

Boys Work by Tientsin Rotary Club in the 1920s

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

1 September 2014

Initiation of the Boys Work Program in 1919

Prior to the establishment of the “Interact Club” program in 1962 for both boys and girls, Rotary’s service to the younger generations was focused on “Boys Work”. Initiation of the “Boys Work” program could be traced back to the year 1915 when a number of Rotary clubs had become actively interested in working with boys. Why boys only? Probably, Rotary was a “male only” organization before July 1989. In the 1916 Convention at Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A., a resolution was adopted calling for the appointment of a “standing committee on the subject of work among the boys.” Thus began a long and concerted Rotary interest.

In 1919 during the 10th Annual Convention of the International Association of Rotary Clubs (forerunner of Rotary International) held at Salt Lake City of the United States, Dr. Charles E. Barker, of Grand Rapids Rotary Club, Michigan, U.S.A., spoke on the subject: “A Father’s Responsibility to his Son.” So impressive was his presentation that it was arranged for him to Rotary clubs and public meetings sponsored by Rotary clubs. The Convention then endorsed the report submitted by the Committee on Boys Work chaired by John Dolph of Washington D.C. And as a result of a convention resolution, “Boys Work” was declared a major activity for Rotary clubs and a Boys Work Department was established in the International Association and to be supported by Walter W. Strong, Assistant International Secretary. Since then, the Rotary clubs world-wide were catching the vision of the opportunity which was theirs for genuine service in the field of Boys Work and increased activity was being manifested both in the organization of committees and the actual doing of work. But being keenly desirous of having all of the clubs functioning in Boys Work, International President 1919-1920 “Bert” Albert S. Adams wrote the following letter to stir to action those clubs which have not been heard from:

My Dear Friend President:

In outlying the program for the work for Rotary this year, I said:

“Boys Work is the most appealing work, the work with greater possibilities, even undertaken by Rotary; the work that carries on year after year, and the work that gives a challenge to the best that is in us of brain and heart.”

The Board agreed with me, and, as far as I’ve ever heard, every Club has agreed with this. I am sure that you agree with it, if you have thought it true, and that you have realized the truth of what I said. The field of boys work is so large and the opportunities for service so many that even with all the splendid agencies now at work in it, the surface is hardly scratched.

Your clubs who haven’t undertaken any work – what are you going to do about it? We are going to push to the utmost this work and are not going to let up for one instant until every club goes in the boys work to the limit.

Walter Strong tells me that not quite forty per cent of the clubs have reported the appointment of a Boys Work Committee. Is your Club one of them? If it is, before you do another thing, appoint that committee! Then write Headquarters the name of the chairman and then get that committee on the job and every member of your Club right back of the committee.

We tackled this job with our eyes open; it wasn't wished on us. It is the biggest and best job that we have ever tackled, and for the sake of the kids who need our help, encouragement and inspiration, for the fun and the satisfaction we, ourselves, will get out of it, and for the everlasting glory of Rotary.

Let's go to it and out the job over one hundred per cent!

Rotarily yours,

Bert Adams, International President

The Treaty Port Tientsin

The concessions in Tientsin (*Tianjin*) (天津) were concession territories ceded by the Ch'ing Empire (Manchu Dynasty) (大清國) to a number of European countries, the United States and Imperial Japan within the city of Tientsin. There were nine concessions in altogether. These concessions also contributed to the rapid development of Tientsin from the early to mid-20th century. The first concessions in Tientsin were granted in 1860. By 1943, in the Republic of China (中華民國) all the foreign concessions, save the Japanese concession, had ceased to exist de facto.

The original old walled city grew in the course of the 19th Century well beyond its limits, but with the coming of the 1911 Revolution (辛亥革命) and the disturbances and stimulus to modernity it brought, development had centered in the foreign areas adjacent to the Chinese city and further down river. The French, Japanese and Italian Concessions during the republican years since 1912 had only a few streets, had been built up completely on the 1930's. The much larger British Area plus the American Area, which adjoined the French Concession, was then the chief center of new building and so greatly had the rate of development been accelerated. The former German and Austrian Concessions, which had reverted to China after the Washington Conference in 1922, had long since been built up, while the ex-Russian Concession had grown appreciably in the post-First-World-War years.

The British Concession was situated on the right bank of the Haiho (*Haihe*) (海河) below the native city, occupying some 200 acres (0.81 km²). It was held on a lease in perpetuity granted by the Ch'ing Empire government to the British Crown, which sublet plots to private owners in the same way as was done at Hankow (*Hankou*) (漢口). The local management was entrusted to a Municipal Council, and the seat of Government was the stately Gordon Hall, situated on the financial street called Victoria Road (i.e. Jiefang Road 解放路 today).

The Beginning of Rotary in Tientsin and the Boys Work

The Tientsin Rotary Club (天津扶輪社), sponsored by Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社), was a member Club of Rotary International, Charter No. 1444, and in point of seniority came next to the Shanghai Rotary Club. Informally founded late in 1922, it was officially elected a member of Rotary International on 10 May 1923, as the second Rotary Club in the Republic of China. Its origin was quite spontaneous. Two leading Americans, a doctor and a lawyer, first talked the matter over and later eight Americans, one Briton, and one Chinese met and agreed to organize a Rotary Club. As the years passed the Club became more and more cosmopolitan. Its headquarters were at the Astor House Hotel (利順德大飯店), at Victoria Road in the British Concession, where the Club met every Thursday at 12:30 p.m.

Unlike most clubs in the cities of the West world, its membership was transient. The foreign consular and military representatives, many of whom joined the Club, were stationed there for a limited period. Even the ordinary banking and commercial community was subject to great changes, owing to the fact that the larger institutions had branches throughout the Far East, transfers of personnel thus being frequent. Nevertheless there was a considerable stable membership among the professional and business classes whose enterprises were centered there. The leading Chinese had taken an increasing interest in the movement, and this was reflected in the much larger Chinese representation in the Club. English was the lingua franca of the East, and this being a very international Club, its proceedings were conducted in that tongue. While no definite principle was laid down, account was generally taken, in the election of directors and successive presidents, of the various national representations in the Club membership.

While the Club possessed all the usual Rotary committees, its activities had concentrated hitherto on two main lines: Boys Work and Community Service. Boys Work had been taken in many different forms. The Club had actively co-operated with the Scout Movement there, and awarded a special replica of the Rotary Wheel as an annual trophy for the best all-round Scout. In addition to this it had helped the forward Scout activities in other ways. The Club had sponsored a number of boys camps either at the seaside or in the beautiful western hills northwest of Peking (*Beijing*) (北京), during the summer time.

Boys Week activities included an annual Boys Hobby Exhibition---one of the most successful functions of its sort in Tientsin---and an international “Fathers and Sons Tiffin” first held in December 1923, with more than 100 participants of which the boys and their fathers were invited, Scouts and Cubs attending with their Scoutmasters in uniform. The photo below shows in summer 1929 the first group of under-privileged boys of Tientsin leaving for 2 weeks’ vacation on the beach of Pei Tai Ho (北戴河) where Tientsin Rotarians had established a boys’ camp.



Reporting such remarkable Rotary activities in the Tientsin community, in the April 1926 Issue of *《The Rotarian》* magazine, Rotarian “Shiner” Wilfred Victor Pennell, a career journalist, told the readers around the Rotary World on what the Club was doing to the Tientsin boys, both of the local Chinese natives and the residents from overseas countries-- *《When East Meets West》* . The full text illustrated with photos is reprinted below on pages 5-9.

Wilfred Victor Pennell (潘納祿) was then the Associate Editor of *《Peking and Tientsin Times》* (京津泰晤士報). He joined the newspaper in 1916 as the assistant to Henry George Wandesforde Woodhead (伍德海) (*Tientsin Rotary Club President 1924-1925*). Pennell succeeded Woodhead as Editor in 1930, and later also served Tientsin Rotary Club as President in 1931-1932. After he moved to the British Crown Colony Hong Kong and joined the *《South China Morning Post》*, he served Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社) as President in 1954-1955. He was author of some books including: *《The Threat of a Third Revolution in China》* *《A lifetime with the Chinese》* *《History of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce 1861-1961》*, etc.

The 3 Rotarians mentioned in Pennell's article *《When East Meets West》* were:

(1) Henry K. Chang (張謙), Guangdong native (廣東新會), Club President 1925-1926, career diplomat, was 1909 graduate with Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.) from the University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Chang was married to the 2nd daughter of Chinese Premier Tang Shao-Yi (中華民國首任國務總理唐紹儀), while his colleague diplomat Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo (顧維鈞博士) (*Shanghai Rotary Club*) was married to Tang's 5th daughter in his second marriage. So, they were brothers-in-law.

(2) V. K. Ting (丁文江), Jiangsu native (江蘇泰興), was a graduate 1911 from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, with two degrees in both Geology and Zoology. As a geologist and natural scientist, he contributed to mining exploration and eminently to academic and social enterprises. Ting attempted to make 'Mr. Science' an integral part of China's everyday life. His life was ended in early age of 48 due to an accident during a site survey in Changsha, Hunan Province (湖南省長沙市).

(3) Major-General William Durward Connor was Commandant of the United States Army Forces China stationed in Tientsin from April 1923 to May 1926. Connor was promoted to Major-General in 1925. Returning home, he served as the Superintendent of The United States Military Academy at West Point from 1932 to 1938 and then retired on 28 February 1938. He was recalled for service during World War II from 1941 to 1942.



Henry K. Chang (張謙)

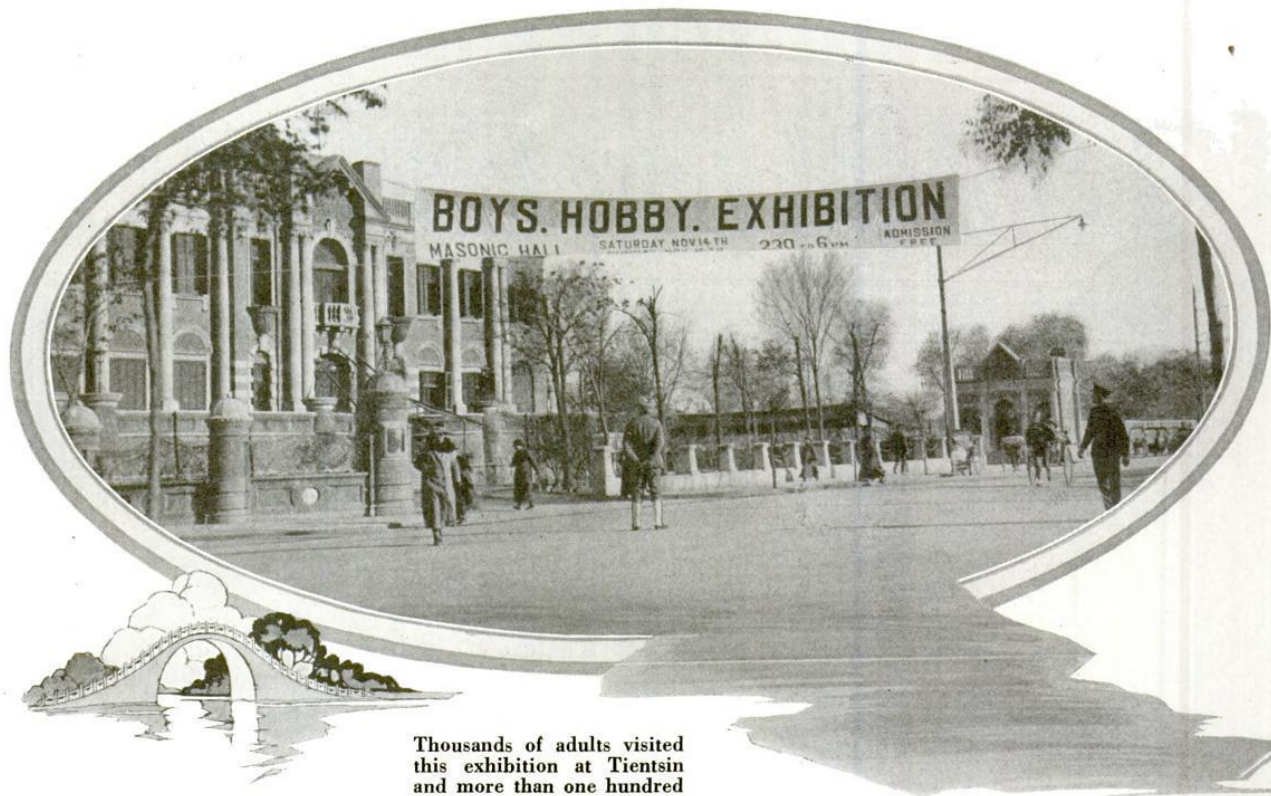


V. K. Ting (丁文江)



William D. Connor





Thousands of adults visited this exhibition at Tientsin and more than one hundred prizes were awarded.

When East Meets West

By W. V. Pennell

Associate Editor of "Peking and Tientsin Times"

IMAGINE a Rotary Club with a membership akin to the League of Nations. That is a distinction we share with our fellow-Rotarians in Shanghai, but with probably no other club in all the lands of the West to which Rotary and its ideals have penetrated. Think of the opportunity for service, for a closer understanding of each other, and a higher appreciation of the best that is in all of us, within the club itself,—Chinese, American, Briton, Italian, Dane, Swiss, *et al*, linked together in Rotary, in the spirit of service. And no club could possibly be more harmonious even if composed solely of Rotarians of a single nationality. But the Rotary Club of Tientsin does not serve itself alone. It is blessed with a field of bountiful opportunity, and, as will be shown, is doing its utmost to exploit those opportunities in a manner that has won for the club the goodwill and high respect of the whole cosmopolitan community of this great center of commerce.

These are critical days in the relationships of Chinese and foreigners. It is no part of my purpose to go into

them. But nobody who appreciates the mighty potentialities of the great and ancient race, a quarter of the world's population, among whom we live, can ignore for a moment the incomparable tragedy that civilization must meet if bitterness and misunderstanding are not removed, and the mutual antagonism of East and West merged into mutual appreciation. Few bodies in this part of the world minister more wholeheartedly to this incalculable mission than the Rotary Club of Tientsin. A celebrated Chinese statesman, once successively minister to Washington and London, and later foreign minister and acting premier, recently made a fervent plea for more personal contact between foreigners and his countrymen. "There should be more co-operation between these communities," he said. "There must be more personal association, more mutual social interests, if goodwill and real friendship is to exist."

During the height of the crisis in our relationships last summer, the local Rotary Club was the only social organization that maintained this contact.

We carried on our usual activities, held our weekly meetings, met and conversed with one another, in an atmosphere far removed from the painful estrangement that obtained outside—a true band of workers in Rotary, under our Chinese president, "Hen." Chang, a son-in-law of the famous elder statesman, Mr. Tang Shao-yi.

China needs the help and sympathy of the West in a thousand ways. We are doing our little bit. There are few countries in which that most pitiful of all afflictions, total blindness, prevails more greatly than in China. The blind are so numerous that they are closely organized in guilds of various degrees of importance, and subsist mostly by begging. The Rotary Club is taking a keen interest in the amelioration of this affliction and is giving practical support to the education and training of blind Chinese along the lines followed at the Hill-Murray Institute in Peking, where they are taught various trades, whereby they are enabled to earn their own livelihood in a productive and self-respecting way.

Nobody who lives in the more pros-



The "father and son" tiffin was a very cosmopolitan affair. Tientsin shares with other coast towns the distinction of having an unusual number of nationalities in its population, many of which are also represented in the local Rotary club.



perous and socially advanced West can imagine the poverty and hardships suffered by the apprentices in the native carpet and match factories. In the carpet factories, which have sprung up like mushrooms during the past few years owing to the remarkable development of this ancient industry, the apprentices work incredible hours for no reward other than the acquisition of a trade which, however, they have difficulty in turning to good account when they have served their apprenticeship, since the proprietors prefer to take on more apprentices rather than pay skilled wages. The lot of these unfortunate people, not a few of whom are of adult age, has always enlisted the sympathy of the Rotarians, who have annually organized in their be-

half a special entertainment and presented the thousands of apprentices with useful gifts at Christmas.

The spirit which inspired this kindly thought was of far more importance in the eyes of the beneficiaries than the intrinsic value of the gifts or the rareness of this diversion in a life of unremitting and ill-requited toil. One of the most interesting results has been to stimulate the employers to improve the conditions in the factories. The industrial section of the Y. M. C. A.

had long labored toward this end, without much result. But when foreign members of the Rotary Club came on the scene the managers felt that it was time they did something to improve things. Moreover, a considerable number of the foremen in these factories, impressed by the practical demonstration of Rotary service, have

The winners of the Rotary essay contest photographed with Rotarians (standing) Rev. Wilfred Scott; "Hen" Chang; Dr. V. K. Ting, and "Sandy" Harvey (extreme right). No less than 461 entries were received for this contest, and most of them were creditable compositions.





Among the objects brought to the judges of the hobby exhibition were an ancient cross, a spear-head coin, snake-skins, construction models, miniature theatres, model railways, snuff-boxes, Chinese script, a mounted skeleton, cotton chickens, and bank-notes. Practically every nationality in Tientsin contributed.

formed a club of their own on similar lines, called the "Friendship Club," and based on the principle of "Service above Self." The distribution during the Christmas that has just passed consisted of a large quantity of "Thousand Character Books," issued by an organization, originally started among the laborers behind the British lines in France during the war, which is doing wonderful work throughout the country in combatting the illiteracy among the masses.

Another phase of the club's activities is the "Red Firelight" movement. There are several foreign garrisons in Tientsin, which were established after the Boxer rising. Hitherto there has been little intercourse between the soldiers and the civilian communities. The latter have generously provided valuable amenities, such as clubs, etc., for the troops of their nationality, but soldier and civilian lived their lives apart. "Tommy" is perhaps hardened, as the result of long service abroad, to his isolation from home life. Not so his American pals, who find it harder to adapt themselves to the entirely

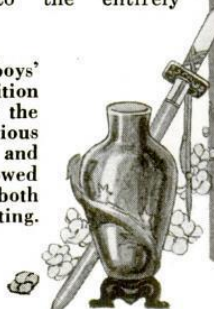
strange conditions obtaining in a city like this. The Rotary Club decided to try to bring soldier and civilian together. We obtained the cordial co-operation of the commandants and of our civilian friends, not members of the Rotary Club. Non-commissioned officers and men of the various garrisons were entertained to dinner at the homes of Rotarians and their friends, and afterwards all repaired to the Gordon Hall. Here the soldier guests found willing dance partners in the wives of the hosts, the latter looking after the wants of guests who did not

dance, and the local Amateur Dramatic Club contributed a bright little entertainment of up-to-date songs and dances, called "Cabaret Time." The affair was successful beyond all expectations, and the guests, who entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing, had a wonderful time. This was the first of what is to be a regular series of similar "get-togethers" during the winter.

But it is the Boys Work that forms the principal part of the club's activities in the pursuit of Rotary ideals.

(Continued on page 53)

A corner of the boys' hobby exhibition showing a few of the artistic and curious exhibits. Chinese and Japanese boys showed special skill in both drawing and painting.



When East Meets West

(Continued from page 8)

The annual "Father and Son Week" of the Rotary Club is one of the biggest undertakings of this kind in China. The main features of this celebration are an Exhibition of Boys' Hobbies, an international parade of Chinese and foreign boys, an essay contest among the students of the Chinese and foreign schools, and a "Father and Son" tiffin. The subjects for the essays were designated by leading members of the club, and it is significant of the interest aroused among the Chinese boys that no fewer than 461 entries were received from them, Rotarian V. K. Ting, a distinguished Chinese scientist, who had the onerous task of judging them, mentioned that most of them were of a very high order. The prizes were formally presented at the tiffin, which each Rotarian was required to attend with one or more sons, his own or borrowed. The prizes were of great value to the students, consisting mostly of encyclopaedias in the case of the Chinese winners, and of similarly useful works in the case of the foreign boys.

The Tientsin Woman's Club, a most useful body whose activities cover a wide range was so impressed by the success of this gathering that it emulated the example of the Rotarians, and held a "Mother and Daughter" tiffin, which will no doubt be expanded into an "annual week" on the lines of the Rotary "Father and Son" celebration.

THE Exhibition of Boys' Hobbies was a revelation of variety and skill. The exhibition was literally filled with an amazingly diversified collection. The exhibits of the Chinese and Japanese boys showed great artistic merit, both in drawings, paintings, and sets of insects, models, and birds. Other boys displayed numerous rare articles such as an ancient cross and a spear-head coin. There were snake-skins and building-construction models, miniature theaters and railways and snuff boxes, Chinese script and mounted skeleton, cotton chickens and banknotes. Practically every nationality in the city participated. Well over one-hundred of the exhibitors were awarded prizes, and the task of the judges was one of extreme difficulty. The exhibition aroused great interest among the public, and was visited by thousands of

adults in addition to the boys themselves.

The most striking feature of all was the Grand Parade. The previous year this had to be abandoned owing to the civil war in the immediate vicinity and the prevalence of disorder in the native city. Conditions were almost as unfavorable on this occasion, war having again broken out. The city was under martial law and all processions were forbidden. The intercession of Major-General William D. Connor, of the U. S. Army, and an enthusiastic member of the Rotary Club, achieved the desired aim, and the Chinese authorities lent their co-operation. Many hundreds of Chinese Boy Scouts and students, headed by a native Cadets Band, marched through the city to the place of assembly in the British Concession. A patrol of foreign Scouts went out to meet them and escorted them into the parade ground, where they were cordially received by the foreign boys and by General Connor (chairman of the Parade Committee). It was a very impressive scene, witnessed by a very large gathering of people, when all the boys were drawn up in parade formation fronting the gaily decorated Pavilion, on which was inscribed in large letters the familiar Chinese saying "Between the Four Seas are men, are Brethren," side by side with Rotary mottoes.

The senior Scout in the foreign patrol welcomed the Chinese boys in an admirable little speech, and thanked the Rotary Club for all it had done in their interest.

A student of the Anglo-Chinese College, in response to this greeting, spoke in English as follows:

Every one of us here knows that this is a special week. It is the "Father and Son" Week. And therefore it may be regarded as perhaps the most joyful and helpful week of the year. Fathers have been taking the opportunity to think especially about their sons, and sons have been devoting more time to thinking about their fathers.

In addition to this we have entertainments and shows given to us by the Rotary Club. Through these we have grasped that spirit of international brotherhood which is the promise of peace.

The Exhibition of Boys' Hobbies is an embodiment of the exchange of ideas through which we can know each other to a better and fuller extent. All these things make us think that, behind everything, there is a great force which enables us to achieve success.

As a student of the Tientsin Anglo-Chinese College, I want to show my most hearty appre-

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elation of this opportunity both to welcome our foreign brothers and to express our thankfulness to the Rotary Club on behalf of the Chinese students of this city.

General Connor welcomed the boys as guests of the Rotary Club.

We older men realize that the management of affairs will soon slip away from us and pass into your hands and we feel that it is very important that you should know one another. We have therefore arranged this joint reception of Chinese and foreign school boys as a part of our "Father and Son Week" program.

Most of the troubles between peoples arise from a lack of acquaintance with one another, a lack of understanding of each other's ideals and ambitions and we hope that by bringing you together once a year we may sow the seeds of friendship between you in an acquaintance and understanding that will produce good results for all countries that you represent.

You may feel that your responsibilities are small because you are yet young, but there is a proverb which says that "The boy is father to the man" and therefore each one of you is responsible for the kind of man that you will become in all too short a time. I do not mean to imply that the responsibility is all yours, for we men of the present generation must share it with you. But I do want to impress it on you that not only is a large part of it yours, but, what is more important to you is that you will reap directly and personally the rewards or punishments for the way you meet this responsibility, whereas we shall reap them only indirectly and impersonally.

As representative of the Rotary Club I bid you welcome. We wish you success in your studies and we hope that, even as boys, you feel the great responsibility that you have towards the men that you will some day be, and that as a result you men of the next generation may be able to accomplish the things that we have only dreamed of and that your efforts to bring peace and happiness to the world will be more successful than those of our generation have been.

The President of the Rotary Club (Mr. H. K. Chang) was introduced and spoke as follows:

I want to take advantage of this opportunity General Connor has given me to extend the hearty greeting of the Tientsin Rotary Club to you and to express our appreciation of your coming and taking part in this parade organized by our club as one of the most important events in connection with its observance of the Boys' Week. It may not be amiss for me here to tell you something about Rotary which is of recent growth in China. Paradoxical as it may seem, Rotary is at once abstract and concrete. It is abstract in the sense that it represents only an ideal. In the simplest terms it may be defined as a philosophy of service. But it is concrete—and very much so—in the sense that it is a vital factor in the present-day civilization. It has become an agency through which hundreds of men, leaders in every walk of life, are making important contributions to the welfare of mankind. And it is out of this ideal of service that we have, in common with over 2000 clubs of all nationalities, taken up this Boys Work. We believe that we would be rendering an important service if, at a given time we call the attention of the community toward its obligations to its boys. We want the community to think of certain things in terms of boyhood. We want them to recognize boyhood as the surest guarantee of the future. We want to bring before them vividly the conception that their chief asset is not in their mines and fields but in their boys. No matter what the resources a nation may have in material things, its greatness is measured by its citizenship and the character of the life that it builds into its manhood of tomorrow. And that is why we want to provide the boys of today with ways and means whereby they may in due time become individuals of power and usefulness.

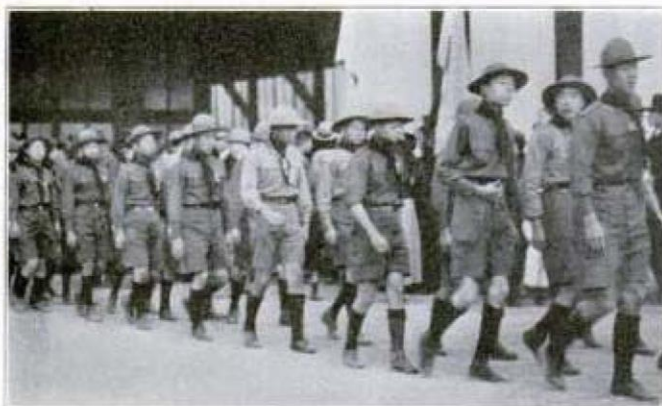
It is most gratifying—indeed it is inspiring to see so many boys both native born and foreign participate side by side in this parade. This serves to emphasize as nothing can emphasize so strongly the international character of Rotary. This parade is a demonstration that international friendship is real. Is it then

too much to hope that, if the initiative taken by Rotary is intensively followed up, we are within measurable distance of having a world of fellowship and brotherhood and mutual service which is the essence and spirit of Rotary?

One of the most striking and significant speeches was that of Rotarian V. K. Ting. Speaking in Chinese and particularly to the boys of his own race, among whom he has very great influence, he said that in former times there was little understanding between Chinese and foreigners. The Chinese despised the newcomers as barbarians. Then came another period, culminating in the Boxer affair, when the Chinese were made to fear the foreigner as a dangerous foe. A better state of things was now being established by common accord among all nations, and the Rotary Club in its own sphere was doing all possible to help forward the new movement of co-operation and good understanding.

The Rotary Club, incidentally, presents a magnificent trophy to be awarded annually to the most deserving and efficient Scout, and occasion was taken to present it to this year's winner. Certificates of merit were also handed to two other Scouts.

In view of the events of the preceding summer, and the part played by the student class in the nationalist movement, this parade, and whole-hearted spirit of co-operation evinced by the Chinese students, constituted a singularly striking demonstration of the possibilities of future accord.



"Father and Son Week" in Tientsin, China, was one of the most successful undertakings sponsored by the local Rotarians. Boys of all nationalities participated in the parade and in the hobby exhibit both of which were features of the week's activities.

Above, General Connor, U. S. A., and Rotarians reviewing the parade of school-boys. At left, a troop of Chinese Boy Scouts which formed part of the Scout guard of honor.