

extreme south, and in close proximity to the northern frontier of the Indian Empire. Neither need we point to the historical fact that no other States or Powers have, during the time that the British dominion has been established in India, had any connection with Tibet, but, firstly, China who possesses a nominal suzerainty over the country, secondly, Nepal, a State in close political connection with India, and, thirdly, the British Government itself. The policy of exclusiveness to which the Tibetan Government has during the last century become increasingly addicted has only been tolerated by us, because anomalous and unfriendly as it has been, it carried with it no element of political or military danger. At no time during that century do we imagine that Great Britain would have permitted the creation of a rival or hostile influence in a position so close to the Indian border and so pregnant with possibilities of mischief. We are of opinion that the only way in which to counteract the danger by which we regard British interests as directly threatened in Tibet, is to assume the initiative ourselves, and we regard the Chinese proposals for a conference as affording an excellent opportunity for pressing forward and carrying out this policy. We are in favour, subject to a qualification that we shall presently mention, of accepting the Chinese proposals, but of attaching to them the condition that the conference shall take place not upon our frontier, but at Lhasa, and that it shall be attended by a representative of the Tibetan Government, who shall participate in the proceedings. In this way alone does it appear to us that we shall escape the ignominious position of having an Agreement which has been formally concluded with the Chinese subsequently repudiated by the Tibetans; and in no other way do we regard it as in the least likely that the wall of Tibetan impassivity and obstruction will be broken down. We might find many precedents in the history of India for missions with a not altogether dissimilar object. . . . In view of the contingency of opposition, we think that the mission, if decided upon, should be accompanied by an armed escort, sufficient to overawe any opposition that might be encountered on the way, and to ensure its safety while in Lhasa. The military strength of the Tibetans is beneath contempt, and serious resistance is not to be contemplated. It would, however, be