

when we found ourselves on a smooth slope of hard snow. Though the mist around scarcely allowed one to see ahead more than a few hundred yards, I rightly guessed that we had reached the *névé* beds feeding this branch of the glacier. To ascend transversely some 500 feet higher up was not particularly difficult, since the ice-axe, brought with us, cut steps with ease and rapidity. But the tracks worn by stones and big snowballs which had glided down warned me that we were on a slope by no means safe from avalanches. Just then the mist lifted a little, and I was beginning to hope for a full view of our surroundings, when rumbling sounds above announced the fall of softened snow or ice. None of it passed near us, but the sound was enough to make the four Taghliks, carrying plane-table and cameras, bolt downwards in terror. They had already, while we were crossing the moraine walls, declared their fear to move over ground that was wholly strange to them, and the dread of an avalanche now completely demoralized them. There was nothing for it but to follow them downwards, though in a more cautious fashion. Not far from the topmost limit of the *débris* accumulations encrusting the glacier proper we found a bit of level ground in a cirque, completely sheltered by huge masses of split rock. Here we might have hoped to advance our camp, but the preparations we made for clearing this space sufficed to fill the Taghliks with renewed terrors. To pass a night in such surroundings evidently appeared to them a step dangerously near to destruction.

For a short while, as we descended, the mist scattered before a brisk breeze and revealed above, to the south-east, an imposing amphitheatre of *névé*-covered slopes, crowned by a crest of bare and most precipitous rock walls, reaching to an estimated height of about 17,000 feet. With due precautions I thought the crest might be gained through one of the several snow-filled rock couloirs. But even these short glimpses sufficed to convince me that there was here no possible route for laden men such as these Taghliks. Still less was it to be believed that the party of Habibullah's men, whom Johnson had accompanied, could have brought their numerous yaks down over snow and rock slopes like