

CHAPTER XXV

A FINAL REFLECTION

“THAT strange force which has so often driven the English forward against their will appears to be in operation once more,” wrote the *Spectator* in May, 1904; “it is certain that neither the British Government nor the British people wished to go to Lhasa.”

This reflection was criticized by other journals at the time as savouring of hypocrisy. One paper said that no mention was made of the Viceroy, and that it was obvious that “the advance was a perfectly gratuitous move on the part of Lord Curzon.” Another leading London paper attributed the whole movement to “the designs of the little group of intriguing officials”; it said that “the raid was conceived and engineered as a part of the forward policy which has always been the peril of India and of the Empire,” and added that it had been “based upon the most trivial and factitious excuses ever invented by designing bureaucrats.”

This matter is worth going into. Bureaucrats, of whom presumably I was one, are only too painfully aware that they have not a tithe of the power which is attributed to them. They certainly have not the means of making the whole British Government and British people act against their will. I sometimes wish they had. To attribute to them such miraculous power is as shallow as to believe that the Lamas exercise their hold over Tibetans and Mongols only by trickery and chicanery. Bureaucrats and priests must have something far more powerful behind them than intrigues and trickery. The question is, What is it? What does impel us? Is there