

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE ENGLISH EXPEDITION TO LHASA.

Since I wrote the above words various works have been published about the English expedition to Lhasa, and in connection with them I cannot abstain from adding a few remarks with regard to the geographical results of the expedition. I had hoped that, if nothing else was gained by the expedition, it would at all events have thrown the country open for the future; but in one of the books alluded to I find the following passage: »There is no doubt that even now as I write Tibet has again been trebly barred against the foreigner; but if by force or fraud another traveller shall find himself at Nagartse, let him go ten miles to the south-east and climb the saddle of the Ta la.» And further: »Never again will the lonely isolation of the Forbidden City call out all that is best in a race of pioneers. Her challenge no longer rings across Asia, and the echoes of more than the call have died out with it. It is true that the curtain has again fallen, and fallen more impenetrably than before; it is true that in all probability no other living white man will ever see the brown mice of Palden-lhamo, or watch the lazy ascending line of blue incense smoke in the chapels of Na-chung Chos-kyong — but the charm of Lhasa is for ever broken.»*

Thus the curtain has once more fallen, and all that has been won for the future is that the frontiers will be guarded with treble zeal against the approach of foreigners. Any way we may comfort ourselves with the reflection that only one year before the English expedition started the jealous exclusiveness of the Tibetans was enforced with great vigilance. Turgut and Tsajdam Mongol pilgrims, then on the way to Lhasa, were willing enough to report the approach of a caravan from the north. And now, I have no doubt, there will be a host of self-appointed spies ready to carry to the lamas for a slight reward everything they see and hear. Still we may venture to join in Mr. Douglas Freshfield's hope, that Lord Curzon, himself one of the most distinguished of living Asiatic explorers, and a devoted friend of geographical science, will succeed in despatching one or more geographical ex-

* *Lhasa, an Account of the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the Progress of the Mission sent there by the English Government in the Year 1903—4*, by Perceval Landon. II, pp. 96 and 340.