

to be communicative, being engaged in some computations, and, perhaps observing this, they bestowed most of their attention on Pike's quarters.

Our visitors were greatly surprised at the smallness of our company. They told us they had been warned to look out for a force of 2,000 men, commanded by twelve European officers, and had received orders to turn it back at once. Where, they asked again and again, were the rest of our men? We gathered that exaggerated information concerning our expedition had been sent to Lhasa long before our departure from Leh, and that strict orders, followed by a reminder every fortnight, had been dispatched from the Tibetan capital to all the Pombos in Western Tibet to watch and regularly report on the movements of this force. The Pombos had searched all the known routes, and we had only avoided their attention by finding a route for ourselves. Ramzan protested in vain that these reports were false, and we fell more and more under the suspicion of being concerned in a subtle scheme for the invasion of the capital. One of the caravan men, however, was equal to the occasion, and, having struck up a warm friendship with a Tibetan visitor, assured him in the strictest confidence that the remainder of our force had been packed away in the yak dans and baggage.

This explanation, repeated in the Tibetan encampment, proved highly satisfactory, and, thereafter, we and our belongings were regarded with respect and awe. We, in turn, were surprised at the smallness of the nomad encampment at Gerge, but subsequently we ascertained that this name was applied not merely to this spot, but also to the adjacent tract of country where the numerous valleys afforded shelter and concealment to many other groups of tents with a considerable population.

About dusk the visitors retired to their own tents and