

sponsible negotiators would meet us. Anyhow, the time for further parleying here was gone. The moment for advance had arrived. I would give them a quarter of an hour after their return to their lines within which to make up their minds. After that interval General Macdonald would advance, and if the Tibetans had not already left their positions blocking our line of advance, he would expel them by force.

All this was interpreted to them by Captain O'Connor with his inimitable suavity and composure. But we might just as well have spoken to a stone wall. Not the very slightest effect was produced. After all, our numbers were not very overwhelming. The Tibetans had charms against our bullets, and the supernatural powers of the Great Lama in the background. Whether they had any lurking suspicions that perhaps, after all, these might not be efficacious I know not. But, anyhow, all had to obey the orders from Lhasa. Those orders were not to let us proceed farther, so stop us they must, and that was all they were concerned with. They had formed no plan of what they should do if we did advance contrary to the Great Lama's orders. But for that there was no need; the Lama would provide. Such were their ideas. It was, of course, an impossible situation.

The Generals and their following returned to their camp. The quarter of an hour of grace elapsed. And now the great moment had arrived. But I wished still to give them just one last chance, in the hope that at the eleventh hour, and at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour, they might change their minds. I therefore asked General Macdonald to order his men not to fire upon the Tibetans until the Tibetans first fired on them. In making this request I well knew the responsibility I was incurring. We were but a handful of men—about 100 Englishmen and 1,200 Indians—in the face of superior numbers of Tibetans, in the heart of their country, 15,000 feet above the sea, and separated from India by two high passes; and the advantage our troops possessed from arms of precision and long-range fire I took from them.