

three, and could not, therefore, be taken as breaking our pledges to Russia.

Others might not think likewise. But even if they did not, I could not see that if I agreed to the Tibetan proposals, including, as they would, the right for us to occupy the Chumbi Valley for seventy-five years, I was thereby involving Government in any fresh responsibility. I should not, for instance, be giving to the inhabitants a promise of our protection which it would be impossible for Government to repudiate. I should be simply acquiring for Government the right to occupy the Chumbi Valley for seventy-five years if they wanted to, and if they did not want to, they could go out whenever they liked. I was not "*compelling* the Government to occupy the Chumbi" Valley; I was simply acquiring the right, which they could abrogate if they did not want it.

Arguing thus with myself, I decided finally to seize the golden opportunity. If I let it go I knew not what might happen. The Regent might flee. The National Assembly might sulk. The Chinese might wake up and put in some obstruction. By agreeing I should be doing nothing counter to the wishes of the Government of India, for the amount of the indemnity was what they had themselves suggested, and they had on June 30,* after the pledges to Russia were given, spoken of retaining the Chumbi Valley, the occupation of which had been urged by the Bengal Government as far back as 1888. By agreeing I should also be effecting what my own experience showed me would be by far the most satisfactory permanent solution of the whole question. Chumbi is the key to Tibet. It is also the most difficult part of the road to Lhasa. Situated in the Chumbi Valley, we should have a clear run into Tibet, for the Tang-la (pass) across the watershed is an open plain several miles wide. The Chumbi Valley is the only strategical point of value in the whole north-eastern frontier from Kashmir to Burma. It was the surest guarantee for the fulfilment of the new Treaty which we could possibly get, except the establishment of an agent at Lhasa, and the obtaining of a

* Blue-book, III., p. 36.