

LHASA.

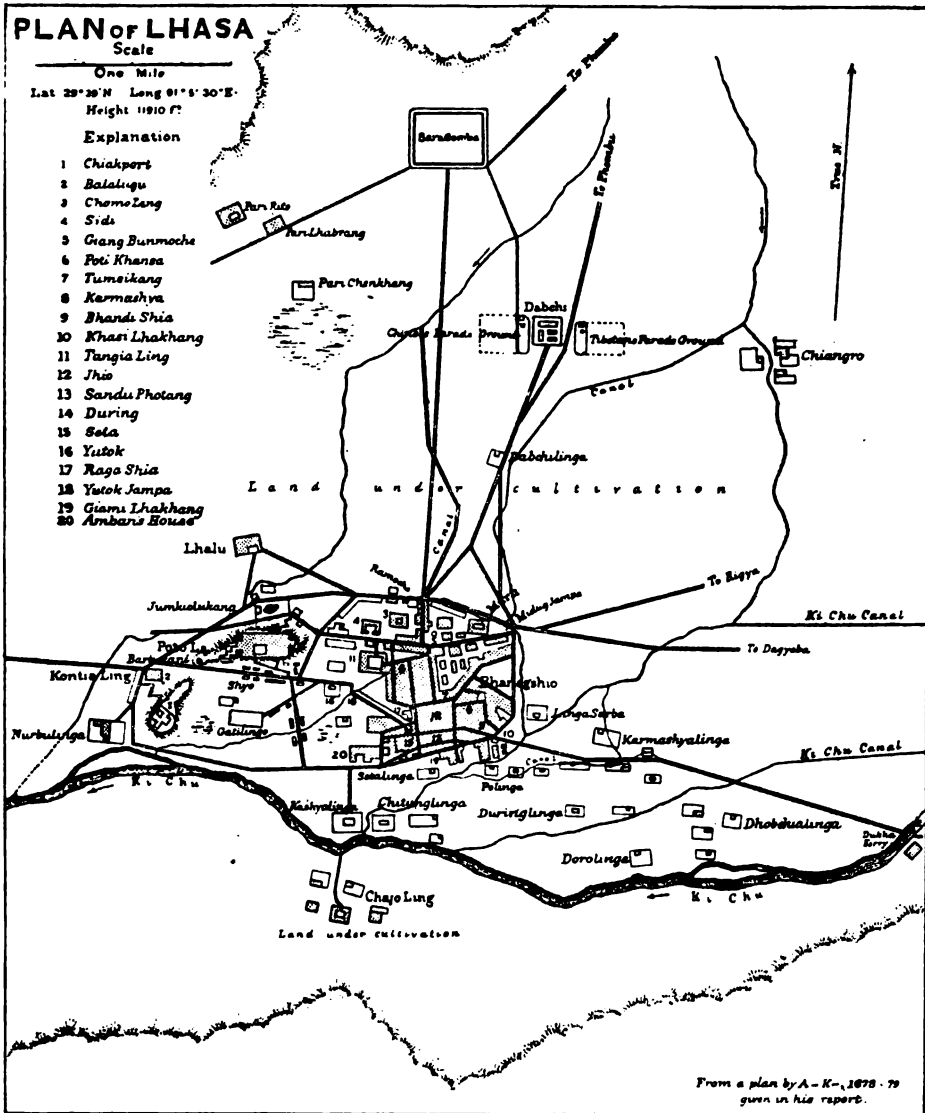
By Colonel Sir T. H. HOLDICH, K.C.I.E., C.B.

Two very interesting photographs have been added to the collection of the Royal Geographical Society, illustrating the city of Lhasa and Potala, the residence of the Dalai Lama, in its immediate neighbourhood. These photographs derive additional interest from the fact that in the October number of *La Géographie* (the journal of the Paris Geographical Society) is to be found the reproduction of a photograph of Potala taken during the present year by a Russian subject—a Kalmuk chief named Ovohé Novzounof—which is said to be the first photograph ever taken of the holy city. The date of the photographs herewith published (p. 607) is not precisely known, but there is good reason to believe that it was considerably anterior to that of the Kalmuk traveller. The point of view of Potala is almost identical in both cases, and nearly coincides with that of the early picture of "Bietala," made by the Jesuit fathers about the year 1660 (p. 605), which has hitherto been the only pictorial record of the place.

Potala is the most important architectural feature about Lhasa, and it is described by every traveller who has visited it during the nineteenth century. Manning was there in disguise in 1811; and the French missionaries, Huc and Gabet, resided several months in Lhasa in 1846. Since then no European has set his foot within the gates of the city, but many native travellers have been there, and have brought back records which are sufficient to give us a fairly clear idea of the city and its environment. An Indian Survey explorer, Pundit Nain Sing, made two journeys to Lhasa in 1866 and 1873; and he was followed by a second explorer (A. K., or Krishna) in 1879–80. A member of the Indian Educational Department, Chandra Das, accompanied by a survey explorer, the lama Ugyen, travelled to Lhasa in 1881–82, and to him we owe the most comprehensive and detailed accounts of the city and its people that have yet been produced. In all important particulars they support the earlier records of Nain Sing and Krishna. The latter made a map of Lhasa, which is reproduced from the *Petermanns Mitteilungen* (1885) in the October number of *La Géographie*. These Indian explorers have been succeeded more recently by Russian subjects, Kalmaks and Buddhist priests, amongst whom one Baza-Bakchi is quoted as an authority in the French journal.

According to Baza-Bakchi, the hill on which the Potala palace and temple stand is 500 metres in height above the plain. This is obviously impossible, for (on the evidence of the photograph) it would make the walls of the building nearly 200 metres (over 700 feet) in height. Krishna's estimate of 300 feet is probably much more nearly correct;

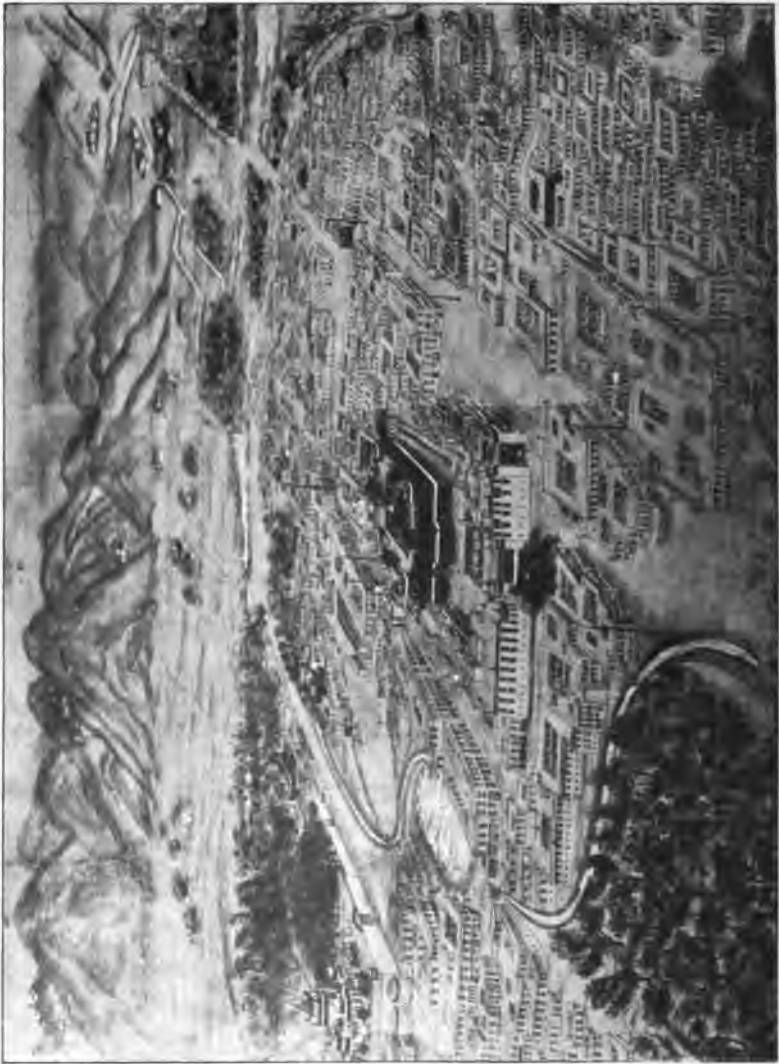
and even that gives an impressive idea of the stupendous nature of the construction which crowns the hill. It is difficult to reconcile the earlier Jesuit drawing of the temple and hill with the modern photograph. It



would almost appear that the buildings had undergone considerable extension during the two and a half centuries which have elapsed between the illustrations. It is probable enough that this has been the case; but too much reliance on the details of the architectural drawing

is hardly warranted by the accessories of the picture, amongst which we find a two-wheeled conveyance of the nature of the Indian ekka drawn by a pair of horses !

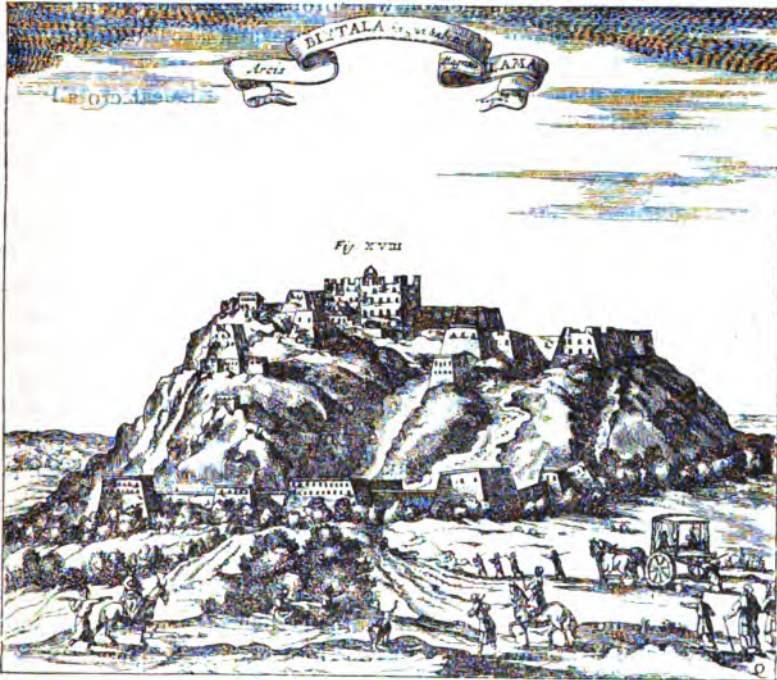
According to Chandra Das, who entered Potala by the eastern gate-



PLAN OF THE CITY OF LHASA.

way on his visit to the Dalai Lama, he first "walked through a long hall, on either side of which were rows of prayer-wheels, which every passer-by put in motion. Then ascending three long lines of stone steps, we . . . proceeded towards the palace. . . . We had to climb up five ladders before we reached the ground-floor of Phodang marpo, or

'the Red Palace,' thus called from the exterior walls being of a dark red colour. Then we had half a dozen more ladders to climb up, and we found ourselves at the top of Potala (there are nine storeys to this building), where we saw a number of monks awaiting an audience." Nine storeys of, say, 20 feet would account for 180 feet of altitude within the building itself, which obviously extends above the hill as well as down its upper slopes, so that an estimate of 300 feet for the



POTALA, THE PALACE OF THE GRAND LAMA.

(From Kircher's "China," 1667.)

actual height of the hill seems to be fairly well supported by the photographs.

Potala derives its chief interest from the fact that it is the residence of the head of all the great Buddhist hierarchy, the Dalai (or Tale) lama, who is represented in the flesh by a child of tender years. In 1811 Manning describes the Grand Lama as a well-educated, princely child about seven years old. In 1846 Huc says that the Dalai Lama was nine years of age, and had been Grand Lama for only six years. In 1866 Nain Sing describes him as a fair and handsome boy of thirteen years of age, entirely dominated by the Gyalpo or temporal ruler of Lhasa. Thus one re-incarnation at least must have taken place between

the visits of these two later travellers, and probably more than one, f.r., as Montgomerie shrewdly observes, "Grand Lamas are made to go through their transmigrations very rapidly, the intervals being probably in inverse proportion to the amount of trouble they give to the Gyalpo." Chandra Das (our latest authority) writes of the Dalai lama as "a child of eight with a bright and fair complexion and rosy cheeks. His eyes are large and penetrating, the shape of his face remarkably Aryan, though somewhat marred by the obliquity of his eyes. The thinness of his person was probably due to the fatigue of court ceremonies and to the religious duties and ascetic observances of his estate. A yellow mitre covered his head, and its pendant lappels hid his ears; a yellow mantle draped his person, and he sat cross-legged with joined palms." Certain it is that the Dalai lamas of Tibet are invariably children, and that they die as those die "whom the gods love."

The plan on p. 604 appears to be taken from a drawing of the city of Lhasa by a native artist; and there is some appearance of the drawing itself having been made from a photograph as the original. It is not very easy to locate the point of view. The only indication which can be followed is the stream, or canal, which winds through the picture, touching the city walls at two points. According to Krishna's plan, such a feature can only be observed from a point (evidently elevated) north of the eastern end of the city, so that the observer is looking towards the valley of Kyiohu, and to the roads leading southwards through the mountains towards India.

If this is so, then the building with the dark-red walls in the centre of the city is evidently the Jo (Nain Sing) or Jo Khang (Chandra Das), the great temple of Jo-vo, or "the Lord Budha," whose famous image, known as the Jo-vo-rinpoche, is said to have been made in Magadha during the lifetime of the great teacher. Here men, women, and children congregate to do worship and to obtain a blessing on June 1, reckoned to be the holiest day in the year as the date of Budha's nirvana. An interesting legend connected with this image is told by Chandra Das in his 'Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet.' The picture well illustrates the nature of Tibetan homes—"tower-like whitewashed houses and Chinese buildings with roofs of blue tiles" all stone-built and substantial, with a central courtyard. The windows are seldom glazed, paper usually taking the place of glass. A decorative feature of Lhasa is found in the festoons of inscribed and painted rags which are hung from one building to another, and in the banners which line the approaches to some of the principal temples. They may be seen in the Potala photograph, where their motion as they sway with the wind rather mars the effect of the picture. It is hardly necessary to point out that the flag-poles in the native artist's picture are enormously exaggerated in length. About the size of the city (which

is oval in shape, with the longer axis from east to west), there is little apparent difference of opinion. It is 6 or 7 miles in circumference,



POTALA, THE PALACE OF THE GRAND LAMA.
(From a photograph by a member of the Nepal Embassy to Peking.)

and contains a population variously estimated from 25,000 to 50,000 souls.
