

CHAPTER V

THE CONVENTION WITH CHINA

THE Chinese Amban, or Resident, at Lhasa now appeared upon the scene to effect a settlement, and during 1889 we endeavoured to have the frontier line properly fixed and our exclusive supremacy in Sikkim, which was recorded in well-known treaties, definitely recognized. We also wished, if possible, to have trade regulated. Considering that we had abandoned the proposed mission to Lhasa out of deference to Chinese and Tibetan susceptibilities, that the Tibetans had assumed the offensive, and that the Chinese had shown themselves utterly unable to control them, this was not an unreasonable expectation to hold. We made no demand for indemnity or for any accession of territory. We merely asked that the boundary and trade should be regulated. Yet a year of negotiation passed and no result was obtained, and the Government of India told the Chinese negotiators that they had decided "to close the Sikkim incident, so far as China is concerned, without insisting upon a specific agreement."

But now that the Indian Government, knowing that they could perfectly well hold their own up to their frontier, and finding that the Chinese were of little use in controlling events beyond it, were quite prepared to drop negotiations, the Chinese themselves came forward and pressed for their conclusion. This is an important point. It was now the Chinese who were pressing for an agreement. Further, and this is still more important, they stated that "China will be quite able to enforce in Tibet the terms of the treaty," and they asked the Government of India to depute officers to meet the Chinese Resident at Gnatong. For the agreement which was subsequently reached the