

## CHAPTER VII

### NEGOTIATIONS WITH RUSSIA

I WOULD again recall the fact that when the Government of India wrote the above-quoted despatch, Russia was not yet at war with Japan, and was very much in the ascendant and active in Asia. She had recently occupied Port Arthur, and run a railway through Manchuria; and she was in a dominant, almost domineering, position at Peking. And as showing the interest she took in Tibet, there came, just after the receipt by the India Office of Lord Curzon's despatch, a representation from the Russian Chargé d'Affaires in London, founded apparently upon our very humble efforts of the previous summer within our own frontier. In this representation, which was made in the form of a memorandum\* communicated to the Foreign Office, it was stated that, according to the information which the Russian Government had received from an authoritative source, a British military expedition had reached Komba-Ovaleko, on its way north by the Chumbi Valley, and that the Russian Government would consider such an expedition to Tibet as likely to produce a situation of considerable gravity, which might oblige them to take measures to protect their interests in those regions.

It was impossible to trace what place was intended by Komba-Ovaleko. Mr. White and his little escort of 150 men had never gone outside the limits of Sikkim, and had long since returned to their headquarters. There was no difficulty, then, in giving the Russian Ambassador the assurance that this "authoritative" information was without the smallest foundation. And Lord Lansdowne went further than merely refuting the false information.

\* Blue-book, p. 178.