

itself in communication with us. The fear of our going to Lhasa might have more effect than our actual presence in the place. The mere dread of our advance might make them agree to our terms, while if we actually advanced to their sacred city we might find that the most determined defence had been reserved for the capital; and that we had put our heads into a hornets' nest, and irritated 20,000 monks into buzzing about our ears. This was an eventuality on which I had to count, and of which I had been warned by speeches by responsible men in England which did little to encourage me in my task. An ex-Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery, had said in February in the House of Lords that this Mission bore "in its circumstances so melancholy a resemblance to that first war in Afghanistan, which we conducted under the late Lord Lytton, that it must give all those whose minds and memories recurred to the past serious grounds of misgivings when they saw once more His Majesty's Government proceeding in the same direction to an end which they could not see themselves." A future Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, in pressing for the recall of the Mission, had said in the House of Commons in April that "we had had experience before, and the associations connected with the name of Cavagnari did not seem to invite us to undertake a similar policy again."

If we pressed on to Lhasa, into this swarm of fanatically hostile monks, we might all share the fate of Cavagnari, while if we simply held up the threat of advancing we might get the treaty through. It was an alternative which I had to consider; but I felt fairly sure by now that I had rightly taken the measure of the Tibetans, so I sent a verbal intimation by the messenger that I would be glad to receive the delegates, but that I could not consent to defer my advance to Lhasa. And, in reply to the letter of the National Assembly, I wrote to the Dalai Lama that more than a year ago I had arrived at Khamba Jong, which he had approved as a meeting-place for the negotiations, but that the appointed delegates refused to negotiate. I had advanced to Gyantse, but still no negotiators had arrived, and instead, I was