

## Chastening of Herbert Spencer 223

Government to give up two provinces, Turkestan and Tibet, since an advance (assuming it physically possible to reach Lhasa with an army from the north) must be over Chinese territory. It is obvious that such an effort by Russia, in the face of known opposition in England and America against the disintegration of China, would be attempted only as part, and the last part, of some great program of an international war of the first magnitude. In such case no conduct of Russian affairs, short of one headquartered in an insane asylum, would squander upon the Tibetan plateau forces urgently needed elsewhere.

So terrible are the obstacles placed there by nature, that the Chinese strength, small as it is, would be more than sufficient to stop an army moving toward Lhasa, from the difficult north, and would be, if friendly to Russia, wholly powerless as against British force, moving from the *easy south*. Those who were impressed, in a vague way, by the long delays of the Younghusband expedition, with the view that the military operations were difficult, must yield that opinion to the facts. It was diplomacy, not strategy, which ate up the long months, which gave the Tibetans ample time to prepare a resistance doomed to be of the *opera bouffe* kind, and which aggravated greatly the problem of supplies for the British force.

Imagine a single company of Cossacks, known or reasonably supposed to be actually on the plateau, and you may at once imagine Lhasa reached, conquered, and destroyed by the British within two weeks from the time a column should leave