A MONTH'S TRIP UP THE SUTLEJ VALLEY FROM SIMLA, JUNE, 1934.

By Major R. W. Cardeew, M.C.,
Royal Engineers.

This trek was the result of a hasty trip on six days' leave at Easter out to Narkanda, some forty miles from Simla on the Hindustan-Tibet road. The view of the snows from Narkanda is magnificent, but the urge to get nearer sent me examining maps and making out a trip for a month, knowing that this was all the leave I could get or could conveniently afford.

Thus, the trip was mapped out to see as much as possible in the short time, including a visit to one glacier at least.

On studying the map, I found the nearest way to get at a glacier was to break off the Hindustan-Tibet road about 100 miles out and go up a valley into the blue—a dotted line showed a path across high ground up to the foot of the Zangsu Glacier; and with this object in view I set out.

The plan was to go by the upper road, as it was June. This road takes off at Narkanda and joins the main or valley road at Sarahan, about 90 miles out. The upper road is 20 miles longer, but well worth it—for prettiness and coolness.

My party consisted of two mules with a mule man, a bearer and a hill man as mate and odd jobs man.

The mules I bargained for, and got them for Rs.4/- a day the pair. If one takes mules by stages, it is far more expensive; and as I knew I had to return more or less the same way, there would be no need to dispense with them for other means of transport, except on the 20 miles off the main road up to the glacier.

Two yaks filled with eatables, bedding, a suitcase, a 40 lb. and a 20 lb. tent, completed the outfit, plus the servants' gear and a few odd cooking pots.

I started on June 3.

In order to get over the portion to Narkanda, which I knew, we double-marched for three days—as far as a forest bungalow at Kadrala—56 miles.

The following day was a short march of 10 miles, so I was able to reconnoitre my next day's walk in which I was going over Maral Kanda, 12,244 feet, to Taklech, while the transport went by the main road—22 miles. My route was about 14 miles, but up from 8,000 feet to 12,000 feet and down again to 5,500 feet at Taklech.

The summit of Maral Kanda is studded with curious piles of flat stone.
A Month's Trip up the Sutlej Valley from Simla
erected presumably as votive offerings by people of olden times, as the present local inhabitants could tell me nothing of their purport. A very well-made track up the mountain also exists with steps made from flat stones, so that evidently at some past date pilgrims have used this road. The drop down from Maral Kanda was through lovely woods, and I reached Taklech an hour before the mules.

A day’s rest for the mules enabled me to make up towards the mountains named Hansbeshan, 17,000 feet, but before 10 a.m. they were clouded over, so that it was useless to continue up the mountain side. Instead, I spent a pleasant hour in the valley bathing in a stream.

The following day was a 12-mile uphill march to the Forest Rest House, at Daran Ghati.

A glorious view, however, makes up for the hot march, and I stayed a day in order to see Hansbeshan if the clouds were kind. They, however, came up just after dawn and did not quit till dusk.

One more march brought us to Sarahan, the summer capital of the Rajah of Bassahr State, whose winter home is at Rampur, on the Sutlej, at only 3,000 feet altitude.

At Sarahan, I got my “dak” (mail) and was able to send off letters, there being no post office between Bagi (10 miles from Narkanda) and Sarahan.

Next morning we reached Chora, 10 miles further on, where I was to quit the main road. After lunch, I walked on some miles investigating the valley on the opposite of the Sutlej with a telescope in order to be able to recognize peaks and knobs of hills, when I got over there. It was not possible to take the mules across the Sutlej to Rupi, as report had it that the bridge floor was broken. This I was able to check from above through my telescope, as I could see a shadowless gap on the water under the bridge where evidently there was no bridge flooring. I had just thought it was due to laziness on the part of the bearer and mule man, who did not seem to want to move off the level road.

The following morning early, I, my hill man Salli, and two coolies set forth down the “short cut” to the bridge some 1,500 feet below, and then up the other side of the valley to Rupi. There I camped, and met the Forest Ranger of the Pandra Bis ranges, who made arrangements for three local men to accompany me up to the Glacier Valley, the two men I brought from Chora returning there. The mule drivers had also been instructed to proceed one march to Taranda and await my arrival, when, I could not say exactly, but in four or five days’ time.

We were off at dawn and set our faces up the mountain side making for a knob called Janda De to commence with.

However, after reaching the limit of the forest at about 11,000 feet at 11 a.m., and after a short halt for lunch, it took up till 5 p.m. to reach Janda De, owing to the so-called path merely being along the rocky crest of a spur and up and down 200 feet at frequent intervals. My objective
on the map being a similar further distance beyond Janda De, I decided it was quite impracticable, and picked the only flat portion of mother earth, the summit of Janda De, 13,277 feet, as camp. The men sheltered comfortably under some large rocks within a few feet of the tent.

It was a glorious evening till 7 p.m., when clouds gathered ominously. However, the storm which eventually broke at 4 a.m. was short lived, and dawn brought a wonderful cloud-flecked sky, with snow mountains all round—Gushu Pishu, Ghata Kanda, Kokshane, Ghatarang and Dea close by, Kailas and Baldang in the east some 20 miles away and the back of the Hansbeshan peaks across the valley to the southward.

A little discussion with the elderly hill man who acted as guide brought the decision to descend into the Zangsu (or Shorang) Valley, rather than carry on along the ridge, though since then I regret not doing the latter. The descent was a scramble over snow slides, down rocks, over grassy slopes at a slippery angle for about three hours, till we reached water.

The previous evening the only water was melted snow.

Then into virgin forest, with rhododendron bent parallel to the ground during the winter by snow. This was the worst part, and one’s clothes suffered considerably. Periodically a halt was necessary to circumvent a “dankar” or precipice which appeared below the next tree. However, we reached the torrent at 9,000 feet altitude about 3 p.m., and camped under the “boot,” which I gathered was the local name for a large tree.
It was certainly warmer than the top of Janda De for camp.

Leaving my own hill man and two coolies at camp, at dawn again I set out with the old man, and the two of us proceeded up the valley to the glacier, about 6 miles by the map.

There certainly was a path of sorts, vanishing under mud slides here and there.

By 10.30 we had gone some 5 miles and were nearing my objective—the glacier which up to the last was tucked behind and hidden by a rocky spur.

The view of Kokshane (18,940 feet) ahead of us all the time was wonderful, with the sun glinting on the ice-clad pinnacles and snow slopes.

En route, I came to dwellings marked on the map by red dots which indicated houses but never a house—my old shepherd informing me that the large cavities under certain rocks were the places named on the map—shelters for the shepherds who bring their flocks along the same route as I had come, and stay from July to September under these awe-inspiring peaks and crags.
My guide seemed weary and anxious I should go no further, but I said I wanted to see the glacier. This he could not understand—who wanted to see cold ice? So I told him to remain and I would see the glacier: so off again up an old moraine, across snow beds, over rocks and at last round the spur—what a sight! The whole glacier glistening in the sun, with a rocky crag and a peak at the far side, 18,448 feet. From the point I reached, which was about 14,000 feet by the aneroid approximating to the map height given at a rock in the valley head, the peaks towered above one—such a valley head—glacier to the left, then a peak, then a dip on the other side from which I knew the Pin and Parbati rivers rise, and thence round to the Kokshane on the right.

Alone I could go no farther for fear of getting into difficulties, and the guide about a mile behind out of sight, so the only thing was to sit down and eat my lunch and feast my eyes on the grand scene and take photographs. I had not much time to spend there, only an hour or so, as there were six miles to get back.

Return to camp was uneventful.
An early start next morning was necessary, as I was anxious to get back to Taranda in one day. The track down led across a spot which had once been formed into a lake by the hillside, some 2,000 feet high, sliding down and blocking the valley. The water filled up and then ran over the edge, cutting a narrow gulley into a series of cascades but leaving no lake—only a levelled patch a mile long, across which the stream now goes in several shallow branches. These had to be waded and were ice-cold, of course.

After this the track leads over to Rupi; but I wanted to make the opposite bank, so a scramble was necessary, and then a gap to cross on a fallen tree. The existing one was rotten, so we had to set to and procure other trees and make a bridge 25 feet span between two rocks, with the torrent 40 feet below in a chasm.

I crossed nervously I must say, but it had to be done—a rope held each side and tied round me improved my nerve in case of a slip. Shoes were, of course, discarded, and the log crossed in my stockinged feet.

Thence the path improved and we reached Bara Kamba about 1 p.m.

Here I paid off my Rupi men and sent them home, and procured two other men to descend to the Sutlej and take my kit up to Taranda.

The descent was perilously steep, and 2,000 feet sheer down in a cleft in the rock—the main road to Taranda village.

Again stockinged feet for most of the descent, with one hill man in places holding his hand so that my foot did not slip off the hollows cut into the rock as steps.
At the bottom was a jhula or rope bridge of the kind common up these parts—a wire rope stretched across the river, and a traveller from which hangs a board by four chains, on which one sits.

On the words "go," the traveller runs to the centre down the rope and is then hauled up by the man on the far side. It takes a few minutes for the man to take in the slack of the hauling rope, a country-made grass rope at that, apt to break at any time and leave one suspended in mid stream till it can be repaired. We were lucky, and no rope broke.

Fig. 5.—Clouds over the Sutlej Valley from near Wangtu.

Two thousand feet to climb the other side up a good path however, and not quite so steep as the descent on the Bara Kamba side; and so to Taranda by 6 p.m. after 14 miles of strenuous going.

Here my excitement ended, and the remainder of the journey was on the main road again.

I had just time for two more marches further up the Sutlej, and made for Kilba at the junction of the Sutlej and Baspar rivers.

The first night we spent at Wangtu, which is hot and dusty. We passed Nichar, a beauty spot, and resolved to return there to camp on the return journey, instead of Wangtu.
I had one full day at Kilba, spending two nights and doing a 10 mile walk from Kilba up on to the hill above the Baspar river, from which there are grand views of Kailas and Raldang peaks, up the Baspar river and across to the Buran or Borenda Pass, which is over the Hansbeshan ridge.

At Kanahi, the village on the hill side, I came across a Buddhist shrine, a "mane" wall and a chorten. The interior decoration of the gateway was beautifully painted with pictures of dragons and demons.

And from here I had to return, as my days of leave were numbered and I had but one spare day in hand in case of accidents on the return journey.

At Sarahan, we took the valley road to Rampur, 20 miles, which was extremely hot and unpleasant, but we struck rain for the first time since leaving Narkanda and that cooled things a little.

From Rampur, I made Luhri in one day, about 22 miles, and from Luhri climbed to Narkanda: a hot climb for the first six miles. At Narkanda we met the rains proper, and for the three days in from Narkanda to Simla it rained consistently.

On the road we passed a gathering of men from Kulu who were taking four Devtas or symbolic idols on the way from Kulu to Patiala’s hill capital at Chail, for a festival—a distance of 400 miles. At each stopping place a ceremony occurred, and the incessant noise of drums and trumpets broke the silence of the mountains throughout the day and night.

On totalling up the mileage, including odd walks after the day’s march and walks on the days the mules rested, I found I had walked about 370 miles, which I had done in 27 days from start to finish and without fatigue.

The approximate distances are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Miles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simla to Theog</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theog to Narkanda</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narkanda to Kadrala</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadrala to Sungri</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sungri to Taklech (over Maral Kanda)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taklech to Daran Ghati</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daran Ghati to Sarahan</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarahan to Chora</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chora up to the Zansu and back to Taranda</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranda to Wangtu</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wangtu to Kilba</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilba to Nichar</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichar to Taranda</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranda to Sarahan</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarahan to Rampur</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampur to Luhri</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luhri to Narkanda</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narkanda to Matiana</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matiana to Pagu</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pagu to Simla</td>
<td>13</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A note of warning to those who may do a similar trip: stores and food are almost unobtainable, except a few chickens here and there. Eggs
Current Literature

seemed almost unknown. Atta of a kind can be got, and the servants managed to supply their wants.

Cigarettes are scarce except in the large places such as Sarahan and Rampur, and at one small out of the way shop kept by an Ambala family at Saldang, not far from Taranda.

I regretted not being able to get into Buddhist country beyond Chini, but another week or ten days would have been necessary to reach the Tibet border at Shipki. That must remain for another time.

Current Literature.


Aluminium combined with silicic acid is very widely distributed and forms 7 to 8 per cent of the earth's crust. It is found normally in minute quantities in plants, animals and the human body. A number of investigations by various workers extending over many years are quoted to show that the use of aluminium cooking vessels is not injurious to health. It is, however, agreed that aluminium containers are not suitable for keeping foodstuffs containing acid fruit juice. Thus 400 grammes of apple were cooked in 250 cubic centimetres of water in an aluminium vessel for three-quarters of an hour and allowed to stand in it for two days, after which 20·8 milligrammes were found in the content. On the other hand 400 cubic centimetres of potato starch paste were cooked for a quarter of an hour in a similar vessel and left to stand in it for three days when the quantity of aluminium in the content was found to be only 0·7 milligramme.

Feeding experiments on animals have shown that aluminium salts only pass through the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal to a very slight extent, and that practically all the aluminium given by the mouth is recovered in the faeces. When animals are given acid-reacting aluminium salts with their food in high concentration they lose their appetites and show considerable loss of weight, but such a high concentration of acid aluminium salts is out of the question under the conditions in which human food is prepared.

Aluminium combined with silicic acid occurs in the clay used for making earthenware vessels and no injurious effects to health have been attributed to their use.

No diminution in the vitamin content of food cooked or preserved in aluminium vessels has been found.

A. J. COLLIS.

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