

a problem. His residence was on the far side of the city, and the point was whether we should ride through Lhasa or round it. It was risky to ride through this sacred city, swarming with monks who had organized the opposition against us. We had been so recently fighting against them that we could not be sure of their attitude. Peace was not yet concluded, and they had shown no signs, so far, of really negotiating, but had, on the contrary, been doing their best to stave us off from Lhasa. So our reception was uncertain, and, if anything happened to us, the matter-of-fact, common-sense person at home would, without compunction, have criticized me for running the risk without any necessity. But from my point of view there was a necessity. All this trouble had arisen through the Tibetans being so inaccessible and keeping themselves so much apart; and now I meant to close in with them, to break through their seclusion, to brush aside their exclusiveness, and to let them see us and us see them as the inhabitants of the rest of the world see each other; and I meant to make a beginning at once. So I determined now, on the very first day after our arrival, to ride right through the heart of the city of Lhasa.

The Chinese Resident sent his bodyguard with pikes, and three-pronged spears, and many banners to escort us, and of our own troops I took two companies of the Royal Fusiliers and the 2nd Mounted Infantry. Two guns and four companies of infantry were also kept in readiness in camp to support us at a moment's notice.

Many a traveller had pined to look on Lhasa, but now we were actually in this sacred city, it was, except for the Potala, a sorry affair. The streets were filthily dirty, and the inhabitants hardly more clean than the streets; the houses were built of solid masonry, but as dirty as the streets and inhabitants; and the temples we passed, though massive, were ungainly. Only the Potala was imposing; it rose from the squalid town at its base in tier upon tier of solid, massive masonry, and, without any pretence at architectural beauty or symmetry, was impressive from its sheer size and strength and dominating situation.