

CHAPTER IX

SIMLA TO KHAMBA JONG

THE previous chapters have been necessarily, though perhaps somewhat tediously, filled up with a narrative of the many intricate considerations which went towards the final determination to send a mission to Tibet. But of all that had been going on—of the voluminous correspondence in the great offices, of the meetings and attempts at meetings on the frontier—I was wholly ignorant. Anglo-Indian papers seldom contain information on such happenings. And for some years past, in accordance with the well-intentioned, but, as it has since turned out, thoroughly unsound, advice of a previous Viceroy, that it would be to my advantage in the Political Department not to remain for ever on the frontier, but to acquire experience of internal affairs as well, I had been serving in the interior in political agencies in Rajputana and Central India, and had heard nothing of any intention to send a mission to Tibet. Nor had I ever had any connection with Tibet, though as long ago as 1888 the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal had, I discovered many years after, asked the Government of India for my services, as I had then just returned from a journey around Manchuria and across Central Asia, from Peking to Kashmir, and it was thought that, knowing Chinese customs, I might be of use, in addition to the Chinese interpreter. This request was twice made, it appears; but I was then a young subaltern, still in military employ, and in the throes of examination, and the Government of India replied that I was not available, as I was about to go up for examination, and, if sent away then, would fail to qualify for promotion. So I went up for one of those