

informed by Ramzan, who acted as interpreter, that we could not be induced to discuss any matter of business in presence of his servants. The menials being kept outside the interview went on, and proved eminently unsatisfactory. We told him that we meant to travel towards the east, but had neither the intention nor the wish to go near Lhasa, and we asked him for assistance in obtaining guides and transport. He replied that he could not assist us to travel in that direction without permission from his superiors, and, to obtain this permission, he was willing to send to Rudok. He could not receive a reply from Rudok in less than sixteen days, and we could not possibly wait so long. We told him that we meant to go to Batang, and would set out next day, with or without his assistance. This was mere brag on our part for, owing to the state of our commissariat and transport, such a journey would have been quite impracticable. Moreover, a rumour had reached us, doubtless originated by the Pombo, that a few days' march to the east of Gerge there was a large body of Chukpas. Still, it was necessary to seem resolute. So long as we presented a bold front with some appearance of strength in reserve, the Tibetans were not likely to use force against us. The opposition we met was mostly passive, and the Pombo was evidently taken aback by our reply. He now asked us to wait for five or six days, and asserted that within that time he would be able to obtain instructions from an official of higher rank than himself. We repeated our determination to proceed, and the Pombo further modified his proposals by offering to supply us with food till the necessary instructions should be received. We replied that, if one day's supplies were produced at once, we would accept this offer, but if they were not speedily forthcoming we would adhere to our plans. It seemed evident that this offer of the Pombo was not made in good faith, for we heard no more of it.