



**The Opening of Tibet: An Account of Lhasa and
the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the
Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English
Government in the Year 1903-04**

Perceval Landon

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Excerpt:

We of the Tibet Mission and its escort were honored with the conduct of a task which for fascination of interest could hardly be surpassed. Few, if any, of us doubted the wisdom of the great and far-seeing statesman who initiated the enterprise and inspired it throughout. But, whether the policy was wise or unwise, we determined that it should not suffer in the execution. On us, we felt, were fixed the eyes of many millions, not in India alone, nor in England alone, but all over Europe and America also, and in many an Asiatic country besides.

We who work in India know what prestige means. Throughout the expedition we felt that our national honor was at stake, and down to the latest-joined sepoy we bent ourselves to uphold and raise higher the dignity of our Sovereign and the good name of our country: to show that not even the rigors of a Tibetan winter nor the obstinacy and procrastination of the two most stolid nations in the world could deter us from our purpose; above all, to try to effect that purpose without resorting to force. If, as unfortunately proved to be the case, fighting were inevitable, we were determined still to show moderation in the hour of victory, and to let the ignorant Tibetan leaders see that we would respect them as we demanded they should respect us, and, in place of distrust, to establish a confidence between us which would prove the surest foundation for future relations.

A loss of life was indeed necessitated which every one of us regretted; yet I for one believe that at any rate some good will come to the Tibetans as the result of our work. War does not always mean oppression. Nor does the breaking of the power of a despotic Government mean the down-treading of the people.

From the first the Tibetan peasantry showed good-will toward us. They were especially anxious to trade—no keener traders could be found. We have, as one result, partially freed the people from the terrible incubus of priestly control, and there are unmistakable signs that we left them better disposed toward us after our advance to Lhasa than they were before. Owing to the magnificent behavior of the troops, the confidence of the people was entirely gained. Villagers and traders thronged to our camps. Soldiers went about unmolested in every part of the Lhasa bazaar.

Officers were admitted to the most sacred shrines. Captain O'Connor, my right-hand man in dealing with the Tibetans, was received not only with real ceremony, but with real warmth, by the Tashi Lama at Shigatse. And, last but by no means least, Tibetan wool-merchants are already making arrangements for trading with India.

How all this was effected none can tell better than Mr. Landon. He reveled in the mysteries of Tibet, and appreciated to the full the wonderful scenery which to my mind was infinitely the most fascinating of all our experiences. I have not had the advantage of reading the proofs of his book, and I cannot be responsible for

any political views which he may have expressed. But I feel confident that no more competent chronicler of what the Tibet Mission saw and did could be found, and we were indeed fortunate in having with us one of his enthusiasm and powers of description.

F. E. YOUNGHUSBAND.

London, December, 1904.

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