

# Vigan, Laoag and Points North

It is remarkable that one can motor over an unbroken road 600 kilometers north from Manila, and still more remarkable that a similar trip is possible in the opposite direction from the islands' capital, through the southeastern provinces of this huge Luzon, of which we only begin to sense the real physical hugeness, and enjoy the grandeur, as engineers' blueprints materialize in road and bridge appropriations and the actual roads—with bridges added every year.

Banguì, the end of the road, is at the extreme northwest point of Luzon, whence a branch crosses the mountains to Aparri, the Cagayan river port and outlet of the Cagayan valley. We did not essay this trail. We simply saluted the justice of the peace at Banguì, drove around the plaza, got out of the car and let the ladies climb over the ruins of the old church while we explored the remains of what had been an appetizing lunch. We observed that a few eucalyptus trees skirted the plaza and were large and thriving, and then drove back to Laoag for merienda—dinner in Vigan an hour and a half later—a wonder trip of 250 kilometers of seagirt, valley-bounded and mountain-sheltered travel completed in a day.

Banguì is 150 kilometers North of Vigan, which is 450 kilometers from Manila; we had stopped overnight at Laoag, on the way up the coast.

The way to begin such a trip is to glance into the census. One finds that La Union has an area of 350 square miles, a population of 160,590, or 459 to the square mile; that Ilocos Sur has an area of 442 square miles, a population of 217,406, or 492 to the square mile; and that Ilocos Norte has an area of 1,293 square miles, a population of 219,129, or 169 to the square mile. But he also finds great towns, Laoag, for example, with 40,000 inhabitants; and in traveling through the three provinces he sees that the valleys are not extensive like those of central Luzon. They are comparatively narrow, coastal plains, and much of the total area is mountainous. Although 1,000 acres and more, of rice, is seen growing in a single field, it is divided among many owners. The farms are small, and

quite commonly owned by the families working them. A greater industry is observed among the farmers than in the central Luzon provinces where tenant farming is more prevalent. In the Ilocano provinces at this time of year, the Christmas holidays, you see rice fields being prepared for tobacco. Elsewhere "catch" crops are being planted, or sugar cane is growing

their activities into this region they will find it a very productive one. The women appear particularly industrious; they are seen working in the fields and at road building and irrigation construction—drawing the wages of men and doing a man's work. The men toil too, about as much as they do elsewhere in the islands where their energy is confined by what is hardly more than a neighborhood culture, with no ambitions extending beyond the sound of the church-tower bells.

Yet from this very region thousands of topnotch workmen were recruited for the sugar plantations in Hawaii, where good hard money rewards their toil.

Educators in the region say they have remarked the fact that young men who have gone through school, especially well up into high school, don't go back to the fields when they can no longer afford to study, or when repeated failures have taught them or their supporting relatives that further study would be useless. They have then learned to wear white clothes and esteem bodily cleanliness. They therefore proceed to make the wearing of white clothes an occupation, colored with the occasional excitement of political campaigns wherein they may be petty leaders, depended upon to harangue their less favored brethren and bring out the vote.

Their number is legion, the schools throughout the three provinces are all overcrowded.

The grazing lands are considerable. Carcasses of beef animals are regularly shipped to Manila in coast schooners, and carabao and horses are sold into the provinces south, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Pampanga, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija. They are also sold in Manila. The many coves form safe harbors for schooners, which are moored close to the shore at high tide. Planks are laid across from shore to shipside, and they and the chute into the hold are banked over with rice straw. Thus deceived, the animals are loaded without difficulty, and in a good breeze the run to Manila or another convenient market is not a long one.

What is seen along the long enchanting road from Manila to Banguì, is valleys



*Mubagbug Water Falls, Ilocos Norte*

and will be harvested in time to turn the land back into rice.

The region is now producing 60,000 bales of maguay annually. This grows on the lower hillsides, the dunes built by the sea, some of which are still bare, some half wooded over with scrub, and where scrub is growing it may be removed for the planting of maguay.

Men plod along the roads (which are frequently crowded with the traffic of well constructed carts drawn by trotting bulls), and have distaffs in their hands. They spin as they walk, and the women weave fine cloths of cotton, cotton-silk and silk. Wood carving is a household industry with some, brush making with others. When the embroidery houses of Manila extend

strung like a chain of emeralds along a coral coast. Towns brush by at intervals. brown thatched towns with old Roman red brick churches and whitewashed conventos, and high detached campaniles that were once, no doubt, fortifications against marauding Moros and the depredations of wild tribes from the hills. In folds of the hills, watchtowers are occasionally seen towers with turret tops where fire might be kept burning, whence torch signals could be flashed, and cannons fired upon fleets of Moro vintas endeavoring a landing in an adjacent cove—where forbidding coral reefs give way to shelving sandy slopes.

It is an old country, old and picturesque, with great edifices of the missionary church, the pride in bygone times of the devoted priests who built them, crumbling now, many of them, beneath the burden of the encroaching jungle—soon to be one with the forgotten glories of a great and gallant age; and were we to search in their old records, though many of these disappeared during the sanguinary 90's, we should see where more than one missionary expedition left this little port, or that one, for

the missions in old Japan.

Old pictures in the repaired churches and convents frequently depict martyrdom suffered by the early fathers. The arts they taught the people, the industries they established, remain after their memories are forgotten. Father Juan Davila introduces cacao from Mexico. Another introduces coffee, still another makes a device for stripping hemp which persists in common use to this day. One in the country we are traversing instructs in the reeling of fibers in running water. All are builders—churches, convents, roads. The road to Bangui from Manila embraces many sections of old Spanish roads and causeways, and many old Spanish bridges, centuries old and still as good as when first constructed. It is, this entire trip, not only highly diverting as an excursion into the provinces, but an interesting study of past and present, and how the new has been imposed upon the best of the old under Spanish rule.

Beyond Burgos, at the precipitous crest roadway of unsurpassed beauty, is Bojeador lighthouse, which should be visited for the

magnificent view afforded from the tower—where on the one hand the coast sweeps ruggedly away to the eastward and on the other the eye ranges out to sea and a limitless horizon.

The best plan for the trip is that of easy stages: the charm of motor travel in the Philippines is half lost if trips are made hurriedly. Start from Manila at a comfortable hour and reach George Stewart's hotel at Bauang in the afternoon. Tell George you want fried chicken and stewed apples for supper. Your bed will be clean and comfortable, the soundness of your sleep enhanced by the muffled rumble of the sea some hundreds of yards away. Make Vigan the next day, lurching by the roadside any place. Here you will make pleasant arrangements for the stay at Laoga the next night, and the day following this, motor on to Bangui and back through Laoga to Vigan, again having roadside lunches. Now double back to Manila, with your choice of numerous side trips including one to Baguio over the Naguilian road.

**The Observation. . .**

*(Continued from page 26)*

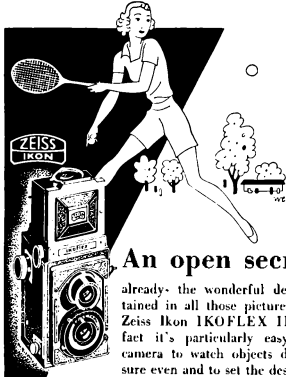
an encouraging trend of thought.

Not the least of these modifications related to the matter of capital gains and losses. The whole principle of a tax on capital gains has long been in dispute. Once again citing Great

Britain as an example, in that country no such tax exists because it is realized that any blanketting of investment or speculative capital must eventually do more harm than good.

However, the elimination of this form of taxation at this time in the United States is too much to expect, and it is sufficiently gratifying to witness some loosening of the prohibitory penalties against the creation of capital gains. Such gains are

*(Please turn to page 41)*



**An open secret**

already, the wonderful definition obtained in all those pictures which the Zeiss Ikon IKOFLEX II takes. In fact it's particularly easy with this camera to watch objects during exposure even and to set the desirable sharp focus by pressure on a lever, for it boasts as ground glass screen a collecting lens matted on the underside. Add to this the help of a magnifier for fine focussing, a frame finder for sports photography; and that you yourself can appear on the picture as well, you have the built-in self-release to thank. For other useful facts please apply to

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