

## CHAPTER V

### ON TO POLU—AND THE LURE OF THE UNKNOWN

**A** CHEERFUL, probably a sincere individual we found the Chinese Amban of Khotan. He urged us not to go to Polu, the village which should mark the beginning of our ascent to the great plateau. He thought it foolish to try unknown dangers, when Ladak, our nominal objective, could be reached by the arduous but familiar route via Yarkand. Whether or not we should have frankly told him that we wanted to make a try toward Lhasa, I do not know. Father Hendricks thought not. He believed we would not be permitted to even start for Central Tibet as our avowed objective, nor, thought he, could we try to provision for so long a journey without arousing suspicion. So we talked Ladak—a province once belonging to Tibet, now lately stolen away by the Maharajah of Kashmir—and thought Rudok, a village in territory that is still Tibetan, and where we hoped to reprovision; and where, if pressure of time required it, Anginieur, whose year's leave approached its end, could start for Ladak, and I might try again for the East, eventually returning to Ladak.

The Amban advised, but did not command; and after a four-days' stop in Khotan, we were off one fine day with Father Hendricks, the Hindoo Aksa-