

I was heartily tired of this fencing about at a distance; I wanted to get in under their reserve. And I thought that if we could meet and could tell them in an uncontentious and unceremonious manner what all the pother was about, we might at any rate get a start—get what the Americans call a “move on.” It was worth while, it seemed to me, to make a supreme effort to get this intrinsically small matter settled by peaceful means, even if a very considerable risk was incurred in the process; and I wished particularly to see them, and to judge of them, in their own natural surroundings. I was constantly being called upon by Government to give my opinion upon the probable action of the Tibetans, but so far I had only seen them in our own camps, and they had steadily refused to admit me into theirs. I therefore determined on the following morning, without any formality, without any previous announcement, and without any escort, to ride over to their camp, about ten miles distant, at Guru, and talk over the general situation—not as British Commissioner, with a list of grievances for which he had to demand redress, but as one who wished to understand them, and by friendly means to effect a settlement. I was only too well aware that such an attempt was likely to be taken by the Tibetans as a sign of weakness; still, when I saw these people so steeped in ignorance of what opposing the might of the British Empire really meant, I felt it my duty to reason with them up to the latest moment, to save them from the results of their ignorance.

Captain O'Connor and Captain Sawyer, of the 23rd Pioneers, who was learning Tibetan, accompanied me, but we did not take with us even a single sepoy as escort. On our way we were met by messengers, who had come to say that the Tibetan chiefs would not come to see me at Tuna, and I was all the more pleased that I had left Tuna before the message arrived.

On reaching Guru, a small village under a hill, we found numbers of Tibetan soldiers out collecting yak-dung in the surrounding plain; but there was no military precaution whatever taken, and we rode straight into the