

# Crowded Szechwan



Passenger-Carrying Wheelbarrows in Szechwan.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

FEW nations have a greater problem in feeding and clothing their citizens than a single province in China, Szechwan, where approximately 60,000,000 people live isolated behind great mountain barriers. Szechwan is the westernmost of the provinces of the middle zone of China, lying over against Tibet. None other of the divisions of the great republic has so many inhabitants.

There is a most intensive, if primitive, domestic commerce in Szechwan, and millions of the laborers of the province spend their lives on its roads, bearing burdens on their backs or pushing the wheelbarrows which supply the only wheels that ever touch the network of roads and trails.

Sharing with these carriers the burden of the nation's life is the proverbial "Man with the Hoe," usually a poor tenant giving half his crop for the rent of his acre. Frequently, however, he is able to own his own implements and a water buffalo, with which he plows his own and his neighbor's plot, receiving in turn his neighbor's help in seed time and harvest.

Still others, and on the rich Chengtu plain they are numerous, are wealthy farmers, who live in fine homes and till their estates with the help of sons and grandsons or with hired servants.

To these farmers is given the task of feeding a nation of 60,000,000 people; for Szechwan, isolated by mountain barriers, must be self-sustaining. The measure of this task is appreciated when we consider that fully 50 per cent of the 181,000 square miles of Szechwan is too mountainous for cultivation, which means that these 60,000,000 are sustained on an area less than one-half that of the state of Texas.

Add to this condition his lack of scientific knowledge and the primitive implements with which he labors, as well as the necessity of securing and returning to the soil, as fertilizers, all that he reaps from it; remember, also, that rice, his chief cereal crop, is the most difficult of all cereals to produce, especially in a country where the hills must be terraced and water lifted to fill the paddy fields; and it becomes evident that the Szechwan farmer's task is next to impossible and its accomplishment little short of a miracle.

**Rich Soil and Plenty of Rain.**

He is, however, favored with a temperate climate all the year and a naturally rich soil, an atmosphere saturated with moisture, an abundant rainfall, and a never-failing supply of water for irrigation from the melting snows on the mountain near by.

He produces nearly every vegetable and grain found in our market and others to which we are strangers. The fruits that are ours are his also. Apples are few and poor in quality, but the persimmon and orange are second to none and are produced in great abundance. One thousand oranges on the upper Yangtze can be purchased for 50 cents.

He knows little of the science of gardening, but much of its method. By interplanting, especially beans and peas, which he knows improves the quality of the soil; by crop rotation, which he knows increases his yield; and by intensive fertilizing and the sowing of vetch in the fallow season, he manages to keep his fields rich and raises from two to six crops a year. He has made Szechwan known as the Garden of Asia, the land where famine never comes.

The tenant farmer pays his rent with the major portion of his rice, which is the master crop and his chief concern and joy in life. In the early spring he plows his paddy fields, and then prays for rains to flood them, offering incense to the god of the garden, whose shrine is built near by.

When rain and gods fall him, he sets to work with endless-chain, foot-treadle pumps, laboriously lifting into his terraced fields the water that he has conserved in the valley. Then, breaking up the rice sod, which has been grown from early sowing in highly fertilized plots, he transplants it in hills in the watered paddy fields.

The rainy winter makes the hoeing of his rice field impossible; so he does not hoe it; he toes it. With bare foot he feels about the plant with his toes, and if he finds a weed, he toes it out; then presses the dirt firmly in place again. With his right foot he toes two rows, with his left foot he toes two rows, and thus he toes four rows as he goes. That's the way he does it. For the harvest the farmers combine

and render mutual assistance. The rice is cut with the sickle, gathered in bundles, and the grain beaten out by striking it upon slats in the center of a large bin which is pulled along after the threshers. Dried upon bamboo mats, rolled and cleaned, it is then ready to be transported to market.

**Salt Industry at "Flowing Well."**

About midway between Chungking and Chengtu the traveler in Szechwan is tempted by the long train of salt carriers to turn aside and see the renowned salt industry at Tsaidu-ching, which means "Flowing Well." Its origin is lost in antiquity, being first mentioned in the reign of the Minor Han dynasty in Szechwan, A. D. 221-263.

With its forest of derricks, it resembles an oil boom town. The wells have been drilled by foot power to a depth of 2,400 feet for brine, and about 2,800 for natural gas, which is used exclusively for the evaporation of the brine.

Salt is the unfailing source of government revenue and its production is guarded most jealously to prevent monopoly. The proprietor of the salt well cannot own a gas well or evaporating plant. Likewise, the owner of the gas well or evaporating plant cannot engage in the other branches of the industry, thus making each dependent upon the other and preventing family or government control.

There are no flowing wells now, the brine being lifted in bamboo buckets about 50 feet in length, and 4 to 5 inches in diameter. The power is supplied by water buffaloes, hitched in fours to a 60-foot horizontal drum, about which the rope fastened to the bucket winds as the animals are beaten around the circle at a wild gallop. The magnitude of the industry may be gleaned from the fact that every family demands its weekly pound of salt, and that many tons are exported each month to other provinces.

Returning once more to the Big road and passing without comment its towns and cities, located about ten miles apart, one comes to Chengtu, the Perfect capital, a vice-regal city of half a million people, ruling over Szechwan and Tibet. It is surrounded by a finely constructed brick wall, 35 to 40 feet in height, with a thickness at the top of 20 feet and a circumference of more than nine miles.

Chengtu is an ancient capital, its first recorded wall being built 2,315 years ago. Marco Polo described it as a trinity of cities beautifully embellished. Its approaches were carved marble bridges which spanned its moat. Its wall, nearly 20 miles in circumference, enclosing a population of more than a million, was surrounded by rows of hibiscus trees, which in autumn bloom made it the "Embroidered City," a name that has long outlived the wall and its trees. Some conception of the toll required to erect such a wall may be gained from the historical records, which state that the construction of one of its extensions, eight miles in length, required an army of 100,000 men and 9,999,999 days' work.

**Ancient Irrigation System.**

Chengtu has given its name to the plain on which it stands. This plain is said to have one of the finest and most ancient systems of irrigation in the world. It was perfected about 200 B. C. by Li Ping, who has since become the patron saint of Chengtu—the only instance, perhaps, where a civil engineer has become a patron saint. He divided the Min into three great delta systems of rivers and canals, which radiate to all parts of the 80-mile plain. The waters are united again in two main streams, which leave the southwest and southeast borders of the plain by the Min and the Lin rivers. He left the people this motto for regulating the canals: "Keep the banks low and the bottom clean"; and this wise counsel has prevented the disastrous floods of ancient times, while furnishing a never-failing supply of mountain water for the fields.

It is not, however, this fertile plain, with its irrigation and teeming millions; nor the city, with its ancient culture and modern shops; nor yet the wall that claims chief consideration, but a modern institution, the Christian college, rising just beside it; for, interesting as is Old China, with its walled-in peoples and civilization, it holds no such world significance as the China of today, which such institutions have in large measure made possible.

# FLASH

The Lead Dog

By GEORGE MARSH

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## SYNOPSIS

Up the wild waters of the unknown Yellow-Leg, on a winter's hunt, journey Brock McCain and Gaspard Lecroix, his French-Cree comrade, with Flash, Brock's puppy and their dog team. After several battles with the stormy waters they arrive at a fork in the Yellow-Leg. Brock is severely injured in making a portage and Flash leads Gaspard to the unconscious youth. Gaspard tells Brock of his determination to find out who killed his father. Tracks are discovered and the two boys separate for scouting purposes. Brock is jumped by two Indians and a white man and knocked unconscious. He is held prisoner. Gaspard rescues him while his captors sleep. While out alone Gaspard is shot from ambush by an Indian and kills his would-be-slayer. While out on his trap line, Gaspard is caught in a heavy snow storm. Gaspard finds him and the two start out on Brock's trap line. They find an Indian who had been stalking them caught in a trap, dead. On him was knife that belonged to Gaspard's father. They decide to camp until spring and then continue their journey. Two months later they start out and reconnoiter an Indian camp. They avoid the camp without making their presence known.

## CHAPTER XI—Continued

—22—

"Cree camp—four men—below here —Black Jack—five sleds—at little pond. Etienne," slowly translated Brock. "Great glory, Gaspard, that'll run 'em out of the country!"

"Wen dey see dat, dey head for de coast, eh?" laughed the crafty half-breed. "I geeve dem good scare wen dey hear Black Jack ees on dere trail wid five-dog team."

"That's a great idea! Unless the wind rises they'll know that somebody's walked the lake trail, last night, in that snow. Now, instead of following us up today, they'll likely quit trapping and carry the news to that white man I got my hooks into, and the big boss at their main camp. You're a genius, old pard. Put 'er there!"

The grinning friends shook each others' mittened hands. Gaspard's stratagem was a flash of genius, for five sled teams meant at least ten men on the trail of the free-traders' Cree servants. The news that five sled teams of provincial police were in the country should cause a speedy stampede north if they didn't smell a rat in this bold message left on a traveled trap-line trail.

"Of course," said Brock, "they may spot this for just what it is—a bluff." Gaspard nodded in agreement. "Dey tink eet ver' strange for sure, but dey weel have worry just de same. I know dem Cree."

Gaspard's Indian blood enabled him to read only too well the mercenary and superstitious mental make-up of his mother's people—to know their weaknesses and value their sturdier qualities.

"Well, let's go, we've got a long day ahead," said Brock. "I'll take a last squirt at the lake trail to see if they've started this way." Returning from the shore, he said, as he slipped his feet into the thongs of his shoes and followed Gaspard into the southeast, "No sight of 'em yet, they're a lazy crew."

Through quiet February days the two snowshoed through forest and scrub, over ridges and around ponds, sometimes, for miles, following the convenient thoroughfares of deadwaters and streams, but they avoided crossing all lakes and barrens. These they circled, for on open lake or muskeg they could be seen for great distances. But, to their surprise, they crossed no country trapped by their enemies. Evidently the mysterious disappearance of their friends had aroused in the trappers of "Iced Beard" a wholesome dread of the Yellow-Leg Lake watershed. Nevertheless, not for an instant did the cunning Gaspard relax his vigilance as the two traveled southeast in the direction of the outlet of the big lake. Frequently through the day, while Brock kept on the halfbreed buried himself in a clump of spruce or fir to watch the back trail. If there was a bold and shrewd enough man in the camp they had seen at the lake, the boys would be followed. Gaspard took no chances.

But late in the afternoon, far south of the divide between Carcajou and Yellow-Leg water, when the weary snowshoes were beginning to look for a good camp-site, and their clamoring stomachs chiefly occupied their thoughts, Gaspard, a hundred yards to Brock's left, suddenly stopped with raised arm. Hurrying to his friend, Brock's eyes swept the snow in front of them for the cause of the gesture.

"Look!"

At Gaspard's feet ran a settled trail filled with new snow but plainly distinguishable to a bushman.

"Dey not use dis in some day—since de las' snow."

"You mean the one before last night's fall?"

"Ah-hah," nodded Gaspard. "We follow it a piece."

They had traveled a mile, single file, when the halfbreed who was ahead stopped and pointed.

Fifty yards away was a snowed-over, brush lean-to trapping camp,

similar to those Gaspard and Brock had built at the far end of their own trap-lines. As the boys reached and curiously examined the abandoned camp covered with a foot of new snow, with an exclamation Gaspard suddenly walked up the trail and stood looking at a blazed spruce.

"Listen to dis!" he called to Brock who was scraping away the snow from the fire-hole of the camp. Brock quickly joined his friend, who read: "Antoine not come back. I wait ten sleeps. If I stay dey weel find me here. I go to Beeg Carcajou. Leetle Jacques."

"Ah-hah!" grunted the halfbreed with a shake of the head, his deepest eyes glittering in satisfaction. "Antoine weel not come back—ma fren'. Antoine put hees foot een de bear-trap." "By the horned owl, Gaspard!" exploded Brock. "They must have made this camp to hunt us from. He didn't stop to hunt for his partner—this Little Jacques—but made tracks. Not much like a partner I've got."

Two days later they were back in their camp south of Big Yellow-Leg. Through, February, or Mikistwipism, the Cree Moon of the Eagle, there was little rest for the two trappers, who were daily adding to their fur-park. In the timber the snow had settled and in the barrens, the wind had hammered and packed it, greatly improving the sledding. Every two days now, Brock made the circuit of his lines with Flash. The fur was not so prime as in the early winter, but, after the winds and blizzards of January, foxes and lynx were traveling more, fisher and marten extending their ranges, and the otter seeking new fishing water which he entered at the broken ice of falls and rapids.

Often they found their traps sprung and bait eaten by thieving squirrel and whisky-jack. Sometimes the talons of the horned or snowy owl marked the snow around a pilfered trap; and once, a lynx trap held the legs and feet of an imprisoned "snowy" which a plundering wolverine had calmly torn to pieces. For ten days this carcajou baffled the industry of Gaspard and Brock. Time and again, with an uncanny shrewdness, he avoided the traps buried in the snow beside baited fisher shanes and lynx sets; but in the end he fell victim to his own cunning. For, one night, in the act of tearing down the rear of a fisher cabin, to avoid passing the trap set in front of the bait, he stepped into the circle of traps buried in the snow by the boys in anticipation of this very maneuver.

It was a veritable demon of fury and savage desperation that Brock and Flash found waiting them, one quiet morning. As he watched their approach, the evil, red eyes of the trapped carcajou flamed with hate. Crouched in the snow, his rust-brown hair stiff on neck and back his overful forelegs, armed with clinker-like claws which would rip a wolf's pelt into ribbons, ready to strike, the Injun-devil lifted his hairy head from the most feared teeth in the forest in a warning snarl.

With a roar, Flash started to the battle with the strange foe who challenged him, but, with a quick movement, Brock had him by the collar.

"No, you don't, old boy!" cried Brock, holding his enraged husky, harnessed to the sled, as the crouched wolverine, anchored to the caught clog of the trap, snarled his defiance, his thick forelegs tensed for the double sink of knife-like claws which awaited Flash's lunge. "We need you whole and sound, for March, old partner! You're not going to get sliced up fighting that fellow! You might kill him in the end—break his neck; but he'd hurt you for sure, before he died."

So, taming the maddened puppy, not for battle, to a spruce, Brock advanced cautiously, with his ax, the head reversed.

Built somewhat on the lines of a small bear, but more rangily, the wolverine, pound for pound, is the strongest beast in the north. To this he adds a fighting fury which commands the respect of all, beasts or humans, who meet him. The killing qualities of the great tusks, and the savage strength of the Ungava, might overcome the flying kulver of the carcajou's feet, but Brock had no intention of seeing the slate-gray mane of his puppy smothered with slashes which, if they did not kill, would cripple him for weeks. In usual hunter fashion he would aim and kill the wolverine with the ax.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Lighthouse Centuries Old

At the most northerly point of Jutland, where the North sea and the Kattegat meet, is an ancient lighthouse. The waters there have a bad reputation among seafaring men, but the men who have manned the beacon have just the opposite, most of them having been heroes of a high order. Many centuries ago, says tradition, this lighthouse was built by a peasant, Thorkei Skarpa, and his shepherd clan. A fishing village in time grew up around the beacon and King Erik of Pommern, as he was called, though king of Denmark, granted it a town charter in 1413. The shifting dunes have so buried the church of this village that now only the top of the tower is to be seen.—Detroit News.

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## School for Commuters

### Something of Novelty

Carrying still further the new idea of education in the home, several educational institutions of southern California have combined to offer courses to suburbanites for study while traveling to and from their work. Fees are small, the pupil is self-taught, but may consult an instructor if he wishes, and the text-books are small and easy to carry.

More than twenty courses are listed by the school with more to follow if the demand warrants. Subjects which appeal especially to the suburban resident are included, such as home building, home gardening and real estate. Among the others are such varied choices as advertising, art appreciation, aviation, English investments, personal leadership, psychology, radio, salesmanship and stenography.

### Russia's Holy Men

If the Soviet government really means to try to suppress the "holy men" who wander about in Russia, it will be up against as hard a task as it has encountered yet, writes "Looker-On" in the London Daily Chronicle. These local saints, or "elders," as they are called, have great influence, not only on such highly placed people as believed in Rasputin, but on the mass of peasants. The Russian villages are forcing beds for superstition, and the "staretzi" make the most of that fact. Some of them are genuine, too, and preach with the fervor of Jewish minor prophets.

### Behave

Doug Fairbanks and John Barrymore chanced to meet at a Christmas benefit for one of our schools for the blind, and the talk naturally turned toward education. Soon the two stars were checking up on their own college careers.

"My college was founded in 1704," stated Mr. Barrymore.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Doug.

"I never even knew it was losted."—Los Angeles Times.

### Facts About Columbus

Christopher Columbus did not die in prison, as many seem to suppose. Neither did he die in poverty. The story, often repeated, that he died in utter destitution is merely one of the many legends with which his biography is distorted. His will indicated that he possessed considerable wealth at the time of his death at Valladolid in 1506.

### Pays to Have System

Have a time and place for everything and do everything in its time and place, and you will not only accomplish more, but have more leisure than those who are always hurrying, as if vainly attempting to overtake time that has been lost.—Tryon Edwards.

### Big Demand for Cotton

The demand for cotton is enormous. Last year more than a million bales of cotton went into the making of motor tires. India and Africa are the only countries in which the area of cotton land can be increased.

### Give Cheerfully

We should give as we would receive, cheerfully, quickly, and without hesitation; for there is no grace in a benefit that sticks to the fingers.—Seneca.

### Portentous Fact

America in the next few years is going either to handle or to mishandle more power than any nation ever dealt with before.—American Magazine.

Accidentally an Arkansas Indian cured fits in a valuable dog with Husk Ball Blue. Many others now use it. Never fails, she says.—Adv.

"There is no disputing about taste." Maybe not. But people with bad taste ought to be told about it.

If jealousy doesn't go too far, it is rather agreeable to the one of whom some one is jealous.

Every scheme for improving the human race overlooks the ingrained faults of the human race.

Don't imagine that the hotel runner runs the hotel.

A flunkier is a man who doesn't lose his spunk.

## Who Wants to be Bald?

Not many, and when you are getting that way and losing hair, which ends in baldness, you want a good remedy that will stop falling hair, dandruff and grow hair on the bald head. **BARE-TO-HAIR** is what you want.

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## Haste and waste more than rhyme.

Realism in painting invariably fails to exhibit a farmer sweating.

From the mother's point of view an ugly baby is an impossibility.

A well digger and a columnist begin at the top and work down.

Happiness is rare enough to lead people to seldom talk about it.

You may be tolerant of one thing, but you are sure to be intolerant of another.

Place where thousands resort for pleasure is quite dull to the man who lives there.

Liberty should be tempered with judgment, not with profuseness.—Hosea Ballou.

At Jonesboro, Ark., while the fire department waited seven minutes for a train to clear a crossing the Meredith store was badly damaged by fire.



## Weak After Operation

"About five months ago, following an operation for appendicitis I did not gain strength enough to be up and about. My mother and sister advised me to take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. I have taken five bottles and it has helped me to get strong so I can do my own housework now. I have recommended it to several friends who have been weak and run-down."—Mrs. Oscar Ottum, Box 474, Thief River Falls, Minn.

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