

had been eleven months trying even to begin negotiations. I should be quite unable to complete them in two or three months, especially if the Chinese and Tibetans knew we intended to leave before the winter.

The substance of this telegram I still think was perfectly sound, but its tone I do not now in cold blood seek to defend. I must confess that during all this Gyantse period I was not so steady and imperturbable as an agent should be. Perhaps the prolonged stay at very high altitudes was beginning to tell, for even Gyantse was over 13,000 feet. Perhaps it was the greater realization that nothing ever would be effected short of Lhasa, and that this playing about at Khamba Jong, at Tuna, and at Gyantse was merely for the benefit of the distant British elector. Or it may have been the difficulty of reconciling military with political considerations. Or possibly it was reading in the newspapers now arriving from England the accusations of cruelty, injustice, and oppression which were being publicly brought against the Mission, and the prophecies of disaster, such as befell Cavagnari, which were to come on us also. Whatever it was, I certainly became very restive, and now earned a rebuff from the Government of India, which only made me worse, and determined me to give up the whole business. It seemed so easy to carry through if we only went straight at it, so utterly impossible when in England they were only half-hearted. I see now that I ought to have gone stolidly and cheerily on, for Governments, too, have innumerable difficulties of their own. Still, this was not easy at the time.

It was tolerably certain a fortnight after my arrival at Gyantse that the Tibetans did not seriously mean to negotiate, and if we had to go to Lhasa, it was urgently necessary to make early preparations for an advance, so that another whole summer might not pass away without result. Yet I was undoubtedly premature in breathing the word Lhasa so early as the end of April. It was clear to me that if we wished to make a well-thought-out, complete, and lasting settlement with the Tibetans and the Chinese combined, and if we wished—