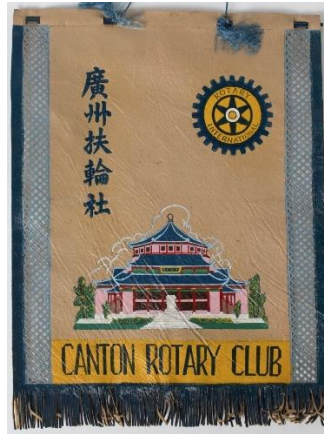


Birth of Canton Rotary Club (廣州扶輪社) in 1931

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

15 September 2015



This piece of history is referred to the Canton Rotary Club (廣州扶輪社) formed in the first republican nation in Asia – The Republic of China (中華民國). The Club was organized at the year end of 1931 and was later admitted to Rotary International in spring 1932, but was regrettably terminated in 1950 due to adverse political environment.

There are still 4 Rotary clubs of Canton existing in the Rotary World, and they are all located in the United States of America:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) Rotary Club of Canton, Ohio (1915) | (2) Rotary Club of Canton, Illinois (1919) |
| (3) Rotary Club of Canton, Georgia (1937) | (4) Rotary Club of Canton, Michigan (1977) |

The Oriental Rotary Extension to South China

On Saturday, 15 November 1930, the “Marco Polo of Rotary” James Wheeler Davidson (禮密臣 / 達飛聲), Honorary General Commissioner of Rotary International, visited Canton (*Guangzhou*) (廣州) of the Republic of China together with his wife Lillian and daughter Marjory. It was Jim’s earnest desire to organize a Rotary Club there in Canton as the plan of his Far East Rotary Extension Mission assigned by Rotary International. Jim had been touring the Orient for the last 2 years, organizing Rotary clubs at different places in the Far East.

Speaking of the ideals of Rotary, in Canton, Jim told the local press 《*The Canton Gazette*》 : “... .. its success is probably due to the fact that it is perhaps the first great movement that has had the world as its field, that has shocked no faith or creed, offended no custom and aroused no greed. Its appeal ignores all international boundaries: it has no mystic rites; it places methods, its aims and objects frankly before the world and is open equally to the member and non-member; it can never be wrecked on the rocks of political argument since it demands of its members first of all good citizenship; it can never be accused of disloyalty since it stands for the rights of nations and believes in patriotism. It is not even a pacifist organization.

“Rotary does not feel that there is anything in loyalty to one’s country that is incompatible with developing friendship with men of other lands. In fact Rotary believes that the citizen who best serves his country is the one who wishes to know the truth about its neighbours, and who desires to replace hatred between nations and peoples with friendship. With the exception of Russia and Canton, the world is truly well covered with Rotary Clubs. It is to be hoped that the leading citizens of Canton will welcome this opportunity to link with the rest of the world.”

The next day, Jim and family went southward to visit the British Crown Colony Hong Kong. At the moment a good start had already been made in Hong Kong which offered an ideal city for a Rotary Club on account of its cosmopolitan population. Prior to this visit, Jim had already established a Rotary Club in Singapore of the British Straits Settlement.



James W. Davidson with daughter Marjory and wife Lillian

The City of Canton in the 1930s

Canton, one of the foremost cities of China, is situated on the Pearl River (珠江), the great commercial metropolis of South China (25° 11» N., 115° 14*E.). It is the capital of the province of Kwangtung (*Guangdong*) (廣東) and the seat of government of the province. By the Chinese it is often referred to as the City of Five Rams (五羊城) which name has come down from an ancient legend. Canton is, by the way, the western misnomer for Kwangtung, the real name.

Because of its favoured situation, Canton at an early date drew European traffic. As far back as 1516 the Portuguese found their way to this port and as early as the 10th century Arab navigators had made regular voyages between here and the western ports of Asia. After them came the Dutch, the English and other western traders.

“Canton” was the name given in the 19th Century by the European for the Guangdong provincial capital “Guangzhou”. The English name “Canton” derived from Portuguese “Cantão” or “Cidade de Cantão”, a muddling of dialectical pronunciations of “Kwangtung”. Although it originally and chiefly applied to the walled city, it was also used in English in reference to Guangdong generally. It was adopted as the Postal Map Romanization of “Kwangchow” and

remained in common use until the gradual adoption of *pinyin* “Guangzhou”. As an adjective, “Cantonese” is still used in describing the people, language, cuisine and culture of Guangzhou and the surrounding Liangguang Region (兩廣), i.e. the greater region of the Guangdong (廣東) and Guangxi (廣西) provinces.

The city which was fast expanding then stretched along the river front for a length of four miles, with a depth of two miles. Formerly it was enclosed by a wall 43 feet thick at the base and from 25 to 40 feet high. This had been demolished in order that a motor road from 80 to 100 feet wide could be constructed. Modern buildings, wide streets and handsome parks adorn the city.

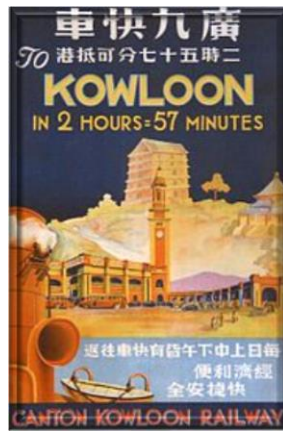
Much has been done in recent years to develop home industries. Factories have sprung with mushroom-like rapidity, especially at Honam (河南) (*South Bund*). A cotton spinning factory equipped with up-to-date machinery has been erected by a local concern at an outlay of \$5,000,000. Locally made matches were exported as far as the Straits Settlements (*Malaysia and Singapore today*) and the Dutch East Indies (now *Indonesia*). Five factories and several hundred workshops for producing hosiery and underwear might be counted among other industries. The silks, ivories, and jades of Canton were too well-known to require mention. The population of Canton City itself was estimated at one million.

There was ample means of communication between Canton and the British Crown Colony Hong Kong (香港), a distance of 111 miles by rail and 95 miles by water. An express train took a little under 3 hours to cover the distance. The complete railway between Canton and Kowloon (九龍) in Hong Kong was opened on 5 October 1911. Through-trains ran from Canton at Tai Sha Tau station (大沙頭火車站) across the border to the southern terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀). There was regular steamboat service between Canton and the Portuguese Territory Macao (澳門), Wuchow (*Wuzhou*) (梧州), West River ports, Newchwang (牛莊埠) (now Port of Yingkou 營口港), Kwangchauwan (*Guangzhouwan*) (廣州灣), Shanghai (上海), etc. Real work had been begun on the uncompleted section of the Canton-Hankow Railway (粵漢鐵路) so that in the near future rail travel would be possible between the two cities. A branch line of this railway from Canton to Shamsui (*Sanshui*) (三水), making the West River ports within easier reach. An extension of this line to Shiushing (*Zhaoqing*) (肇慶) and from there to Kwangsi (*Guangxi*) (廣西) was being planned by the authorities who were also contemplating the construction of an east-bound line to link up Canton with Swatow (*Shantou*) (汕頭) and Amoy (*Xiamen*) (廈門). On 1 September 1931, long distance telephone service was opened between Canton and Hong Kong.

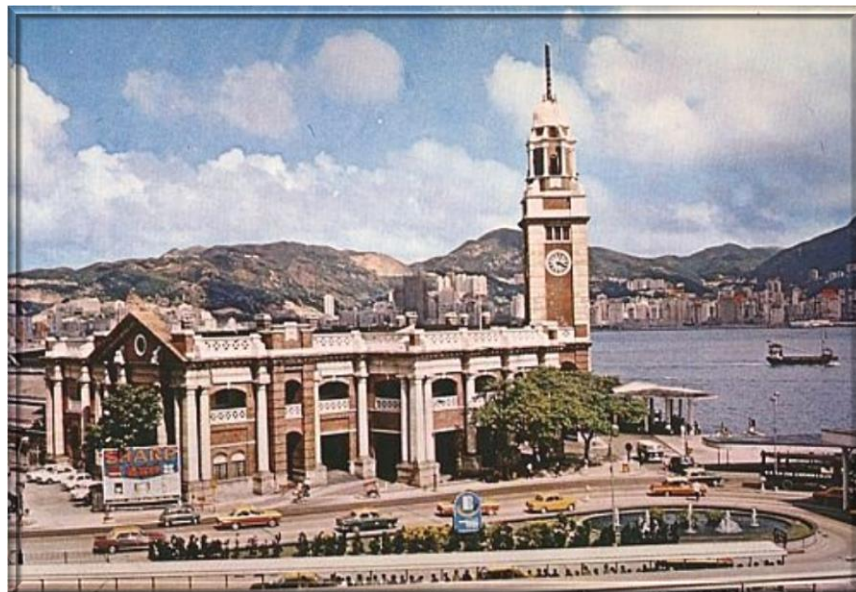
No description of Canton, however brief, is complete without a word on Shameen (*Shamian*) (沙面), which is an artificial island towards the West of Canton City, on which foreign interests were centered. Shameen comprised the British and French Concessions and was well laid out with paths shaded by handsome trees, gardens and tennis courts. From here foreign nationals conducted their business activities and here the majority of them had their homes. Trading companies from Britain, the United States, France, Holland, Italy, Germany, Portugal, and Japan built stone mansions along the waterfront. Shameen was also the consulates district for Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, as well as the United States of America. Certainly, no doubt, the Canton Rotary Club’s secretariat was also located at Shameen.



廣州大沙頭火車站 *Tai Sha Tau Railway Station, Canton*



Canton-Kowloon Express Train Advertisement



九龍尖沙咀鐵路總站 *Kowloon Railway Terminus*

Inception and Birth of Canton Rotary Club

There was no further action in Canton after James W. Davidson's visit in 1930. But with the organizing effort by Jim, the Hong Kong Rotary Club (香港扶輪社) was admitted to Rotary International on 20 February 1931. When Dr. Fong Foo-Sec (鄺富灼博士), a Guangdong native, took up the presidential office of Shanghai Rotary Club (上海扶輪社) on 1 July 1931, there was a wish from the Club to sponsor a new Club in Canton. Taking the opportunity that Dr. James M. Henry (香雅各博士), Provost of Lingnan University (嶺南大學教務長) visited Shanghai in the fall of 1931, James was persuaded to undertake the organization of the new Club. Very soon, the Shanghai Rotary Club decided and appointed its immediate past president George Ashmore Fitch (費吳生) to serve as the Special Representative to take up this mission of Rotary extension.

The first meeting, taking the form of a luncheon at Hotel Asia (亞洲大酒店), to discuss the organization of a Rotary Club in the city of Canton was held on 13 November 1931 with the presence of Dr. James M. Henry, Dr. Chien Shu-Fan, Patrick T. Carey, Huang Kuang, George William Greene, Edward Shim, Lee Ying-Lam, and Lo Po-Shue. The second meeting to continue the discussion was held on 23 November 1931, with a few more in attendance than previously. A provisional committee was appointed consisting of J. M. Henry, K. Huang and P. T. Carey to arrange for an inauguration meeting.

The first formal meeting which gave birth to this Club was held, again at Hotel Asia, on Tuesday, 15 December 1931, from 7 to 9:30 p. m., with 29 charter members and the following 4 visiting Rotarians present: (1) From Shanghai Rotary Club: George A. Fitch, Special Representative; (2) From Hong Kong Rotary Club: Sir William Hornell (康寧爵士), President; Maurice Frederick Key, OBE, Secretary; and Rotarian D. M. Maynard.

At this inauguration meeting, charter membership cards were filled in, election of officers made, appropriate speeches given by George A. Fitch, William Hornell and James M. Henry, and it was unanimously agreed on motion by James Henry and seconded by P. T. Carey to apply to the Rotary International for a charter.

Address by George A. Fitch (費吳生), Past President & Special Representative of Shanghai Rotary Club (Head of Y.M.C.A. in China)

In his address, Fitch spoke on the objects and organization of the Rotary Movement which represented on September last a total of 3,463 clubs and an approximate membership of 155,000 business and professional men throughout the world. He brought out the significant fact that Rotary appeals especially to those who live in the great port cities of the East because of the work it was doing in building up a great world fellowship. Fitch said,

We know that friendship between nations cannot be achieved by treaties, or by the kind words of diplomats: international amity can only come through the world desiring friendship, and it is not brought about by the acceptance of it as an ideal, but by contact." Fitch also pointed out: "International-mindedness and friendship were not the only aims of Rotary, which sought also to carry out community and vocational services.

Fitch then explained in detail the pitch of organization to which a Club like that in Shanghai—twelve years old—had been brought about. This part of his speech was rather strong meat for

babies, and one-year-old like the Hong Kong Rotary Club. He concluded by reading the Objects of Rotary.

Advices by Sir William W. Hornell (康寧爵士), Charter President of Hong Kong Rotary Club (Vice-Chancellor of Hong Kong University 香港大學校長)

In calling upon Sir William Hornell to address the meeting, James Henry said the example of Hong Kong would stimulate them to friendly emulation. Sir William Hornell gave a few words of advice that were timely and appropriate to the occasion. He said:

I will give you a few words of advice, based on my very short experience of Rotary. To succeed, you have to make your meetings a success – something you look forward to attending. Don't 'grouse' when the room is hot, or the speaker dull, or the lunch indigestible. Make a point of coming regularly to the meetings and don't dun the directors with application for leave of absence. First establish a real bond of friendly feeling between yourselves and then you will be able to go out and make Canton a better and a happier place.

After hearing about the magnificence of the organization in Shanghai and the wonderful things they do there, I feel about the Queen of Sheba after a memorable interview with King Solomon – 'there is no life left in me.' (*laughter*) But after a year of considerable difficulties and some disappointments, I say unfeignedly that I do not regret having accepted office as the first President in Hong Kong. I sincerely congratulate Canton on having taken this step, because I believe that the primary thing in Rotary is that it offers the opportunity for its members to become socially-minded, to find joy in the society of their fellow human beings.

Shanghai is a very rich town, an international town they seem to have most marvellous ways of screwing money out of each other! They wouldn't stand it in Hong Kong! (*laughter*) In Shanghai, where Rotarians sing, they must meet in a padded room – (*laughter*) – at least, a sound-proof room, and so they can sing as much as they like. We have to hold our meetings in Hong Kong in a section of a restaurant, and if we took to singing it would soon be a question whether Lane Crawford's would not have to raise the price of lunch to the other people – unless they had to lower it! (*laughter*) However, Rotary flourishes where use of the first name or a nickname is not prevalent, where there is no singing, no horseplay and no so-called stunts. These are incidentals and not part of the Constitution. I believe the reason why Rotary is a world movement to be found in the joy which men who are socially-minded find in working together for a common purpose. The man who is a good citizen, who is fond of his own country, is much more likely to be acceptable to people of other countries.

Remarks by Dr. James McClure Henry (香雅各博士), Charter Member & Vice-President (Provost, Lingnan University 嶺南大學教務長)

When President Dr. Chien Shu-Fan (錢樹芬博士) was compelled to leave the meeting on account of indisposition, James Henry took the chair and congratulated the members on having a president who was one of the leading citizens of Canton and remarked that this new-born Club was grateful to the Shanghai Rotary Club for sending so able and inspiring a representative as George A. Fitch. James Henry dwelled on the organization of the Club and the part Shanghai and Hong Kong took in it. He further said that a good deal of the enthusiasm for Rotary in

Canton was due to the interesting reports in the papers of the meetings of the Hong Kong Rotary Club and that Canton Rotary Club was going to succeed and make itself felt for international friendship, better understanding and a better Canton. It might be added here that James Henry was more instrumental in bringing into being the Canton Rotary Club than any other person.

Greetings from Rotary International

Canton Rotary Club was elected membership to Rotary International on 25 April 1932 with Charter #3509 granted. It was the 4th Club formed in the Republic of China. The charter did not arrive until the latter part of May 1932. In a letter of the 27 April 1932, the Rotary International at Chicago wrote to every charter member in brief as follows:

These few words of welcome may surprise you, but with them I am expressing the fraternal greetings of all Rotarians to you as one who has recently come into the fellowship of Rotary. This fellowship opens to your association with approximately 155,000 business and professional men who are wishing and working for the welfare of all peoples and nations. Just as you are welcomed in your own Rotary club so will you be received and welcomed in the Rotary club of any city in the world.

List of Charter Members with Classifications

- (1) [President] Chien Shu-Fan (錢樹芬) (*General Law Practice*)
- (2) [Vice President] James McClure Henry (香雅各) (*Education-Universities*) (*Lingnan University 嶺南大學*)
- (3) [Secretary] Alfred Elliott Quin (*River Shipping*) (*Deacon & Co.*)
- (4) Walter F. Arndt (*Ocean Shipping*) (*The Robert Dollar Co.*)
- (5) Benjamin Bennett Anthony (*Lubricating Oil Distributing*) (*Standard Oil Co. of New York*)
- (6) George Bodiker (*Metal Mining & Refining*) (*Bodiker & Co.*)
- (7) Patrick T. Carey (*Electrical Supplies Distributing*) (*China Electric Co., Ltd.*)
- (8) Chang Hua-Ling (*Newspaper Publishing*) (*The Canton Gazette*)
- (9) Tso H. Chen (*Silk Brokerage*) (*Silk Bank*)
- (10) Chu Yu-Mai (朱友枚) (*Light & Power Service*) (*Kwangtung Electric Supply Co., Ltd.*)
- (11) Deane Tsung-Yao (*Telephone Service*) (*Canton Municipal Telephone Administration*)
- (12) Paul Kwong Fu (*Silk Testing*) (*Raw Silk Testing Bureau*)
- (13) George William Greene (*Real Estate*) (*Asia Realty Co.*)
- (14) E. R. Hill (*Piece Goods Distributing*) (*Dodwell & Co., Ltd.*)
- (15) August Hoffmeister (*Raw & Waste Silk Distributing*) (*U. Spalinger & Co.*)

- (16) James C. Hung (洪璠) (*Government Administration – Engineering*) (*Canton Municipal Government*)
- (17) Henry Laffond (*Raw Silk Exporting*) (*Mandier Ribet & Co.*)
- (18) Lau Tai-Chi (*Dentistry*)
- (19) Lee Ying-Lam (李應林) (*Young Men’s Associations*) (*Young Men’s Christian Association*)
- (20) Li Lu-Chao (李祿超) (*Government Advisor*) (*Kwangtung Provincial Government*)
- (21) T. Kai Liang (*Banking - Savings*) (*Shanghai Commercial & Savings Bank*)
- (22) Y. M. Lin (*Trust Company*) (*Canton Trust Co., Ltd.*)
- (23) Lo Po-Shue (*Insurance – Fire*) (*China United Assurance Society Ltd.*)
- (24) Loo Ien-Ming (盧賢明) (*Banking – Domestic*) (*The China State Bank Ltd. 國華商業銀行*)
- (25) S. C. Mok (*Water Service*) (*Canton Municipal Water Works*)
- (26) Edward Shim (*Agricultural Chemistry*) (*Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd.*)
- (27) Girault T. Thach (*Banking – General*) (*National City Bank of New York*)
- (28) Tong Hsuan (*Government Administration – Salt Revenue*) (*Salt Revenue Service*)
- (29) Samuel Wong (*Theatres*) (*Chung Hwa Theatre*)

Regular Meeting Venues of Canton Rotary Club

Since inception, Canton Rotary Club had already decided to hold its regular meetings at 2 alternative venues, with the approval granted by Rotary International:

Option (1) -- Indoor Venue:

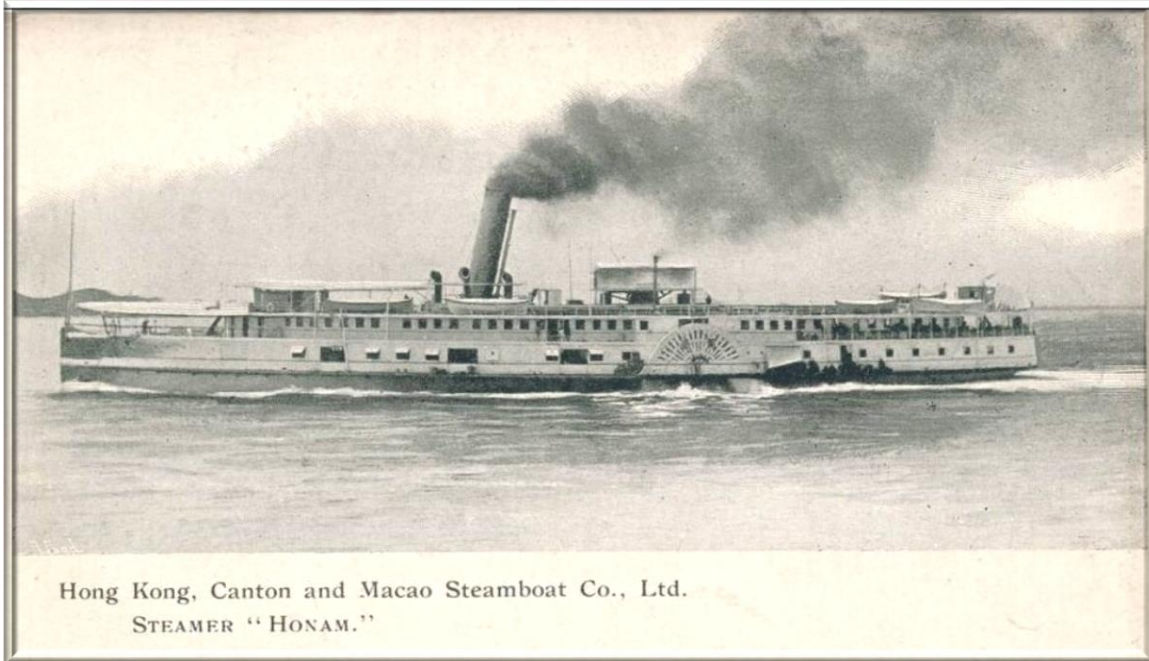
Hotel Asia (亞洲大酒店) located at the West Bund (西堤二馬路 34 號) which was close to the Club Secretariat at Shameen.



Option (2) -- Floating Venue:

On board one of the vessels of the “Hong Kong, Canton & Macao Steamboat Co., Ltd.” (省港澳輪船公司) which offered scheduled transports between Canton and Hong Kong.

(This proved to be a smart decision in the later days as an attraction to good attendance when the 2 clubs of Canton and Hong Kong held their regular inter-city meetings, alternatively. Canton and Hong Kong Rotary clubs were the closest neighbours and brotherhood to each other.)



PRESIDENT
DR. S. F. CHIEN
VICE-PRESIDENT
DR. J. M. HENRY
HON. TREASURER
Y. M. LIN
HON. SECRETARY
A. E. QUIN

"Service
Above Self"

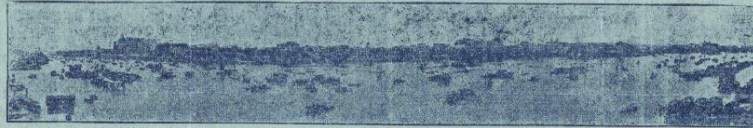
"THE ROCAN"



"He Profits Most
Who Serves Best"

DIRECTORS
H. LAFFOND
AND
F. L. LEE
G. M. GREENE
J. C. HUANG
P. T. CAREY

issued fortnightly by
THE ROTARY CLUB OF CANTON



CANTON, CHINA.

No. 1

MEETING EVERY TUESDAY, 1 P.M., ABOARD HONGKONG-CANTON BOAT

AUGUST 15, 1932

INCEPTION AND BIRTH OF CANTON ROTARY CLUB

The first meeting, taking the form of a luncheon at Hotel Asia, to discuss the organization of a Rotary Club in the city of Canton was held on the 13th of Nov. 1931 with the following present:

Dr. James M. Henry
Dr. Shu Fan Chien
Mr. Pat T. Carey
Mr. Kuang Huang
Mr. George Wm. Greene
Mr. Edward Shim
Mr. Ying Lam Lee
Mr. Po Shue Lo

The second meeting to continue the discussion was held on the 23rd of Nov. 1931, with a few more in attendance than previously. A provisional committee was appointed consisting of Dr. Henry, Mr. K. Huang and Mr. Carey to arrange for an inauguration meeting.

But the first formal meeting which gave birth to this Club was held, again at Hotel Asia, on the 15th of Dec. 1931, from 7 to 9:30 p. m., with 29 charter members and the following visiting Rotarians present:

Visiting Rotarians

Mr. George Fitch, representing the Shanghai Rotary Club
Sir William Hornell, President of the Hongkong Rotary Club
Mr. D. M. Maynard, representing the Hongkong Rotary Club
Mr. M. E. Key, Secretary of the Hongkong Rotary Club

At this inauguration meeting, charter membership cards were filled in, election of officers made, appropriate speeches given by Mr. Fitch, Sir William Hornell and Dr. Henry, and it was unanimously agreed on motion by Dr. Henry and seconded by Mr. Carey to apply to the Rotary International for a charter.

Officers

The following officers were elected by ballot:
President: Dr. Shu Fan Chien, lawyer.

Vice-Pres.: Dr. J. M. Henry, Provost of Lingnan University;
Secretary: Mr. Alfred E. Quin of Deacon & Co.
Treasurer: Mr. Y. M. Lin of Canton Trust Co.

(Continued on Page 2)

World Good Will And Peace Visualized By Pres S. F. Chien In An Address Of Absorbing Interest

Before a large attendance of Rotarians and friends Pres. S. F. Chien of the Canton Rotary Club gave a most interesting address at a lunch meeting August 9, aboard the S. S. Tai-shan. He took for his subject the sixth object of Rotary viz. the advancement of understanding, good-will and international peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of Service.

By way of introducing his address Pres. Chien retold a humorous anecdote once narrated by a professor of the law faculty of the University of Chicago at a smoker.

In a certain family, it seemed, the only son and pride of the house was a mental weakling. At a dinner, fearing that he might utter something foolish he was enjoined to maintain strict silence. The guests on noticing that not a word had passed his mouth remarked to one another that the boy must be a fool. At this the youngster exclaimed: "Daddy, it is no use. They have found out already that I am a fool!"

(Continued on Page 2)

High And Universal Standards Of Business Ethics

The Rotary clubs in the Orient do almost as much to encourage high and universal, instead of local standards, of business ethics, as to promote international good-will. I think that Rotary is taken more seriously in the Far East than it is in the United States. Though the clubs in the Orient do not testify to the spirit of fellowship by the back-slapping and singing that characterize clubs at home they are a powerful factor in the breakdown of that wall of reserve with which the Oriental protects himself against the foreigner, and they greatly facilitate the making of business contracts.

Besides the three clubs in Manchuria—at Dairen, Harbin, and Mukden—and the club in Hong Kong there are three clubs in China proper. These three—at Peiping, Shanghai and Tientsin—have a combined membership of about two hundred and twenty Europeans, Americans and Orientals. The mixture is particularly noticeable in the Shanghai Club where more than a dozen nationalities including both Chinese and Japanese are represented. I have had the pleasure of visiting many of the Rotary clubs in the Far East and I believe that the Rotary movement is doing more than anything else I know to build a bridge between Orient and Occident and to further the interests of peace.

W. E. Priestly in "Asia", April, 1932.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

What does attendance mean to a club? Why is attendance stressed? Well, in the first place, attendance is the life of the club; any club that fails to stress attendance is doomed; without attendance a club does not mean anything. But this does not apply to Rotary clubs only. It applies to the schools, to the clerks working in stores as well as the boss, to the manufacturer and even to home life. The schools must have attendance, a store man must have attendance from his clerks and must also give personal attendance, the manufacturer must have attendance from the people working for him and if a man's home life is to be successful there must be a certain percentage of attendance.

To what extremes should a club go in stressing attendance? If you can attend without personal or business sacrifices it is your duty as a Rotarian to attend. Why? If for no other reason, you owe it to the other members who are trying to keep up the attendance and the standing of the club.

We so often hear "I guess I had better quit because I won't be able to attend regularly." This is the wrong attitude. If you make an effort to attend all meetings possible you are doing all that your fellow Rotarians ask of you, but if you miss because it rained or the car was out of fix, well, that's a different story.—Weekly Bulletin, Kosciusko, U.S.A.

CANTON—WHERE IT IS AND WHAT IT IS—BRIEFLY GIVEN

Canton, one of the foremost cities of China, is situated on the Pearl River, known to the Chinese as Chu Kiang, in latitude 23 deg. 7 min. 10 sec. N., and longitude 113 deg. 14 min. 30 sec. E. It is the capital of the province of Kwangtung and the seat of government of the province. By the Chinese it is often referred to as the City of Rams which name has come down from an ancient legend. Canton is, by the way, the western misnomer for Kwangtung, the real name.

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Development

The city which is fast expanding now stretches along the river front for a length of four miles, with a depth of two miles. Formerly it was enclosed by a wall 43 feet thick at the base and from 25 to 40 feet high. This had been demolished in order that a motor road from 80 to 100 feet wide could be constructed. Modern buildings, wide streets and handsome parks now adorn the city.

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(Continued on Page 2)