

May 1 we received news from Captain Hodgson, commanding the party, that he had advanced with his mounted infantry across the pass, and three miles beyond had found the Tibetans in occupation of a wall, some 600 yards long, built across the valley. The Tibetans, estimated at from 1,000 to 1,500 in number, opened a heavy fire on the mounted infantry at about 300 yards' distance. Our men then retired steadily, firing only a few shots and returned towards Gyantse.

Besides the definite information thus acquired, reports also reached me that other troops were assembling in the Rong Valley, ready to support those on the Lhasa road, and that there was a large gathering, estimated at 4,000, assembled at Shigatse itself, a portion of which was to move up to Dongtse, twelve miles from Gyantse.

Colonel Brander now came to me and asked for leave to go out and attack the Tibetans before these gatherings could come to a head. He had much frontier experience, and I also had some, and we both of us knew that when such gatherings take place it is a pretty sound general principle to take the initiative, and hit hard at them before they have time to accumulate overwhelming strength. It was a bold move, he contemplated, for the Karo-la (pass) was forty-five miles distant, and was over 16,000 feet high; and while he was away with two-thirds of the escort, the Mission, with only one-third of its full escort, might be itself attacked. I said that if he, on his side, did not mind taking this risk, I, on my side, did not mind it, and, as far as my military opinion was worth anything, was quite in favour of the operation.

But it was on political grounds that I had to give the decision, and on those grounds I had no objection. I had come to negotiate, but there was no symptom of negotiators appearing. On the other hand, the Tibetans were still further massing their troops; their position at the Karo-la and between there and Kangma was threatening our line of communication; and they had fired on our reconnoitring party. For these reasons I informed Government by telegram on May 2 that I had raised no objection on political grounds to Colonel Brander's pro-