do not know of one who has eight wives. A Chinaman with eight wives would not merit the respect of his fellow-countrymen, and any Chinaman would rather have that than more wives than custom allows. It was stated, too, that wives were purchased for from fifty dollars upward, according to the size and stamina of the bride-to-be. Bulk as a virtue in their womenfolk is also news. No one appreciates the "chic" in women more than the Celestial. He is not a savage, and his civilisation has stood for over three thousand years. Buying and purchasing are terms that should be qualified when used in connection with the acquisition of wives in China. A woman may be purchased, perhaps, but not a wife. The Chinaman is not a barbarian. His greatest desire is that his progeny shall worship at his tomb, as he himself has worshipped at the tombs of his forefathers.

The Best Par.

"KILOCYCLE," Taumarunui, wins 5/- this week with the following true story:—

"Last Sunday evening, just about tea time, I set the dial of my set to 3YA and switched on. The valves take about 15 seconds to warm up, and during this warming-up interval, a knock came to the door. I stepped to the door, and just as I opened it, my loud-speaker boomed forth, "Come in." Needless to say, my visitor was astounded at the vehemence of my welcome, but I was able to inform him that it was merely the 3YA children's service being broadcast, the speaker having quoted the biblical exhortation: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall COME IN."

"Spark" awards a weekly prize of 5/- for the best original par. Address "Spark," Box 1032, Wellington.

REFERENCE to the sampan life recalls that one quarter of China's immense population lives on the water. The sampan dwellers are a race apart. They are born and live all their lives in their little sculling boats. The "household" paraphernalia often contains the ubiquitous pig, a few fowls, a canary, and a box garden. The wee toddler who flounders about the sampan soon learns to swim, but until he does he has a gourd strapped to his back to keep him on the surface should he get out of bounds. This floats him face downward, but in sight, usually long enough for his rescue. Should he drown, however, his parents look upon the catastrophe as one in which "joss" has made a claim, and if the gourd could be conveniently strapped in front, it would not be done, as the gods are expected to get a fair deal. It is among the sampan people that the pirates exist, and even to-day, right in Hong Kong harbour, the honoured profession of piracy still thrives.

FURTHER news is that when a man becomes wealthy he often allows his fingernails to grow long. The custom has nothing whatever to do with wealth. Many extremely poor Chinese gentlemen have fingernails six to eight inches in length. It symbolises peace and culture, for none of the owners of these horrible-looking appendages could do much in the navying line, and most of them, I think, scorn the man who has profaned his faculties to become wealthy. The assertion that when a Chinaman becomes rich he allows himself to run to fat and endeavours

to develop a corporation is near enough to being correct. Actually it symbolises the contented mind, without which the tummy cannot expand. When it attains a reasonable circumference, the owner pulls his shirt and singlet up under his chin, for the better view of the protuberance to proclaim to all the world that the contented mind has developed a huge paunch in which to stow a large amount of the good things that Mother Earth has to give. There is profound depth in this philosophy if one sees from the proper angle. I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Macpherson's talk, and I will be on to 1YA when he broadcasts again, for I am not yet certain if someone has been pulling his leg or if he is trying to pull the listeners' legs.

NOTHING makes one wish to play a musical instrument more than listening to chamber music, and when the "Wellington Chamber Music Players" gave, from 2YA, Mendelssohn's "Trio in D minor, First Movement, Allegro and Agitato," there must have been many fingers sympathetically tingling. I notice we are to have more chamber music, and this will hearten the many who feel they have a surfeit of fully orchestrated compositions.

A RECENT visitor to Paris states that on the train journey from that city to Calais he did not see one aerial. Even in the city itself aerials were conspicuous by their general absence. It is not contended that along the railway route there

are no listeners, but the outward signs are that the French are too busy nursing hypothetical wrongs to enjoy themselves. If listeners were really numerous it might be worth while for some celebrity to tell them how unprepared they were for the war, through speculation and unashamed corruption.

2YA'S best surprise item to date was on American Independence Day, when the studio was raided by a particularly offensive "shankheel," who subsequently turned out to be not so offensive after all, but one who has been greatly missed by listeners. I learned afterward that the altercation brought the police hurriedly to the studio, which proves that Mr. Announcer has the best of friends.

THE English Post Office is taking steps to prevent a recurrence of certain irregular transmissions by local relay stations. Some have been departing from the terms of their license by introducing local dance bands and vocalists not on the ordinary broadcast programme. This is an infringement on the monopoly of the B.B.C. The relay stations, of which there are 120 in various parts of the country, operate under a Post Office license which allows them to select programmes from any transmitting station, British or foreign, but expressly forbids them to originate programmes of their own.

AFTER listening to the recorded versions of Mr. John Buchan, M.P., on Sir Walter Scott, and Mr. J. B. Priestley on Modern Novels, there will have been many letters forwarded to the booksellers signifying approval of the scheme. Mine is also containing a vigorous protest concerning the undignified musical interlude which gives the impression of an auction sale.

THE W.E.A. series of talks (1YA) being given by Mr. W. T. G. Airey, whose emphatic opinions have ostensibly the foundation of clear study and precience, should command the attention of all listeners. In reviewing the present state of financial collapse, the speaker regards this not so much the result of the war, but more to the inertia of social and political institutions, compared with those that have been responsible for the material progress of the world. Social consciousness is out of step with the scientific advancement made during the last century, (Continued on page 9.)