

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEGOTIATIONS

THE very day that we arrived at Lhasa I made a commencement at negotiating a treaty based on the terms set forth in the preceding chapter. I had already, before I left Gyantse and before Government had made up their minds as to the terms which should be asked, told the Tongsa Penlop informally what we were likely to ask, so that the Tibetans might have a rough idea of our demands; and as the Chinese Resident had intimated to me that he would come and visit me on the afternoon of our arrival, I thought it well to make a start with him at once.

The interview was interesting, for I had been waiting a year to see this Amban. I had seen Chinese officials in Peking; I had seen them at the extreme eastern end of the Empire in Manchuria; I had seen them at the extreme western end, in Chinese Turkestan; and I now saw them here at Lhasa. They were always exactly the same; in their official robes, dressed precisely alike, with the same good manners, the same dignity, the same air of something very much akin to superiority, and with the same evidence of solid intellectual capacity and sterling character. The Resident, Yu-tai, was not different from the rest. He was not, indeed, strikingly clever, and I did not see him at his best, for the recalcitrance of the Tibetans had put him in a most humiliating position, which he must have felt or he would not have paid me a visit before I had visited him. But he kept up appearances and made a brave show with all the aplomb of his race, and I had a real feeling of relief in talking to a man of affairs after so many long, dreary and ineffectual interviews with the obtuse and ignorant Tibetans.