

Now that we were reasonably assured that Russia had no intention of interfering in Tibet, why should we still have thought it necessary to send a mission into the country? The answer is that we had not yet settled those questions of trade and intercourse which had existed years before the Russian factor intruded itself into the situation; besides which we had always the consideration that, although it might be true enough that the Russians had no mind to have any dealings with the Tibetans, yet the Tibetans might still think they could rely on the Russians in flouting us. The Germans had officially no intention of interfering with the Boers, yet it was because Kruger thought he could rely upon German support that he went to war with England. He was much too astute an old gentleman to have fought us if he had thought he would have had to fight us by himself. So it was with the Tibetans. The Russian Government might not have the remotest intention of helping them in any possible way, yet the Tibetans might, and did, think they could count upon Russian support. The Dalai Lama's Envoy Extraordinary had been very well received by the Czar and by the Russian Chancellor and others. Doubtless, he had collected some very handsome subscriptions and received valuable presents. A little Oriental imagination would soon expand these ordinary amenities into a promise of thick-and-thin support against the English. We had still this erroneous impression to reckon with.