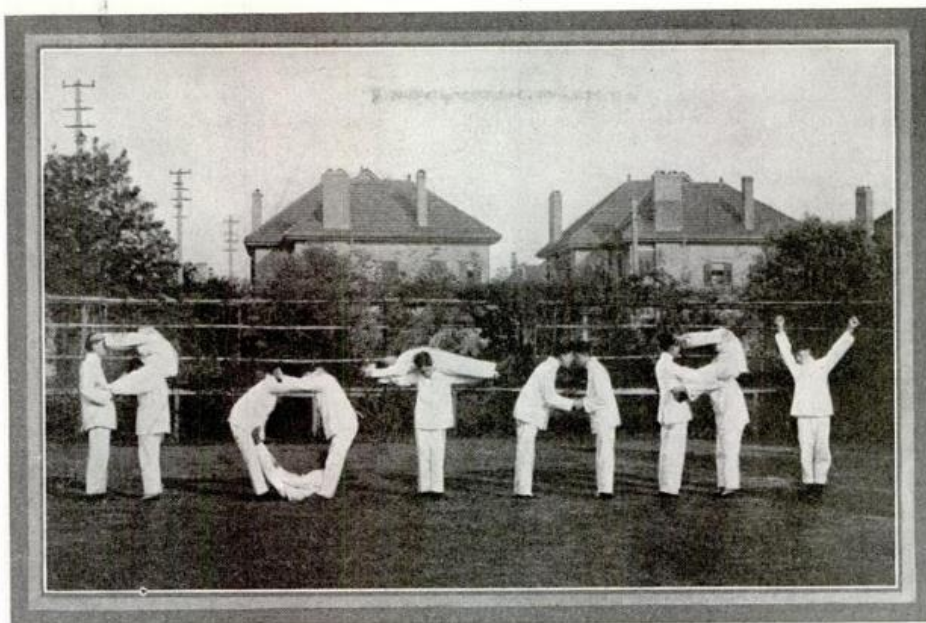


"Rotary in Chinese" — Blind Chinese boys "spell" Rotary with the use of a few legs and arms.



Over the Great Wall

Rotary Service storms the barricade of racial antipathy

By ARTHUR MELVILLE

ACROSS the north end of China, stretched over some twenty-two degrees of longitude lies the Great Wall, one of the most impressive artificial barriers ever erected by man. Roughly constructed of great boulders it was a formidable obstacle in its day, and for nineteen centuries was considered an important part of the country's defences. Yet now it is for the most part neglected, and only where it crosses some important mountain pass is there any attempt to garrison its watch towers.

But far more formidable than such artificial barriers at the frontiers of nations are the feelings of suspicion and envy which keep men apart—and this form of "great wall" is by no means confined to China. To force a breach in one of these invisible, yet very real, obstacles, is a far greater task for modern man than is the removal of barriers of stone. Yet it is being done, and in China as elsewhere there are signs that East and West are finding common ground.

Among the influences (and there are many of them) working for the better relationship of nations is Rotary, which, having secured a foothold on the east coast of China bids fair to carry its message throughout the land. That this condition should exist, despite the natural difficulties of language, is really not so surprising when one takes everything into consideration. For the principles taught by Confucius some twenty-eight centuries ago have much in common with those proclaimed by Rotary—a fact too often overlooked by those who

all too often seek the *differences* among religions rather than the *similarities*. So it happened that the first Rotary Club in China, established at Shanghai in what is practically foreign territory with a predominance of American and British members—found a great opportunity ready at hand. The story of its establishment is rather a diversion from the usual history of Rotary clubs, for the Shanghai club was founded in a territory where there was no district governor—an outpost far from other established clubs. It was a pioneering effort by a man believing in *Rotary International*.

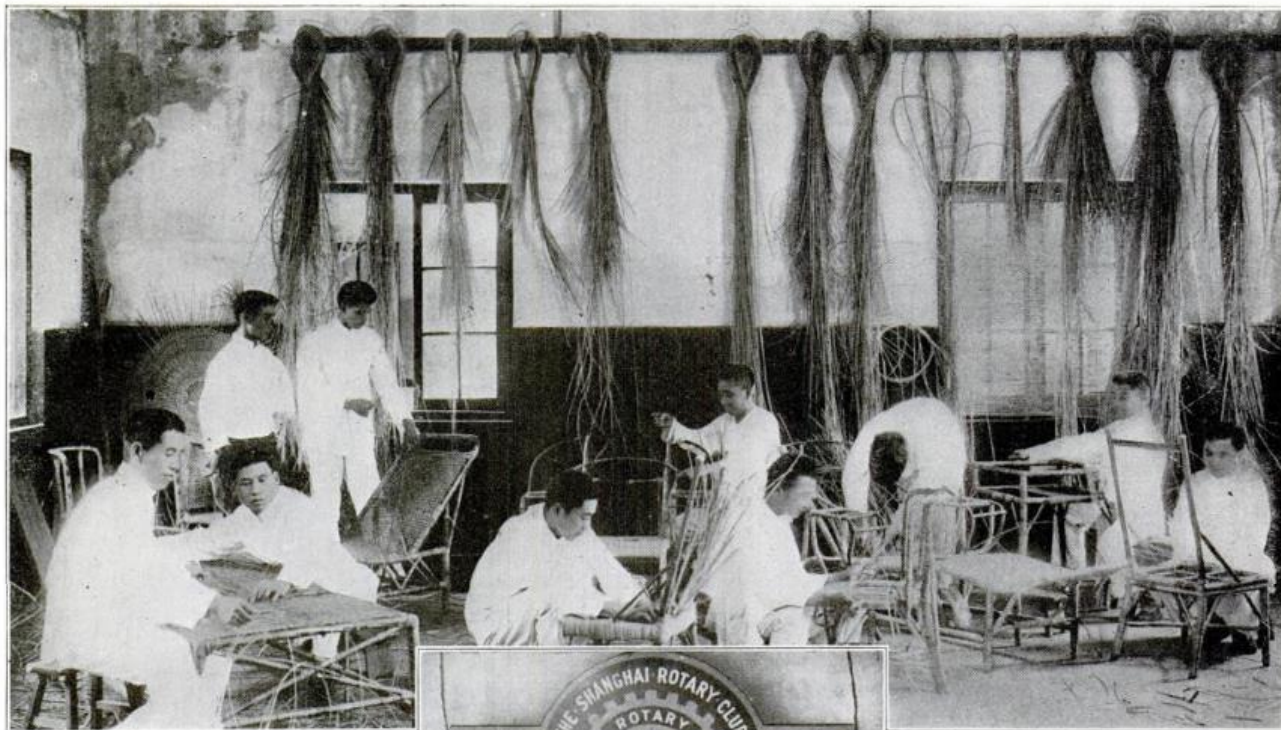
In 1919, Roger D. Pinneo, former president of the Rotary Club of Seattle, Washington, went abroad on an extended business trip undertaken in the interests of the Pacific Steamship Company. Interested in the possibilities of Rotary extension he conferred with the Secretary at Rotary Headquarters and sought permission to establish a club at Manila while in the Orient. The successful organization of the Manila Rotary club inspired him to further efforts, so he turned his attention to Shanghai. As the result of his work, Shanghai Rotary was elected to membership October 1st, 1919, and started its career with thirty-seven charter members, who met first at the Palace Hotel there. The late Dr. Julian Petit was elected the first president, and did yeoman service in getting the club away to a true start, as well as his later work as successor to George L. Treadwell, the latter having been elected the first secretary. "Tread" later returned

to the United States and he is now full-time secretary of Chicago Rotary. R. Buchan was elected treasurer. Rotarian Pinneo presided at the first meeting of the club, held July 9th, 1919.

The club promptly issued "The Pagoda," its weekly news bulletin, and began first to create the groundwork for fellowship within itself.

The list of charter members does not reveal a single Chinese name—but in the succeeding years Shanghai Rotary has purposely acquired a cosmopolitan character, so that now its membership is 80 per cent American, 10 per cent British, and 10 per cent native Chinese. It immediately sensed the opportunity for developing friendly relations between the various nationalities represented in Shanghai. Appreciating that this end could also be accomplished through co-operation with the younger generation as well as through its membership, the Rotary Club of Shanghai has pursued various means of working with Chinese and foreign boys. Two of these, co-operation with the new half-million dollar Shanghai American School, and service to the Institution for Chinese Blind, deserve some further mention.

THE American School was founded to meet one of the great problems of those Americans whose business interests are in the Orient—that of providing a suitable education for their children. How well it meets the demand is evinced by the journeys which American pupils undertake to reach their school—many of them traveling for days

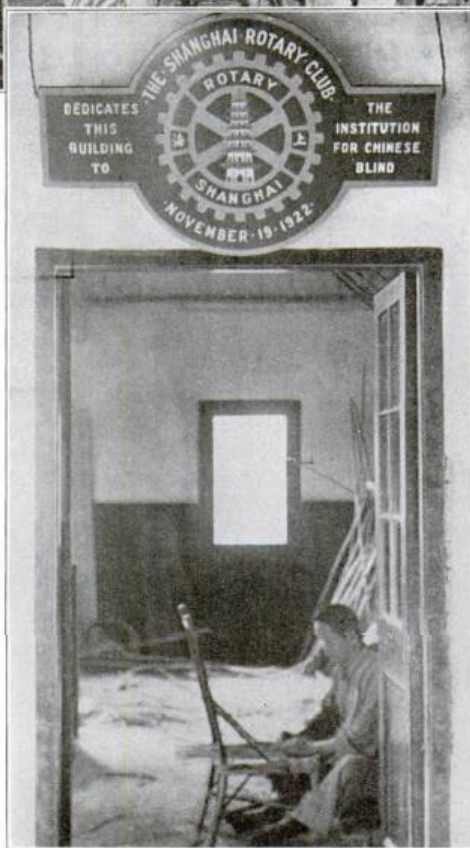


The Rotary Club of Shanghai, China, has provided an additional building for the Institution for Chinese Blind.

through wild country by small boats and other primitive means of transportation. To this school, the Shanghai Rotary Club brings added incentive through the annual award of a \$500 scholarship in any American university for that pupil who has done the most to serve his high school. Competition for these scholarships is keen and the award is not easy where there is so much rivalry. The winner must be more than a three-letter man or a star debater—he must illustrate the spirit of service in some way which directly affects the standing of the school as a whole. Coaching teammates instead of striving for individual success; writing up school news for the local papers; these are some of the many ways which the pupils have found to show their desire to serve their school.

The success of the American school in Shanghai has caused agitation for a similar school at Peking, and it seems likely that this will shortly be provided. Courses in the Chinese language are to be compulsory in these schools, and the pupils thereby secure a first aid to friendliness—a common means of communication.

But the students are not the only beneficiaries of this Rotary service. It finds expression in other ways as for instance in the Y. M. C. A. and the Institution for Chinese Blind, both of which are assisted by Shanghai Rotary. The "Y" is sufficiently well-known for its international work, and needs little



comment here; but the Institution is still at the beginning of a promising career.

Probably the Rev. George B. Fryer had read Milton's sonnets—at least he must have had some idea of the spirit which enabled the poet to surmount the handicap of blindness—and some desire to inject that spirit into others. It is twenty-five years since the Rev. Fryer founded the Institution for Chinese Blind at Shanghai, and since then endowment funds and missionary labor have been employed to maintain it. George B.

Blind students of this school are unusually adept at weaving baskets and in making wicker and rattan furniture.

Fryer, son of the founder, and his wife who now direct the school, have dedicated their lives to this work.

ALTHOUGH the sale of rattan and wicker products made by the blind boys supplements the endowment funds to some extent, there is still opportunity for those who wish to contribute either money or personal help to the work of the Institution. The Shanghai Rotary Club, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and the British Women's Club are listed among the organizations lending energy to those who will not yield to a handicap. Besides building a room 40 by 20 feet, and a kitchen so as to give the Institution much needed space for its operations, the Rotarians have helped in other ways. Individual members find that their visits are greatly appreciated by those who do not need vision to recognize their friends.

There are now some forty-five boys in the Institution whose ages range from three to twenty-one. The skill which they display in manufacturing steamer chairs, tables, baskets, hard-wood furniture, and various other Oriental hand-made products would be creditable if it were exhibited by those in full possession of their sight, and when one considers that it is all done by "seeing" hands it seems wonderful. But the boys do not spend all their time at work. There are recreation intervals which are enjoyed just as much as those in which

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Over the Great Wall

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other boys engage; there are athletic exercises which are just as beneficial in developing strength and sureness as any provided elsewhere. Just to show how well they are trained, a group of these boys gave an acrobatic spelling of "Rotary" when some of the club members were visiting them. It would be interesting to see how many keen-eyed athletes could do this trick off-hand.

Although there are two tots of three years old in the school most of the boys are much older. Also most of them come from families in which the parents would have a hard time to furnish such special training as they now receive. Trachoma is a real problem in China—and the pity of it is that the disease is contagious. Thus a lack of sanitation (which is the chief cause of the disease) in one family may bring suffering to others.

But the boys do not let their handicap eliminate many of the pleasures of life—including that great pleasure of giving pleasure. Like most of the sightless they have unusually acute hearing, and when they give their annual minstrel show the singing is well worth attention—even though they cannot read the notes, for both words and tune are correctly given.

Now since the Rotarians also had experienced the pleasure of helping others the boys were able to reach new horizons of knowledge. They were taken on rides through the city, and when brought to some of the points of interest busy fingers soon revealed to the boys many wonders which their hosts knew—and probably some which those hosts were not acquainted with. For example the boys soon learned to distinguish various shrubs by the "feel" of the leaves; and afterwards could give interesting descriptions of what they "saw."

Naturally the field for such training is not limited to the Institution itself, and we find a dozen graduates of the Institution preparing to help others as they have been helped themselves. Other schools have been established and the advantages of such work among the millions of Chinese will doubtless demand that still more such schools be built.

When these new Institutions are

started there will probably be other Chinese Rotary clubs to assist them. For besides the 100 Rotarians in Shanghai there are the new Rotarians in Tientsin and the prospect of other Chinese clubs in the near future. Eventually Rotary clubs will be organized in Peking, Hankow, Canton and many other cities as Rotary develops in China. The day may come when Chinese will become the dominant language of Rotary in China. Besides the possibilities of native membership there is the certainty of a very considerable leaven of foreigners—men from other countries resident in China.

With these prospects we may ponder the possibilities of Rotary in China; we may imagine two future Rotarians, an Uruguayan and a Chinese, discussing their experiences in both countries and doing it equally well in both tongues—perhaps by that time all Rotarians will be using Esperanto as Rotary's universal auxiliary language.

But this is speculation and we may conclude by saying that however many Rotary clubs are formed in China or elsewhere, the truly international aspect of Rotary depends largely on just such things as this work for blind boys and the exchange of student ideas. For it is such undertakings that combat what Pope termed "man's inhumanity to man" and which teach us to soften the aggressiveness of a new civilization, to temper the conservatism of an old one, to the benefit of both.