

The grape-vine telegraph had long ago reported to Lhasa the strange composition of the innocent commercial mission, which was intended, by the Chinese suzerains who had permitted it, only to discuss details of trade relations—of those relations which had been suspended since the Goorkhas, friends of the British, had shown that conquest, not trade, was uppermost in their minds. Already the Lhasa authorities had felt a reasonable fright—the Under-Secretary's frankness was scarce needed to put them on guard. So great was the resistance in Tibet to the incoming of such a monstrous miscellany of people, *without a special commercial representative*, that it was thought best to abandon the project. The mission was disbanded. Its organisation was a blunder. To disband it without making a manly statement of the original error was another blunder. In 1886 a new convention with China reflected the check by insertion of a clause which released China from any positive engagement to give Tibetan passports and relegated the whole matter to the limbo of "China shall use her best endeavour," or such like empty generality. The armed attack upon Tibet's frontiers, in 1888, did not fail, we may well believe, to further convince the Tibetans that missions of all sorts must be kept out at all hazards.

This seizure of Sikkim not only completed the white man's hold upon the southern crest line of the Himalayas, but it gave control of the easiest roadway over the mountains, down into the Chumbi valley. That the trap should be sprung in due course of time was obvious enough. Something