

been exceptionally heavy, but were confident that loads could now be taken across safely. In spite of this local attitude I was resolved not to forgo any of the precautions I had kept in view ever since my struggle for a passage over the Lowarai commenced. Every load was lightened so as not to exceed forty pounds, or else two men were detached for carriage in turn. To reduce risks I divided the whole train of carriers into three detachments, in charge of myself and the two Ram Singhs. With each detachment I detailed four men without loads, but provided with spades and ropes to come to the rescue of any who might be in trouble. Each detachment was to keep fifteen minutes' or so walking distance from the next, to prevent too heavy a weight being brought on any treacherous snow-slope. Finally, I kept to my programme of crossing at night, and getting clear of all avalanche shoots on the north side long before the morning sun could set the snow moving.

These arrangements kept me busy all through the afternoon, and as the start was to be made by 1 A.M. I was glad enough to turn in for a few hours just as it was getting dark. By 11.30 P.M. I was up again to start the next day's work, and after a hasty 'Chota Hazri' which my cook was determined to treat as a 'supper,' I was ready to set my detachments in motion. Thanks to the previous evening's arrangements all men were quickly at their loads, and the moon shone just long enough to make it easy to keep the detachments apart. Shortly after 1 A.M. I set out with the first party of twenty men, trusty Muhammadju looking after those in the rear. By the movement of the lanterns behind I could see that Naik Ram Singh started the second detachment with military punctuality, followed by the Surveyor's party after another fifteen minutes' interval. Close above Gujar the valley bottom completely disappeared under snow. How deeply it lay was clear from the fact that no sound of the streams flowing beneath this continuous slope of snow bridges ever reached me. Huge avalanches had swept down at intervals from the steep spurs and gorges on either side for months past, leaving their tracks marked by