

Day now began to dawn, but the heavy snowstorm did not cease, and we could only see the lower parts of the mountains, while their summits were hidden in the clouds. We were making towards a ravine, up which we conjectured could be the only possible way to the top of the pass, and were rounding an icy slope forming one side of the ravine, when suddenly we heard a report like thunder, and then a rushing sound. We knew at once that it was an avalanche; it was coming from straight above us, and I felt in that moment greater fear than I ever yet have done, for we could see nothing, but only heard this tremendous rushing sound coming straight down upon us. One of the men called out to run, but we could not, for we were on an ice-slope, up which we were hewing our way with an axe. The sound came nearer and nearer, then came a cloud of snow-dust, and the avalanche rushed past us in the ravine by our side. Had it happened a quarter of an hour later, or had we started a quarter of an hour earlier, we should have been in the ravine and buried by the avalanche.

We now continued the ascent of the ice-slope, hoping we might find a road by that way; but we were brought up by a great rent in the ice, a yawning chasm with perpendicular walls of solid ice. This effectually put an end to our attempt to cross the pass, for I dared not descend into the ravine, through fear of avalanches. We therefore were obliged to return and give up all hopes of reaching the top of the Saltoro Pass. On our way back we saw another avalanche rush down the mountain-side, and over the very path we had made in ascending, covering up our actual footsteps left in the snow. Seeing, therefore, how dangerous it was to remain where we were, we hastened on, and very thankful I was when we again reached the open glacier, and were out of the reach of avalanches. Snow continued to fall heavily, and we heard the roar of avalanches on the mountains all around us. Shukar Ali said that if the sky were to clear, and we could wait a week for the