

While the Gurkhas were slowly plodding up the mountain-sides, I seated myself beside Major Fuller's mountain battery, and watched the effects of gun-fire at these altitudes. It was most interesting. The pass itself was 16,600 feet, and the battery was a few hundred feet above it, and was for some time firing at groups 5,000 yards away, and some of them on the glacier at about 18,000 feet above the sea. In such a rare atmosphere ordinary sighting and ordinary fuses were quite useless. The shells would cleave through the thin air at very considerably greater velocity than they would pass through the thicker air at sea-level. All the sighting and the timing of the fuses had, therefore, to be completely readjusted by trial and guesswork. Despite this, however, wonderfully accurate shooting was effected by these splendid little guns, and it would have made all the difference to Colonel Brander if he had had them instead of the useless 7-pounders.

The Gurkhas and Pathans, after a long and difficult climb to 18,000 feet, turned the position, but the Tibetans in the centre had not waited. They knew that the dreaded mounted infantry would be after them, so each determined that he, at any rate, would not be the last to leave the position, and all had cleared off before our troops arrived. Most, indeed, had retreated in the night, and in reality only about 700 Kham men were left to hold the position. Many of these escaped high up over the snows, pursued only by our shrapnel shells. Our mounted infantry reconnoitred up to within two miles of Nagartse Jong, which was found to be occupied, while reports came in that 1,300 more men from Kham were expected.

Nagartse was reached on the 19th, and close to it I was met by a deputation from Lhasa. Here were signs of negotiations at last. I said I would have a full interview at three that afternoon, but must warn them at once that it would be necessary for me to occupy the jong, and to advance to Lhasa, though I was ready to negotiate on the way. The deputation, which consisted of the Yutok Sha-pé, the Ta Lama, the Chief Secretary, and some monks, arrived in my camp shortly before the time appointed.