

The march was very trying for the troops and transport, for the "road" was simply a mountain-path of the roughest description. One coolie corps struck work, and a number of the local drivers of a pony corps and many Nepalese coolies had deserted, for a curious feeling was prevalent on the frontier that we were advancing to our doom. But the troops and the bulk of the transport got over all right, though very exhausted, and we encamped in three bodies near Langram, well below the pass, in a deep, narrow, forest-clad gorge.

Here I was met by the ubiquitous Captain Parr, who in many ways was extremely helpful at this time, by the local Chinese official, and by the Tibetan General. They asked me to go back to Gnatong, where the Chinese Resident and Tibetan Councillors would come and discuss matters with me. On my declining, they asked me to remain where I was for two or three months. I told them I had waited for months without result at Khamba Jong; now I had to go on into Tibet. If my passage were opposed, General Macdonald would break down opposition; if they did not oppose us, we would not attack them. They asked me what we should do if on the morrow we found the gate in the Yatung wall closed. I said we would blow it open.

What would happen on the morrow was now the interesting question. We would reach Yatung, which for the last ten years we had been trying to make into a trade-mart, according to the treaty, and we would approach that wall which the Tibetans had thrown up to prevent anyone coming to trade. The dramatic moment had arrived; and as General Macdonald and I on the following morning rode down the wooded gorge with all military precautions, it was impossible to say what our reception would be.

Suddenly, as we turned a sharp corner, we saw a solid wall, stretching right across the valley from the river up the mountain-side. General Macdonald sent a flanking party up the hills, and a skirmishing party to advance straight at the wall. As we approached we were met by the same officials who had visited us on the previous night.