

—without spoiling the religion of Tibet, I could not believe that the fact of our going to Lhasa for a few weeks only could have any permanent ill-effect on the religion of Tibet.

They then remarked that if we now went to Lhasa all the other nations would want to go there, and see the sights, and establish agents there. I told them I had not the smallest wish to see the sights of Lhasa. I had already travelled in many different lands, and seen finer sights than they could show me at Lhasa; and as to stationing an agent there, we had no such intention. Could they tell me if any other nation wished to? They replied that the Russians would be wanting to send an agent to Lhasa. I told them they need not be in any fear on that score, for the Russian Government had assured our Government that they had no intention of sending an agent to Tibet. I added that, though we had no intention of establishing a political agent at Lhasa, we desired to open a trade-mart at Gyantse on the same conditions as the trade-mart at Yatung had been opened—that is, with the right to send a British officer there to superintend the trade.

The delegates would not, however, be led into a discussion of the terms. They said they could only discuss the terms at Gyantse, and the conversation drifted back into the old lines of withdrawing to Gyantse. Each of the four members of the delegation repeated in turn the same arguments for withdrawing to Gyantse, and I gave to each in turn my reasons for advancing to Lhasa. I said I feared they must think me extremely obstinate, and I felt sure that, if they had been deputed by their Government earlier in the day, I should have been able to agree to their wishes, and we could have soon come to an agreement. As matters stood at present, I could do nothing but obey the orders of the Viceroy. They asked if I could not stop here, represent to His Excellency what they had said, and await further instructions. I replied that the Viceroy only issued his orders after very careful deliberation, but once they were issued, he never revoked them.