

a gateway in the tower. It would have been impossible to effect an entrance if the Kanjutis chose to be hostile, for even if they did not fire at us, they could have annihilated us by hurling down stones. I thought, therefore, that my best plan would be not to commit my whole party to such a risk, but to go on with an interpreter, and leave the Gurkhas on the top of the cliff on our side of the ravine, to cover the retreat in case the Kanjutis proved hostile. Having made these dispositions, I set off down into the ravine accompanied by Ramzan, the interpreter, and Shahzad Mir, the orderly, who spoke Persian. We had not gone very far, when the Gurkha naik came running after us and said that at Shahidula I had promised that he should be allowed to go first. The reader will remember that the timid Kirghiz had prophesied that whoever should appear first before this Kanjuti outpost would certainly be killed, and I had in chaff said to the Gurkha naik that he should be sent on first, and now, taking my word seriously, he had claimed this as a privilege.

We had descended to the bottom of the ravine, and climbed halfway up the opposite bank. The door through the tower was still open, and no one could be seen about, when suddenly the door was banged, the wall was manned by wild-looking Kanjutis, shouting and waving us back, and pointing their matchlocks at us. We were not fifty feet from them, and I expected at any moment to have bullets and stones whizzing about our ears; so I halted and beckoned to them, holding up one finger and signing to them in this way to send one man down to us. Gradually the hubbub ceased; they still kept their matchlocks pointed at us, but the door was opened and two men came down to us. We had a long parley together, and I told them who I was, that I was coming to visit their chief, and that Captain Durand had already spoken to Safder Ali about my coming. They said they had heard of this, but they wished to make quite sure that I had not an army with me, so I sent