

## SINGAPORE, THE MELTING POT OF THE EAST.

BY A. M. REESE.

IN Singapore, it is said, can be seen more races of men than at any other one spot in the world, so that it has been well named "The Melting Pot of the East." It is also sometimes spoken of as "The Gateway of the East," since all vessels bound for ports in the Far East call there.

It is said, perhaps without sufficient historical evidence, that the town was first settled by Malays in 1360 A.D.; but as a port



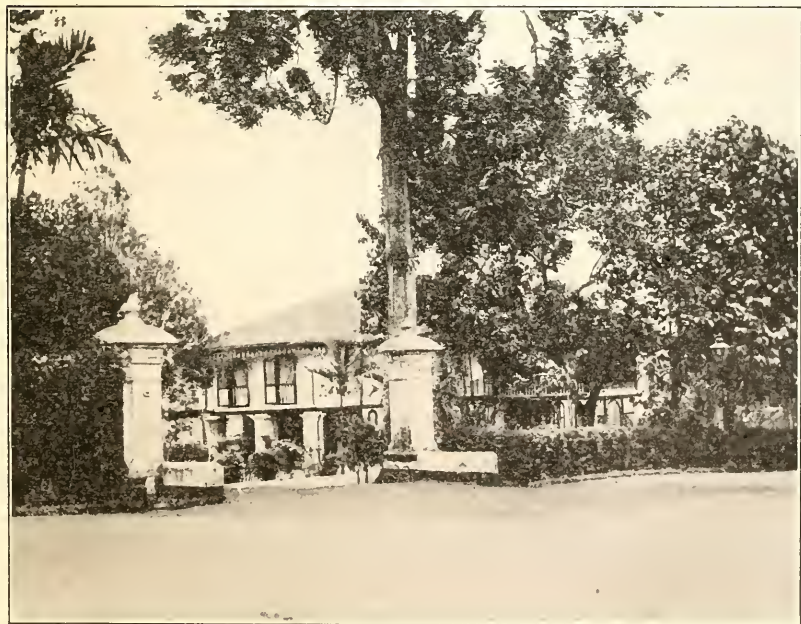
HONGKONG BANK AND PUBLIC SQUARE.

of any importance its history begins in 1819 when it was ceded by Jahore to Great Britain through the instrumentality of Sir Stamford Raffles, whose name is perpetuated in connection with many of the local institutions.

In the early days, in fact until the introduction of steamships, there was much annoyance and danger from pirates at sea and robbers on land, but that of course is now long past and one is as safe here as in any other part of the world.



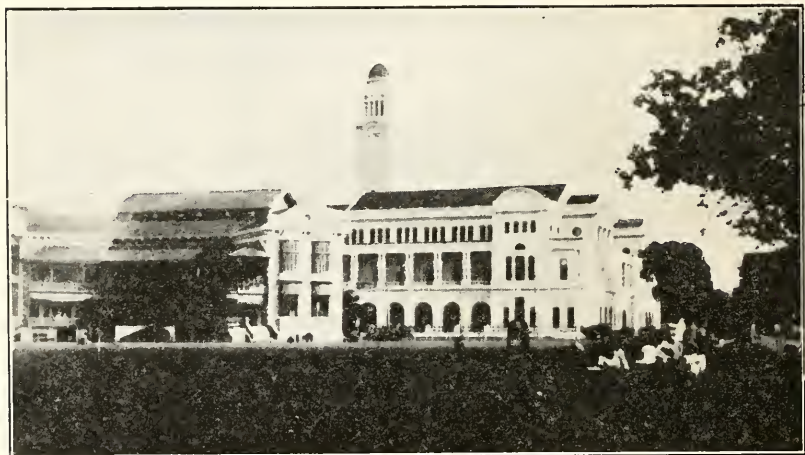
A CHINESE RESIDENCE STREET.



A SUBURBAN RESIDENCE.

The present-day Singapore is a thriving town of more than 250,000 inhabitants, and is one of the busiest harbors in the world; more than three dozen sea-going steamships may sometimes be seen in the harbor at the same time, and the number of rowboats and other small craft is legion.

On landing one is fairly overwhelmed by the *rickisha* men, for the *jinrikisha*, the two-wheeled Japanese cart, is the method of travel in Singapore, though one may hire a pony wagon (*ghari*), or even an automobile at very reasonable rates. As to the electric cars, or "trams," the less said the better; they would disgrace a city of one-tenth the size of Singapore.



VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL AND SINGAPORE CRICKET CLUB.

The streets are excellent and are nearly all level, so that the rickishas, usually pulled by Chinese, make good time. Many residents own their own rickisha and hire the man by the month; more well-to-do people, and there are many wealthy people both native and foreign in Singapore, have their own teams and automobiles.

While there are regular rickisha stands in different parts of town, especially near the hotels and other public places, there are few streets so unfrequented that one cannot "pick up" a rickisha at a moment's notice. Umbrellas are scarcely needed, for in case of a shower one may call a rickisha to the curb and be whisked to his destination dryshod. In fact there is very little walking done in Singapore, especially by Europeans; it is so easy to get into the



ever-present and alluring rickisha. Moreover, it is very hot in the sun, for Singapore is only a little more than one degree from the equator. There is a regular scale of prices for public vehicles, but the newcomer is always "spotted" and is charged double or treble the regular fare until he learns better than to heed the pathetic or indignant protests of the rickisha men.

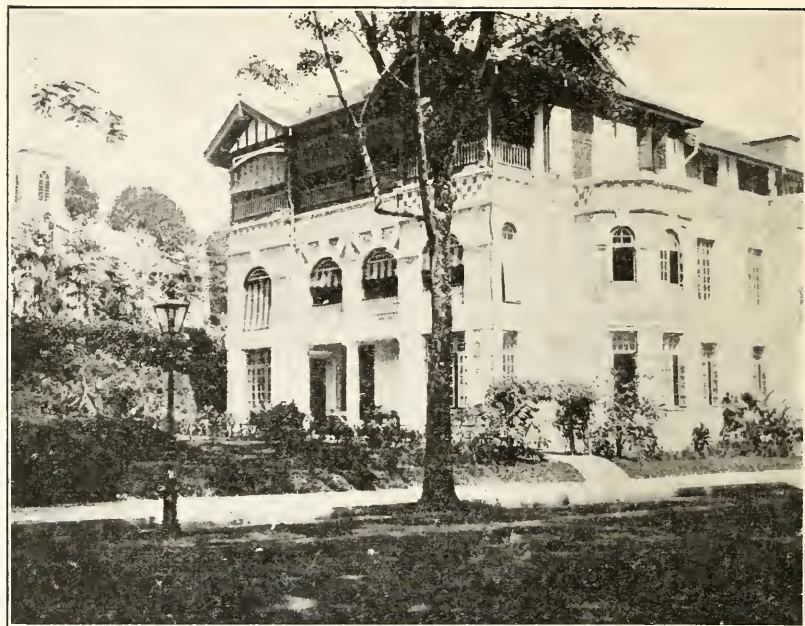
Like other cities in the East Singapore is a mixture of beauty and squalor. In the region of the banks, steamship offices, and wholesale houses there are many handsome buildings; but in the Chinese districts that make up the greater part of the business sec-



THE SCOTCH KIRK.

tion, for the Chinese merchants far outnumber all others, there are narrow crowded streets, small houses, and large and variagated smells. There is also a notorious and wide-open red-light district that is a disgrace to a modern and supposedly civilized town.

While the saloon is not particularly in evidence the indulgence in *stengahs* (Malay for *half*), or whiskey and sodas, is well-nigh universal among the European population, not always excluding the women and clergy. Since alcohol is said to be particularly dangerous in the tropics it would be interesting to know the total effect of this general indulgence. It is generally conceded that after a



Y. M. C. A. BUILDING.  
Methodist Church in left background.



ST. JOSEPH'S COLLEGE.

few years of tropical life Europeans must go home to recuperate: it would be interesting to know if the use of strong alcoholics bears any relation to the frequency of these necessary trips to temperate regions.

Certainly life seems easy and pleasant in Singapore, especially among government officials. About eight or nine o'clock in the morning a stream of rickshas, carriages and automobiles carries the men down town from their pleasant and often very handsome homes uptown or in the suburbs. Many of the finest of these homes are owned by wealthy Chinese merchants. About five in



PART OF A CHINESE FUNERAL PROCESSION.

the afternoon the stream sets in the other direction, carrying those whose day's work is over back to their cool villas or to some recreation ground where tennis, cricket, golf, or football may be enjoyed for an hour or two before dark. Dinner is usually between seven and eight and is over in time for evening entertainments which begin late. Although too far from the beaten tracks frequently to enjoy first-class dramatic talent, there are the ubiquitous "movies," and for the transient visitor the Malay and Chinese theaters are of great interest.



An excellent race course provides entertainment of that sort at frequent intervals. For the more serious-minded the extensive Raffles Museum and Library is centrally and beautifully located.

The beautiful Anglican Cathedral is the largest church in the city, and many other denominations possess smaller but attractive churches.

The central building of all is the beautiful Victoria Memorial Hall with its tall clock tower and chimes. In front of this white building is the black statue of an elephant, presented to the city by the king of Siam to commemorate the first visit ever paid to a



PART OF A CHINESE FUNERAL PROCESSION.

foreign city by a Siamese monarch. In the neighborhood of the Cathedral and Memorial Hall are the hotels, which are good in most respects but whose charges to transient guests are usually exorbitant; here is also the main recreation field where cricket, tennis and football are played every afternoon by both natives and Europeans.

While these churches, residences and parks (including the well-known botanical gardens) are interesting, it is the oriental element that has the greatest charm for those from other lands. A rickisha ride through the teeming streets of the Chinese or Malay quarters, especially at night, is most interesting. If taken

during the day a Chinese funeral procession with its banners, bands and tom-toms may be met: in fact the death-rate among the squalid



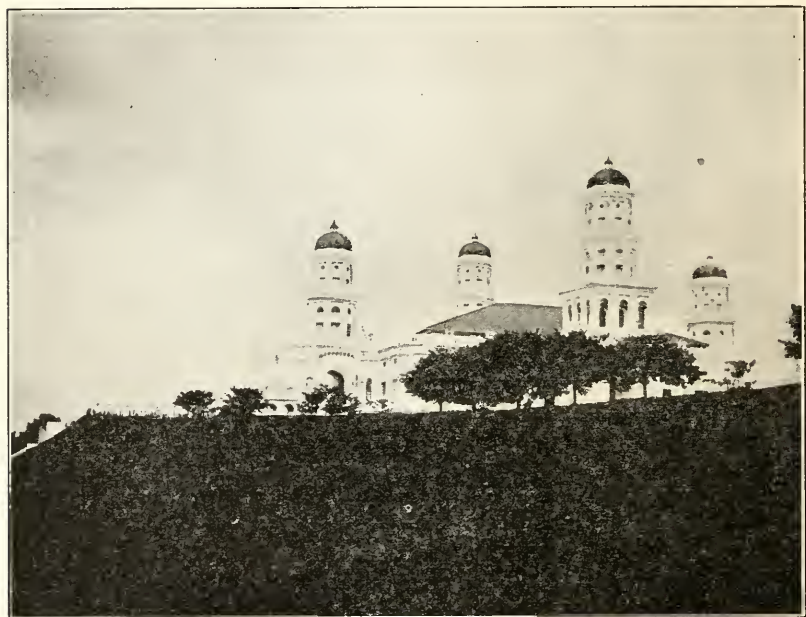
A HINDU TEMPLE.

Rickshas passing.

Chinese residents is so high that funerals are of very frequent occurrence.



At the docks and other gathering places one is fascinated by the constantly shifting sea of strange faces and costumes; sometimes the lack of costume is more noticeable than the costume, as among the coolies or laborers from India or Arabia. Chinese, Japanese, various races of Malays and East Indians, jostle elbows with Englishmen, Americans and every other race under the sun except perhaps, the American Indian. It is surely a motley throng and the tower of Babel was nowhere compared to this conglomeration of tongues.



THE MOSQUE AT JAHORE.

The oriental is a rather mild individual as a rule and wrangling and fighting is probably less common than among occidental communities.

Several interesting temples are to be seen in Singapore; their quaint architecture is always interesting to the occidental tourist, and the hideous images to be seen within will repay the trouble of removing one's shoes, which must be done before admittance is granted.

When the sights of the city have been exhausted a visit to Jahore on the mainland (Singapore is on a small island) of the

Malay Peninsula will be interesting. Here is the summer palace of H. H. the Sultan of Jahore; also a large and handsome mosque. Here is also a wide-open gambling establishment where hundreds of Chinese may be seen playing "fantan."

On the return from Jahore, if interested in such things, a visit to a rubber estate may be made, and the whole process in the manufacture of rubber may be seen in a few hours; it is a strange



CANAL AND MARKET PLACE AT JAHORE.

and fascinating process and is, perhaps, the most important industry of the Federated Malay States.

It is interesting to compare Singapore which has been a British colony for nearly a century with Manila, a city of about the same size, that has been under American rule for less than two decades. The results that have been accomplished in the latter place along the lines of sanitation, education, and other civilizing influences should make an American proud of his native land.