

INDIA AND TIBET

INTRODUCTION

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THIS book is an account of our relations with Tibet, but many still wonder why we need have any such relations at all. The country lies on the far side of the Himalayas, the greatest range of snowy mountains in the world. Why, then, should we trouble ourselves about what goes on there? Why do we want to interfere with the Tibetans? Why not leave them alone? These are very reasonable and pertinent questions, and such as naturally spring to the mind of even the least intelligent of Englishmen. Obviously, therefore, they must have sprung to the minds of responsible British statesmen before they ever sanctioned intervention. The sedate gentlemen who compose the Government of India are not renowned for being carried away by bursts of excitement or enthusiasm, nor are they remarkable for impulsive, thoughtless action. They have spent their lives in the dull routine of official grind, and by the time they attain a seat in the Viceregal Council they are, if anything, too free from emotional impulses. Certainly, the initiation of anything forward and interfering was as little to be expected from them as from the most rigorous anti-Imperialist. The head of the Government of India at the time of the Tibet Mission was, it is true, a man of less mature official experience, but he happened to be a man who had studied Asiatic policy in nearly every part of Asia, besides having been Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and even supposing he had been the most impulsive and irresponsible of Viceroys, he could take no action without gaining the assent of the majority of his colleagues in India,