

We moved along as rapidly as is possible at those high altitudes and encumbered with heavy clothing. A short way out we were met by a messenger from the Tibetan General, urging us to go back to India. I told the messenger to gallop back at once and tell the Lhasa General that we were on our way to Gyantse, and were going as far as Guru, ten miles distant, that day. I said that we did not want to fight, and would not unless we were opposed, but that the road must be left clear for us, and the Tibetans must withdraw from their positions across it. Farther on, as we advanced across an almost level gravelly plain, we came in sight of the Tibetan position in a series of sangars on a ridge. At 1,000 yards' distance we halted, and awaited the arrival of the Tibetans for our last palaver. They rode up briskly with a little cavalcade, and we all dismounted, set out rugs and coats on the ground, and sat down for the final discussion. I reiterated the same old statement—that we had no wish or intention of fighting if we were not opposed, but that we must advance to Gyantse. If they did not obstruct our progress or did not attack us, we would not attack them. But advance we must, for we had found it impossible to negotiate anywhere else. They replied with the request—or, indeed, almost order—that we must go back to Yatung, and they would negotiate there. They said these were their instructions from Lhasa. They also did not wish to fight, but they had orders to send us back to Yatung.

There was no possible reasoning with such people. They had such overweening confidence in their Lama's powers. How *could* anyone dare to resist the orders of the Great Lama? Surely lightning would descend from heaven or the earth open up and destroy anyone who had such temerity! I pointed to our troops, now ready deployed for action. I said that we had tried for fourteen years inside our frontier to settle matters. I urged that for eight months now I had patiently tried to negotiate, but no one with authority came to see me, my letters were returned, and even messages were refused. I had therefore received the commands of the Emperor to advance to Gyantse, in the hope that perhaps there re-