

ship for their men and ponies, they were forced in the end to admit that it was best to let me try at once. They probably also realized my firm determination not to expose the men to any avoidable risks. In order to be prepared for any accidents arising from bad weather, I decided to carry supplies for two days and whatever else was absolutely needed to permit of our spending a night or two on the glacier without immediate danger from exposure. With a view to keeping the individual loads of food supplies, rugs, and fuel as light as possible, I fixed the number of men at twelve. Among them I included two of the sturdy Wakhis who had joined me at Vedinkot, and who from their knowledge of Persian were to me specially useful.

What with selecting the men, inspecting their kit and food supplies, and testing the ropes to be used on the glacier, it was late before I could retire for a few hours' rest. By 12.30 A.M. I got up to find not the rain or snow I had feared, but the clouds still low and a stillness in the air that gave little promise. It took some time before my Hindustani cook in these unwonted surroundings managed to produce what he persisted in calling my supper. But just then a breeze rose, and after a while the first stars showed through a break in the clouds. This sufficed to settle the question of a start, and by 3 A.M. our party was winding its way up the Rukang spur. We found the top still covered with snow, and soon realized how much its softness would delay our progress. At the relatively low elevation the cold of the night was not sufficient to freeze the surface, and wading through soft snow three to four feet deep, with occasional dips into little streams hidden below it, proved a slow and trying business.

Surveyor Ram Singh had readily offered to accompany me, though apart from a hoped-for observation of the height of the pass by mercurial barometer there was no specific topographical task for him to accomplish. But while the spirit was thus willing enough, the body of my worthy companion was bound to give trouble. Since his last great tour in Tibet, up from Gyantse to Lake Mansarowar, Ram Singh had had ample time to acquire once more the pronounced *embonpoint* which invariably distinguishes him