

were in no way accredited to him, it was impossible that he should officially adopt us and ask the Taotai's good offices. The presence of his moonshee and our temporary establishment in his quarters went far to give us good character; yet, after all, we were chance wanderers, save in so far as the sealed letter to M. Petrovsky might give to me the harmless character of an American citizen without a mission, while Anginieur's claim to be a French officer entitled him to a certain consideration. But whether our simple story of accidental association was believed by M. Petrovsky we never knew. In our first interview with him, before visiting the Taotai, he had seemed to warm genially toward us, but utterly discouraged the venture up the plateau. He made no offer of assistance save that he would write to his representative in Khotan to help us there. Farther than Khotan, even if so far, he thought we should not go. If by chance we should reach the inhabited portion of Tibet he believed we would be killed, etc.

Now, the old gentleman's conduct was a bit annoying, yet reasonable enough from the Russian point of view. We were fairly under some suspicion as to our motives, and even if the simple facts were believed, it remained that our presence might produce complications in a region where Europeans are events, and where Russia's present preponderance of influence has been expected at any time to become Russian control. Such a situation is always delicate until worked to an accepted conclusion. China is still the actual and effective ruler. Great Britain is still an eager critic of all Central Asian