

immediately below the Karo-la, and there we found the Bhutanese messenger who had carried a letter from the Tongsa Penlop to the Yutok Sha-pé's camp had returned, saying that some Tibetan officials would come over presently to see us. The Tibetans, however, fired at our mounted infantry from the wall on the far side of the pass, and no officials appeared.

This looked as if we were to have another fight. Before we left Gyantse we had heard that the pass was occupied by 2,000 Tibetans, and that there were 2,000 more in support, and the mounted infantry now reported the pass to be strongly held and fresh walls and sangars to have been built. All the villages *en route*, too, had been deserted, so we fully expected a fight.

Our camp under the pass was right in among a lofty knot of mountains, one of which rose to a height of over 24,000 feet above sea-level. A magnificent glacier descended a side valley to within 500 yards of the camp. The whole scene was desolate in the highest degree. And though we were on the highroad to Lhasa, the road was nothing but the roughest little mountain pathway rubbed out by the traffic of mules and men across it.

The afternoon and evening of the 17th were occupied in reconnoitring the position of the Tibetans. They were very strongly posted at a narrow gorge three miles from our camp on the north side of the pass, and their position was flanked by impassable snow mountains. The old wall of Colonel Brander's time had been extended on either hand till it touched precipices immediately under the snow-line. Behind this lay a second barrier of sangars. Like all the walls which the Tibetans so skilfully erected at such places, this was built up of heavy stones. The position was manned, according to our latest information, by about 1,500 Tibetans.

At 7 a.m. on the morning of the 18th, when now, even in the height of summer, there was still a nip of frost in the air, the advance troops marched off. The Royal Fusiliers, under Colonel Cooper, were to attack the centre, and on either side parties of the 8th Gurkhas were to turn the flanks.