

village. About 600 soldiers were huddled up in the cattle-yards of the houses. They were only armed with spears and matchlocks, and had no breech-loaders. As we rode through the village they all crowded out to look at us, and not with any scowls, but laughing to each other, as if we were an excellent entertainment. They were not very different in appearance from the ordinary Bhutia dandy-bearers of Darjiling or the yak-drivers we had with us in camp.

We asked for the General, and on reaching the principal house I was received at the head of the stairs by a polite, well-dressed, and well-mannered man, who was the Tibetan leader, and who was most cordial in his greeting. Other Generals stood behind him, and smiled and shook hands also. I was then conducted into a room in which the three Lhasa monks were seated, and here the difference was at once observable. They made no attempt to rise, and only made a barely civil salutation from their cushions. One object of my visit had already been attained: I could from this in itself see how the land lay, and where the real obstruction came from.

The Lhasa General and the Shigatse Generals—we had become accustomed to calling them Generals, though the English reader must not imagine they at all resembled Napoleon—took their seats on cushions at the head of the room and opposite to the monks. We were given three cushions on the right, and two Shigatse Generals and another Shigatse representative had seats on the left. Tea was served, and the Lhasa General, as the spokesman of the assembly, asked after my health.

After I had made the usual polite replies and inquiries after their own welfare, I said I had not come to them now on a formal visit as British Commissioner, or with any idea of officially discussing the various points of difference between us; but I was anxious to see them and know them, and to have an opportunity of freely discussing the general situation in a friendly, informal manner. So I had ridden over, without ceremony and without escort, to talk matters over, and see if there was no means of arriving at a settlement by peaceful means. I said that