

Amban that we should insist on negotiating at Lhasa itself if no competent negotiator appeared in conjunction with him at Gyantse within a month.

This was satisfactory to a certain degree, but I was disappointed to have to be still further talking about negotiations when we had been wantonly attacked, when we were now actually invested, and when the Lamas were gathering yet more forces around us. Any mention of negotiating in such circumstances would only lead them to believe we feared them, and it was with much reluctance that I eventually gave this message. But the Government had to contend with many difficulties. They were in the face of a strong opposition in the House of Commons. There was no enthusiasm for the enterprise in the country. We had only recently emerged from the South African War. The Russo-Japanese War was causing anxiety. And we had not yet concluded the agreement and formed the *Entente Cordiale* with France.

General Macdonald was meanwhile making every preparation in Chumbi for supporting the Mission escort and eventually advancing to Lhasa; and he had many difficulties of his own to contend with, through an outbreak of cholera, and through the heavy rains causing many breaches in the road in Sikkim. Supplies, munitions, and transport, had to be laboriously collected, and progress was necessarily slow. But on May 24 strong reinforcements reached Gyantse, and were a most welcome addition to our strength, enabling Colonel Brander to assume a more active attitude. They consisted of two 10-pounder guns of the British mountain battery, under Lieutenant Easton, a company of native sappers and miners, 50 Sikhs, and 20 mounted infantry.

Our little garrison was strengthened, too, by the arrival of Captain Sheppard, Royal Engineers, who, of all the officers I saw during the Mission, struck me as being the most likely to rise to the very highest position in the service. His energy, his never-failing cheerfulness, his daring, and his general ability, were altogether exceptional. He was the champion racquet-player in the army, and he was already known on north-western frontier cam-