

THE PACIFIC WAR ZONE

F. P. Aylward, '44

Our readers are, on the whole, quite familiar with the geography of Europe and northern Africa. This is, perhaps, owing in great part to relations with and our continued interest in European development since the first world war. However, with the dastardly attack made by Japan on Pearl Harbour, a new theatre of war was opened in the Pacific which includes a vast number of islands of whose geographic position the everyday reader has very little knowledge. It is with this thought in mind that the following paragraphs attempt to give some idea of the immensity of this war zone.

Space will not permit our going into this matter in any great detail; therefore, we shall have to be satisfied with merely making a synopsis of the facts, gleaned from various sources, concerning the more important places involved. This is not a discussion of the war, but a brief geographical sketch of the parts of the east whose names we see so often in the headlines today. It proposes to consider location, relative areas and distances, and certain especially notable features of the various places mentioned. In view of the fact that much territory has already temporarily changed hands, ownership will be considered as it existed before the war.

Japan, with Tokyo as capital, consists of six large islands and about six hundred smaller islands. The home population, along with that of China-held areas, totals approximately 130,000,000 people. It lies in the northern Pacific along the eastern coast of Asia. San Francisco, on the western coast of the United States, is 5,217 miles due east; Australia is about 3,000 miles to the south. Japan owns also many small bases which are scattered about the Pacific Ocean. Some of these are: Rota, in sight of U. S.-held Guam; Spratley, in the Chian Sea about midway between Singapore and Manila, and Midway also between Saigan, in Indo China, and Brunei, in Borneo; Yap, about 800 miles east of Mindanao, one of the Philippines, and within striking distance of U. S. air communication; and Formosa, only 500 miles east of the British base, Hong Kong.

Continuing on in a straight south-westerly direction from Formosa, near the coast of China proper and of French Indo China, one comes to the Malaya peninsula which forms the most southerly portion of the continent of Asia. The

upper section of this strip of land is a part of Siam, or what is now called Thailand. This whole peninsula, about 750 miles long, has a total population of over 3,500,000. The southern part, an area of about 52,500 square miles, is under British influence. At the end is the island of Singapore, separated from the mainland province of Johore by the strait of Johore. Singapore is about 3,000 miles from Tokyo. Besides many other tropical products, British Malaya produces 56% of America's rubber. Approximately 500 miles northwest of the beginning of the Malaya peninsula is the port of Rangoon, through which supplies are admitted to the Burma road en route to China.

South and east of the Malaya peninsula lie the Netherlands Indies. These islands cover a vast area, extending from west to east more than 4,000 miles and, including the Philippines, from north to south at least 2,100 miles. If the islands were superimposed upon the Atlantic ocean, they would reach from New York well into the continent of Africa and from Labrador to Florida. The total population is about 67,000,000. The five main islands of the group are: Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, and New Guinea. Sumatra, across the Malacca Strait from Singapore, is over 1,060 miles long and has a width of 248 miles. Its area is over 180,380 square miles, almost as large as Spain. Its chief exports are pepper and rubber. Java, to the south-east of Sumatra, contains two thirds of the total population of the Indies. It is 622 miles long and in parts 121 miles wide. Having an area of 48,504 square miles, it is more than twice the size of Nova Scotia. Borneo is due north of Java. Its length is 830 miles and it has a width of 600 miles. The area is 293,496 square miles, five times as large as that of England and Wales. The population of Borneo is roughly 3,000,000. Rubber is also produced here to some extent. Celebes is situated directly east of Borneo and is separated from it by the Macassar Strait. Along with some small adjacent islands, it has an area of nearly 77,900 square miles and a population of 3,435,664. New Guinea, with an area of 312,329 square miles, is slightly smaller than Ontario. Divided into three parts—Dutch Guinea, British Guinea, and Papua—the island has a total population of about 800,000.

The Netherlands East Indies supply 29% of the rubber used in our continent. Incidentally, about 98% of our natural raw rubber comes from this part of the world with 1% coming from Africa and 1% from South America.

Two other islands, with harbours of strategic importance lie slightly to the east of New Guinea. They are New Ireland and New Britain. New Britain has an area of about 10,000 square miles, while New Ireland is slightly smaller. They are both owned by Australia.

From the eastern extremities of the Indies we might go back some 2,000 miles north west to the Phillippines, one island of which group, Palawan, is only 11 miles north of Borneo. Altogether they consist of 7,083 islands and belong to the United States. They lie about 500 miles east of Asia. From north to south they extend over 1,152 miles, and from west to east 688 miles, and have a population of about 16,000 000. Their total land area, some 114,440 square miles, is about 7,000 square miles less than that of Great Britain. Of all the islands only 462 have areas of more than 1 square mile, and only 2,441 have names. Eleven islands have areas over 1,000 square miles. The largest of these is Luzon in the north with an area of 40,814 square miles. Here is situated the capital, Manila, which is approximately 786 miles north-east of Hong Kong and 1,576 miles north east of Singapore. It is also in the vicinity of 2,000 miles south of Formosa. The next largest island is Mindanao in the south, with an area of some 36,906 square miles. Samar has an area of slightly over 5,000 square miles. The Philippines have a gold output nearly equal to that of California, and their Manila hemp is considered the best in the world.

About midway between Manila and Malaya lies the Japanese island, Sprately, mentioned above; and to the east at a distance of nearly 1,600 miles is the U. S. held island of Guam, also mentioned above. Guam is surrounded by many small Japanese islands. Its area is about 3,337 square miles half as large again as Prince Edward Island. Some 1,508 miles north-east of Guam is Wake island, another link in the island chain of U. S. bases to the east. Others in the chain are Midway and the other Hawaiian islands.

The Hawaiians consist of many small islands, but only eight are inhabited. The capital, Honolulu, is situated near Pearl Harbour on the island of Oahu. It is 2,402 miles from San Francisco. The most northerly island is Midway which lies 1,394 miles north-west of Honolulu. Midway is 2,500 miles or more south-east of Tokyo and 2,350 miles south of Dutch Harbour in Alaska. Hawaii is the largest island, having an area of over 6,400 square miles. The total population of the Hawaiians is about 200,000 people.

The above data, which in some cases are only approximate, may serve to convey some picture of the most important islands in the Pacific war zone. They may not prove to be very interesting reading, but will, however, give the reader some idea of the immense territory involved in the present conflict in that part of the world.



Our greatest glory is not in never failing
But in rising every time we fail.



Beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a great ship.

—*Franklin*



One's character will never rise higher than his aims.



Better little talent and much purpose than much talent and little purpose.