

ROTARY IN TANAH MALAYU

East's farthest outpost adopts "cogged wheel"

“THE Malay Peninsula” called by the Malays “Tanah Malayu,” or Malay Land, is shaped much like the long thin neck and head of a goose. It forms the most southerly part of the continent of Asia and lies close to the equator, but fortunately, being narrow, the hot climate which is the same the year round is tempered by the China Sea which almost surrounds it.

“Malaya” seems to be a term about which there is some haziness among writers but I think the consensus of opinion is that it indicates that portion of the peninsula which is made up of British possessions or protectorates. That is, it includes the Crown Colony of the Straits Settlement, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States, the combined area of which is some 2,000 square miles larger than England without Wales.

Malaya has been so prodigally endowed by nature that “it is the richest part of the British Empire,” a British official in the Malay Civil Service proudly told me, “with a greater income than all her colonies, protectorates, and mandated territories put together.” Bountifully supplied with extensive waterways, Malaya has a soil so fertile that with but one month’s labor her brown sons can sit back and twiddle their thumbs for the rest of the year knowing that all hungry mouths will be well filled.

Buried in her mountains are rich deposits of mineral, especially tin which is washed down with the soil and mined on the alluvial plains either by means of great dredges, operating day and night, or else in opencast mines. These great, deep basins are dotted with Chinese coolies, for it is the man who is the miner in Malaya. Certain parts of the landscape like the extraordinarily rich Larut and Kinta districts are sadly defaced with these worked-out mines, but the world must have its tin and Malaya supplies from a third to a half of it and that of the very finest grade. In 1926 the export of tin from Malaya amounted to £13,030,093 or somewhat over \$63,000,000.

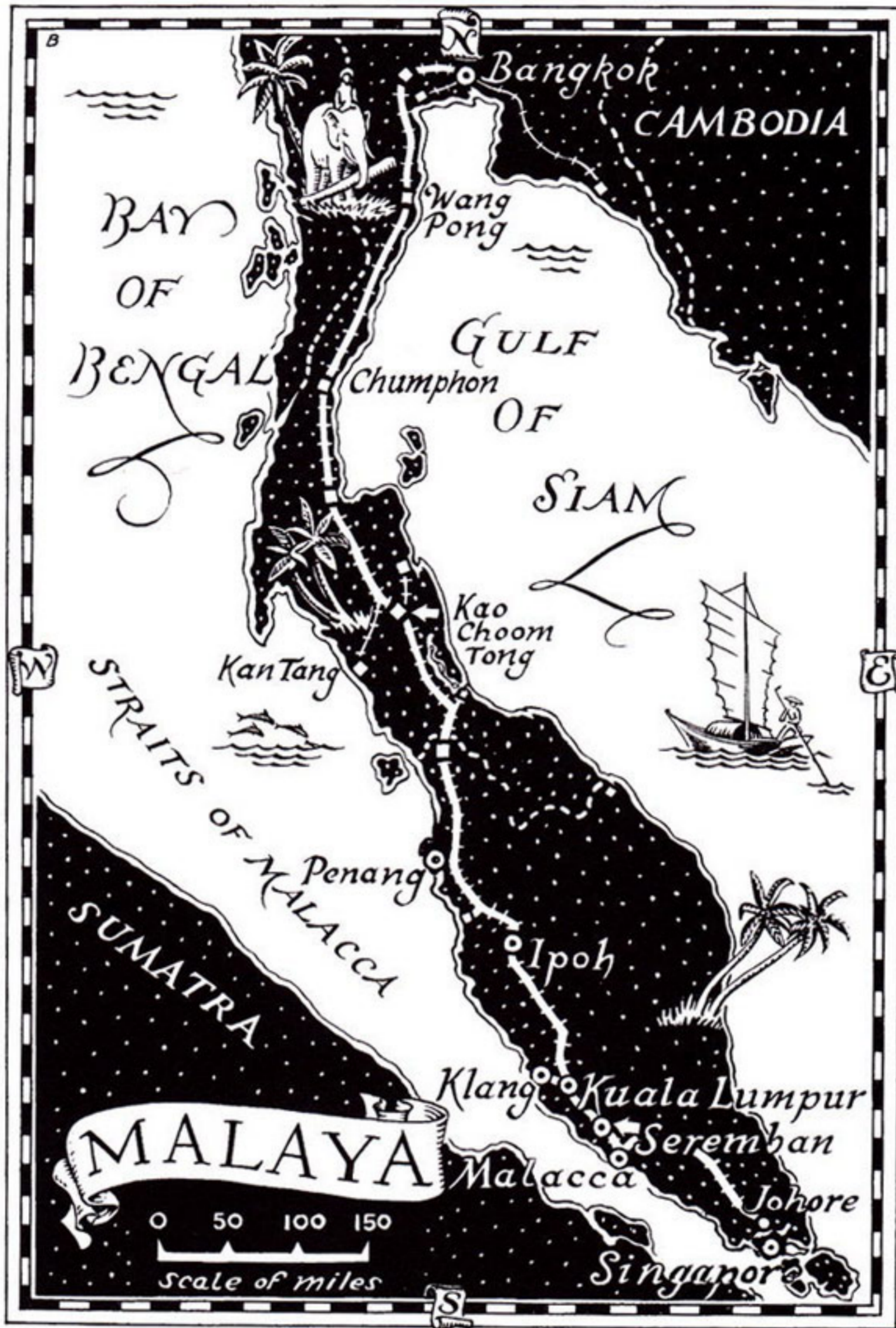
Rubber is, however, the most important product which that same year was £35,549,094. When the price of rubber was high everyone unfortunately tore out other valuable producing crops to plant rubber trees with the inevitable flooding of the world with this product. Naturally, the bottom dropped out of the rubber market. The situation was very serious indeed when we left there in August, 1930.

Upon our arrival in Malaya, we were astounded at the apparent cleanliness of the Malays. Every day seemed washday. Each little *atap*-thatched hut, half hidden by rubber trees, had a clothesline of little white garments swinging in the breeze. Our curiosity was piqued for, strangely enough, they were all of a kind, a little white square about a foot by a foot and a half. A wringer always stood close by. Hopping out of the motor, we discovered they were pads of rubber! Put through the wringer, they were hung up to dry before being sent to the smoke house. But alas, all clotheslines were bare before we left Malaya for a temporary vacation in the manufacture of rubber had been declared.

With the exception of low-lying plains near the coast, Malaya is a very mountainous country covered with magnificent primal forests. The distant mountains are eternally wrapped in a soft lazuli mist—a distinctive feature of Malaya—while those closer at hand display a sea of tree tops. This is an enthralling, tangled mass of green of every known tint with the tall white trunk of an occasional forest giant sharply outlined against it.

The tropical jungle is a thing of supreme beauty providing sanctuary for all wild life, for the creepy, crawly, slithering creatures, wild pigs, tapirs, bears, panthers, leopards, an occasional rhinoceros, the fierce selandang and the mischievous trampling elephant. It is an awesome thing as well for like a monster with a thousand acquisitive tentacles, it would cover the whole land with smothering vegetation, soon creating an absolute wilderness. Legions of brown human beings must everlastingly pit

THIS MAP SHOWS THE ROUTE TAKEN BY THE DAVIDSONS AND THE ROTARY CLUBS AT PRESENT ORGANIZED IN MALAYA ARE INDICATED BY ○



Map drawn by Ben Albert Benson

their puny strength against it to wrest from it enough land for towns, villages and croplands. Beautiful Kuala Lumpur, 30 miles inland, capital and largest city in the Federated Malay States, a garden city sitting proudly on its velvety grass-green hills, is a typical example of a city that has been carved out of the jungle.

The population of the Federated Malay States is about 1,500,000, the Chinese about equalling the Malays, for they flocked into Malaya to enjoy good government. No one can visit Malaya without being impressed with the tremendous debt this country owes the Chinese. Many Chinese immigrants brought with them their hoarded dollars and risked them in the tin mines and as development increased they sent back to China for more and more labor-

ers. They are today the tin miners, the traders, and shopkeepers.

It is amazing how these people, on but a few grains of rice a day, are able to exert so much energy in this climate which is so hot that it saps the vitality of all other races. The Indian does the work on the plantations but he lacks the stamina of the Chinese.

The Malay is truly a charming fellow, a natural-born gentleman. Most Europeans, full of western hustle, condemn him for his indolence. There does seem some truth in it when you see him sitting high on his ladder-like steps leading up to his thatched hut, listlessly watching the Tamil coolie whom he has hired to tap his rubber trees when he ought to be doing that work himself. His leisure, however, is devoted to mastering the fine art of conversation

which in the East is a matter of prime importance. He dotes on the use of subtle parables which require an accurate knowledge of the language to understand.

Those who know him best say that if you can really and truly interest him, he shows amazing energy but that in a land that laughs outright with a harvest at the slightest tickle of the soil he sees no earthly reason to exert himself. Some even claim this so-called indolence is in truth "race intelligence, the fine art of sparing oneself," and predict that he will still be here when the outside races have burned up their little store of energy in this trying climate and gone their separate ways.

Now as to Rotary, my husband tells the story:

"We had looked forward to our arrival in the Federated Malay States for two reasons. First, a group of representative men in Kuala Lumpur, a city of 80,000, had decided that their community required some organization free from racial and religious barriers, one which would tend to unite the several races which it seemed were growing farther and farther apart as time passed. Thus with little information as to our procedure and without inspiration from outside, a group had decided on a Rotary club, had in fact actually organized one, and were awaiting my arrival in order to officially start it on its way.

"I must admit that regardless of my years spent in the Orient, Kuala Lumpur was quite unknown to me. Imagine then my surprise when my train, after passing through occasional stretches of jungle and large reclaimed areas which had been planted

to rubber, entered a beautiful well-kept garden area, then into a substantially built business district providing glimpses of large buildings which would have been a credit to any city, and lastly into a fine railway station, the like of which many European cities of ten times its size do not possess. Later, I motored through a parklike residential district of rolling ground, dotted here and there with comfortable bungalows, each in its own large garden. Everywhere were perfect roads of crushed red stone lined with luxuriant and well-kept hedges, with velvety lawns and beautiful flowers and trees and a lovely lake close by.

"The history of the Rotary movement in Malaya should be linked with the name of L. D. Gammans of Kuala Lumpur. This young Englishman, while a captain in the British army, saw Rotary in operation first when he attended a meeting of the Detroit Rotary Club in 1918. His father is a Rotarian in Portsmouth, England, and a good one for he attended the Dallas convention. Gammans, later, joined the Federated Malay service and after filling several positions, finally became attached to the cooperative societies department of the government.

"His work brought him in close contact with the population, for the object of this department was to rescue the Malays from the clutches of the Asiatic money lender and to interest the people in organizing their own cooperative loan societies. In this way they might obtain loans at a reasonable rate of interest and economically handle their produce through cooperative methods. Engaged in such a worthy un-

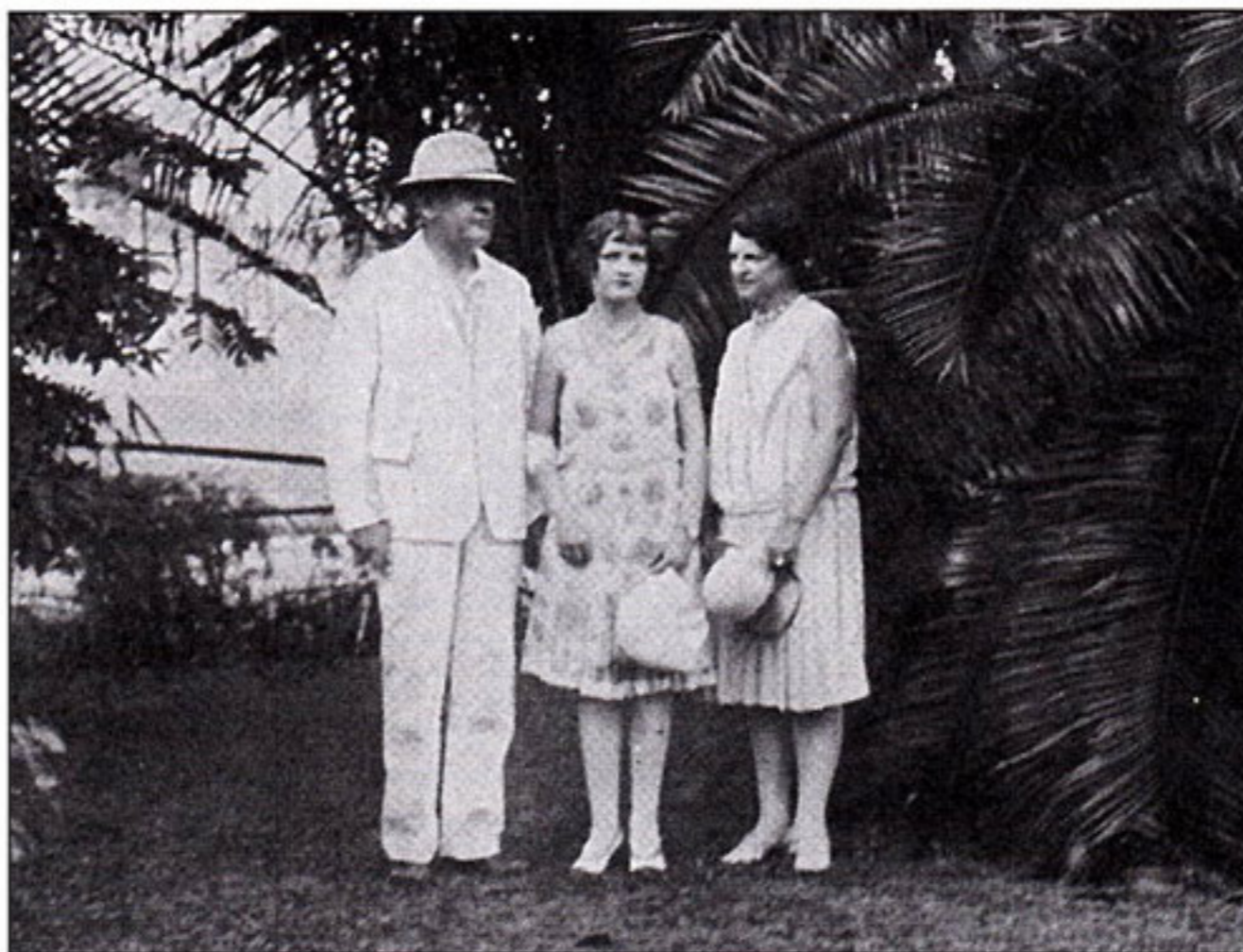


ROTARY LADIES' NIGHTS ARE POPULAR WITH THE ROTARY CLUB OF MALACCA AS THIS PICTURE PROVES. THE FIRST CLUB ORGANIZED IN MALAYA WAS AT KUALA LUMPUR AND THE MOST RECENT ONES AT MALACCA AND PENANG.

dertaking it was perhaps natural that he should give his support to Rotary.

"We found him a genial and likeable young man with a charming wife who seconds him in all his interests. Gammans met with hearty support from leading officials, then resident there, such as A. F. Richards, now governor of British North Borneo,

eral conferences with officers and directors, I held on September 27, the organization meeting in the capacious Masonic Hall beautifully decorated by the wives of Rotarians for the occasion. An excellent international menu was featured with Chinese, Malay, Indian, and European dishes and with Canadian maple syrup thrown in, in honor of my home.



HERE ARE THE THREE ROTARY "MUSKETEERS"—JIM, MARJORY, AND LILLIAN—AT SINGAPORE.

A. Caldecott and A. Cavendish and from other Europeans and representative Malays, Chinese, and Indians. They had found in Malaya a happy atmosphere with several racial groups living in harmony to a degree rarely existing elsewhere and a desire on the part of all that this relationship should continue. All foresaw, however, that there were rather more possibilities for its gradual disappearance than for its development. Why not, therefore, some machinery to assist in maintaining this happy status and to promote further goodwill?

"Gammans found it not difficult to convince the little group that Rotary could best help with such an objective and steps were therefore taken to provide a membership as evenly balanced between Europeans and Asiatics as possible. Rotary literature was obtained, an organization committee formed and on July 20, 1928, a provisional club of twenty-five members came into existence with A. Caldecott, president, and L. D. Gammans as honorary secretary. This action was reported to the International secretary and I was instructed to complete the organization on my arrival in Malaya.

"On my arrival, I found the club in a most healthy condition with some eighty members and after sev-

His excellency, Sir William Peel, now governor of Hongkong, was among the guests and his highness, the Sultan of Selangor, had motored in from his palace twenty-five miles distant, in order to show his interest and goodwill.

"Several columns of space were given to the meeting by the local as well as Singapore press for it was regarded as an important event. Sir Hugh Clifford, then the high commissioner for the Federated Malay States, a man of great popularity with all groups and an authority on all things Malayan, had accepted honorary membership in the club. The new officers were Chu Kia Peng, president, A. F. Richards, vice-president, and L. D. Gammans, honorary secretary. On the directorate were two British, one Malay, one Indian, one Ceylonese and one Chinese, all representative men of their various communities. Now, in 1931 the president is S. Veerasamy, an Indian gentleman, highly respected as a most useful citizen. Thus the club, now numbering about one hundred, maintains its international character. Nearly a dozen different nationalities and several racial groups are represented in its membership.

"I regret that space does not permit me to deal fully with the organization of the Seremban, Ipoh,

and Klang clubs, all in the Federated Malay States. While I was at work in Kuala Lumpur, I had run down to Seremban to watch progress there and the organization meeting actually preceded the Kuala Lumpur event by several days. A fine little club was formed in this community of some seventeen thousand people with O. E. Venables as president.

"Klang (population 12,000), an interesting little city near the coast, was to join the fold some months later following my work in the Dutch East Indies. The place had seemed rather small to me but there was no doubting the enthusiasm of the little group, inspired by Kuala Lumpur Rotarians, who welcomed me. A fine little club of some forty, well representative of the different racial groups, came into existence May 7, 1930.

"Very often it is the busiest of men who give most freely of their time and Dr. W. Ansley-Young who became the first president largely carried the load in putting the club on its feet, and yet his own vocation leaves him little spare time. Even in normal times in such a small community due to constant retirements and transfers of men, it would be difficult to maintain any organization. The Klang club, regardless

of difficulties, will continue and it will be largely due to the heart put into it by its first president.

"I found the Rotarians of Malaya very much interested in obtaining an alteration in our classification system along unique lines to which I had never before given thought. Feeling that the mission of their club should be the development of friendship among various racial groups, they desired to take in members not alone on a basis of difference in vocation but on a difference in race as well. Thus they had as members a Chinese, an Indian, and a European barrister, each one a specialist in the law of his own people. I found myself in sympathy with this interpretation of our classification rules.

"I believe the time has come when we should consider the conditions peculiar to Southern Asia and to other parts of the tropical world and deal with each in accordance with its own requirements in order that Rotary may be permitted to serve to best advantage. We think it justifiable to remove obstacles in the Western world and I believe we should be equally ready to make concessions in the Eastern world so long as our fundamentals are not interfered with nor their effectiveness lessened."



WHERE EAST MEETS WEST.

This cartoon, drawn by Mr. Yan Kce Leong, appeared in the "Tribune," of Penang, during "Jim" Davidson's Rotary organization work in Malaya.