

Isolated Nepal



Nepal Porters Carry 150-Pound Loads.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

NEPAL, though isolated in the high mountains north of the border of India, and almost untouched by western civilization, is remarkable in a number of ways. It can boast of unrivaled natural scenery, of the highest and most fascinating mountains; of unique architectural monuments; of an immense army quite out of proportion to the population; of an excellent and enlightened system of government which brings peace and prosperity to the little kingdom.

Even the chosen few who gain access to Nepal may not wander at will. An interesting way to approach Nepal is through Raxaul, on the frontier of India.

The most agreeable way of reaching Raxaul is by way of Patna, the ancient capital of Assam. From here the pious Buddhist emperor himself set out, in 250 B. C., on his religious pilgrimage to Nepal and other sacred strongholds of his faith. At Patna you board a paddle boat and cruise five or six miles up the Ganges—the distance varies according to the height of the river—and get into a waiting train on the other side. Next morning you wake up in Raxaul.

On one side lie the unbroken acres of the Bihar rice fields, yellowing beneath the sun; on the other lie more rice fields, in the sequestered kingdom. You strain your eyes toward the eastern horizon and dimly perceive a dark green belt.

This flat, low-lying tract of cultivation and jungle, lying between the Himalayan foothills and the border of Bihar, and stretching 200 miles from east to west, is known as the Tarai. From April to November this part of the country is infested with a deadly malarial fever. Thus the stray visitor to Nepal wisely confines his visit to the winter.

Beyond the Tarai again rise huge shadowy forms, the Himalayas hiding in the morning mist.

Through the Jungles.

From Raxaul, a little meter-gauge train sets off across the Tarai. For the first mile the railroad leads through the main street of the city, with shop and house fronts on either side. Then it comes out into the open rice fields and so into the tiger and rhino-haunted jungles beyond. And what jungles! Halfway through them your train draws up, all passengers get out, clamber onto the backs of waiting elephants, and pad silently off into the mysterious depths.

The jungles of the Nepal Tarai are sub-tropical and consist chiefly of sal trees with long, thin black trunks, and huge leaves starting very near the base. Here and there a giant teak, with its beautiful crocodile back, soars upward, stately and erect.

All this thriving growth is interrupted in certain places by the passage of wide river beds. These have long been destitute of water, and their barren white sands and smooth round pebbles contrast strangely with the luxuriant vegetation on either side.

A tiger shoot in Nepal is conducted on novel lines: the tiger is attracted to a kill and is then surrounded by a ring of elephants. Slowly the ring closes in until the angry beast, well aware of what is going on, charges.

On a shoot you may ride some two miles from the train to the kill, where you join the ring of 90 elephants surrounding it.

Lurking somewhere within that wide circle is the tiger.

The huge animal upon which you sit moves stealthily forward. You look down the line of waving trunks and swishing tails: there is not another howdah elephant, carrying rifles, for a hundred yards. Perhaps the wily creature sought would

break through the intervening, unarmored ranks?

The Tiger Charges.
But you have little time to consider this possibility. From a neighboring clump of banana palms comes a series of snarls, and before you quite realize what is happening a huge bristling mass of black and yellow is hurtling toward you. It is a wonderful thing, the charge of an angry tiger—the break from cover in a crash of thunder, the mighty bounds toward the foe, the gleaming teeth, the flaming eyes, and roars of savage hate.

A companion fires once, and the elephants turn with one accord, for none will face a charge; twice, and the tiger turns with a bitter snarl which subsides into a last groan of defeat as he rolls over and lies dead at the bottom of a little gully.

After two days' shooting in the Tarai, you push on to the railway terminus, Amlekhganj. From here you continue the journey toward Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, by motor.

Some thirty miles of narrow but excellent road lead through wooded foothills to Bhimpheh, where the ascent of the first mountain pass begins.

Here ponies and dandies take the place of cars. There are two different types of dandi: one is a wooden chair with leather cushions, the other a canvas hammock, slung on long poles, in which you can lie full length. Both are carried by teams of six coolies in bright-blue cotton uniforms.

Two miles from Bhimpheh lies the little mountain village of Sisagarhi, where travelers customarily spend the night. The village is complete with its garrison of Gurkhas—a foretaste of the tremendous military power active within the kingdom.

Over the Pass to the Valley.
After rising early at Sisagarhi you climb the few remaining feet which lead to the top of the first pass, approximately 8,000 feet high.

Directly below you lies a smiling valley, while beyond it a turbulent mountain ocean rises and falls in colossal waves of sunlight and shadow; far out to "sea" the waves are capped by the glistening white horses of the eternal snows.

Then the descent begins. The path is no longer smooth; it is exceedingly steep and incredibly rough. It consists principally of solid rock and along its jagged surface large loose boulders are strewn at random.

For the next six miles you ride through flourishing fields of brown-headed buckwheat, golden mustard, and ripening rice. The snows are no longer visible and the sun shines brightly overhead.

The path eventually leaves the fields to rise and fall over rolling grassy downland. Then you come to the foot of the Chandragiri pass. From below, the road before you resembles the sheer wall of a precipice; but your ponies make light of it.

The view from the top of the Chandragiri pass is so amazing that you cannot afterwards believe it exists. Below lies the circular rice-clad valley of Katmandu, bathed in the orange glow of the evening sun. Rising out of it, away to the right, in a medley of miniature pagodas, palaces, and towers, is the magnificent capital city. Surrounding it, in a black and purple wall, are the mighty mountain guardians.

At first you are disappointed because the snows seem hidden. Vainly do you try to penetrate the misty white banks which cluster around the rocky heights. Sadly you abandon hope and look up into the sky to see if the moon has risen. It is difficult to believe what you see. There, in all their glittering splendor, are the Himalayan giants, leaping to fantastic heights above the clouds.

SEEN and HEARD around the NATIONAL CAPITAL By Carter Field

Washington.—The best the American merchant marine can hope for from the present congress is a restoration of the \$22,000,000 cut out of the post office appropriation bill. The item approved originally was \$26,500,000 for ocean mail carrying, but the senate cut this to \$4,500,000.

No one contends that carrying the mails by American ships is worth any such sum as \$26,500,000. If it were a question solely of getting the mails carried, there is little doubt that foreign ship owners would bid a lower price than that. And be glad to get it.

The larger sum is paid actually because of the accepted theory that the government must encourage an American merchant marine, and on two theories. The first theory, of course, is national defense. In the event of war, both the army and navy would need a very large number of auxiliary vessels—boats to carry supplies, oil, food, munitions, etc. In the World War the whole hope of the Germans to win was based on the possible success of their submarine campaign to break this line of supply.

The other reason is the one so frequently stated by President Wilson. He liked the illustration that if one department store used the delivery service of a competitor it would not be long before the one depending on the other for trucks or wagons would be forced out of business, even if it saved money by utilizing the service during the first few months or years.

Mr. Wilson was very forcibly impressed with the advantages that Germany and Britain had gained in the period prior to the war by having their own trade routes to South America where he was anxious, as has been every subsequent President, to build up American trade.

There's the Question

If these two reasons for having an American merchant marine are accepted, the question then comes of how to make it possible. There has been such violent objection to the word subsidy that the straight-forward course of encouraging the construction and operation of ships under the American flag has never been possible. Even with the huge Republican majority that resulted from the 1930 election, it was never possible to get such a measure through congress.

The late Senator Jacob H. Gallinger of New Hampshire again and again deplored the fact that despite an almost universal desire to build up an American merchant marine congress was never willing to aid it except by subterfuge.

This subterfuge, of course, has always been the mail subvention—paying ship owners a great deal more for carrying the mail than the service is worth.

But, due to the regulations and requirements of the shipping board (originally set up by President Wilson for no other purpose than to foster an American merchant marine), much of the money spent to aid American shipping has been pure waste. With the best intentions in the world, millions were wasted in aiding the financing of vessels, or the purchasing of ships taken over by the government after the war, and then forcing the operation of those ships in an uneconomic way.

The famous Leviathan is a classic example. The federal treasury would be ahead something in excess of \$15,000,000, at a minimum, if that giant vessel had been towed out to sea and sunk as soon as the last soldier was brought home from France.

Instead the government spent \$10,000,000 in reconditioning her, turning her into an oil burner, etc., and then, after leasing her to private ownership, lost money on her every year since. Moreover, the private interests that leased her also lost money on every trip she made.

Which would seem to indicate that perhaps there are some fundamental things to be cleared up, such as artificial operating expenses forced by law and governmental regulations, before very much hope can be had for an adequate American merchant marine.

Boost Excise Taxes
The proposed excise taxes, which, levied on 33 commodities, were calculated to raise \$221,000,000 a year, are not dead. They are just pushed under the pile for a few days. In fact, the best judgment on Capitol Hill and in the Treasury department is that they will not only be revived, but will be increased.

Treasury experts have been working on this whole problem for months. They know very accurately what can and what cannot be done in the way of raising revenue. The point is that they know congress will never enact it without so many exemptions and loopholes that it would not produce anything like the revenue required.

Moreover, the President did not

contemplate enactment of the tax plan without the excise taxes. So that, in addition to writing in all kinds of exemptions, the proposal of the Hill subcommittee would strike \$221,000,000 of annual revenue from the bill.

There is a further element which puts the whole house subcommittee program into red ink, the treasury experts privately point out. This is that the committee counts on \$100,000,000 from the "windfall" tax. No one in the treasury has ever really taken that tax seriously. As a matter of fact, treasury experts do not think the President had figured on it seriously as a revenue raiser. Its purpose was far more propaganda than as a money producer.

It was intended to hold up before the country the interests that profited from the Supreme court decision invalidating the AAA and outlawing the processing taxes.

Difficulties in Way

Constitutional difficulties of actually collecting the tax are something else again, and so the treasury experts who figured out the tax schedules just put that to one side, as far as any reliance on revenue was concerned.

Meanwhile the hearings scheduled by the house committee, and those which will follow when the measure gets before the senate finance committee, will riddle the whole idea that a change in the corporation taxes will produce the needed revenue without that very substantial part of the whole tax scheme which the President himself included, the excise taxes.

It has been no secret from the first that the senate would rewrite the whole bill. Members of the house admit that freely. Administration leaders in the senate like Pat Harrison, chairman of the finance committee, will do their best to follow the President's ideas as closely as possible.

Expectation has been all along that, in order to make sure of enough money, they would be forced to retain the present corporation levies in whole or in part—the tax on all net earnings of corporations, now 15 per cent on all corporations of any size, the capital stock tax, and the excess profits tax. In fact, there has been a strong tendency to save all these taxes, intact, and add on enough of the tax on undistributed earnings as proposed by the President to make up the additional amount needed.

This additional amount, by the way, is roughly \$792,000,000 a year, less whatever is raised by processing taxes and the windfall taxes.

Government Ownership

Flood disasters spell a tremendous boom in government ownership of electric power plants. Congress is in a liberal mood with respect to flood relief, but it is also ready to go further in the direction President Roosevelt has always desired in bringing about publicly owned power systems.

Even in the direct relief, which will of course be followed by vast works aimed at lessening the proportions of such disasters, there is a notable advantage to "publicly owned" utilities. For instance, consider two electric plants, one publicly owned, one privately owned, at nearby towns on the same river. It could be the Merrimac, or the Connecticut, or the Allegheny of any river hit in the recent floods.

Money already allocated by the President is available for "replacement" of the publicly owned plant. The stockholders of the privately owned plant must take their loss, unless they have flood insurance.

It is for the future that the development is really important, however. There will be a wave of dam building, aimed at holding back future flood waters, and utilizing the water meantime for the generation of electricity in publicly owned power plants. These naturally must sell their electricity somewhere—the Supreme court upheld that in the TVA case even if it did not specifically mention flood control. But it did say with great clarity that the government had the right to sell surplus power developed incidentally to some constitutional project.

So that actually all the 60-odd injunctions by the private utilities against PWA loans for power plants seem a great deal less important than they appeared to be a few weeks back.

Flood Control

The amount of money which will be spent on these flood control projects will stagger the imagination, when added up, as for instance in a general flood control bill. Senator Francis G. Newlands, 25 years ago, was regarded as a nuisance because he talked about spending a couple of hundred million dollars for both flood control and reclamation.

Congress at this very session will seriously be considering spending several billion dollars for flood control alone, and without covering the entire country at that.

One bill, introduced by Senator Joseph F. Guffey of Pennsylvania, and providing for flood control works in the Ohio basin about Pittsburgh, would appropriate more than fifty-five million dollars. This would cover the Allegheny, Monongahela, Juniata and one or two smaller streams.

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1850-B

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