

CHAPTER VIII

A MISSION SANCTIONED

WHILE the negotiations with Russia were proceeding the Home Government would come to no final decision as to the action to be taken. The question at issue, they informed the Indian Government* in February, was no longer one of details as to trade and boundaries—though on these it was necessary that an agreement should be arrived at—but the whole question of the future political relations of India and Tibet. They agreed with the Indian Government that, having regard to the geographical position of Tibet on the frontiers of India, and its relations with Nepal, it was “indispensable that British influence should be recognized at Lhasa in such a manner as to render it impossible for any other Power to exercise a pressure on the Tibetan Government inconsistent with the interests of British India.” They admitted, also, the force of the contention that the interest shown by the Russian Government in the action of the Government of India on the Tibetan frontier demonstrated the urgency of placing our relations with Tibet on a secure basis. They recognized that Nepal might be rightly sensitive as to any alteration in the political position of Tibet which would be likely to disturb the relations at present existing between the two countries, and that the establishment of a powerful foreign influence in Tibet would disturb those relations, and might even, by exposing Nepal to a pressure which it would be difficult to resist, affect those which then existed on so cordial a basis between India and Nepal. They regretted the necessity for abandoning the passive attitude that had hitherto sufficed in the regulation

* Blue-book, p. 184.