

the passes ere the winter set in. Our haste was also in part due to the mere fascination one feels in affronting the unknown—as such. Why, by the way, may not this sentiment, of common occurrence in respect to things mundane, offer an element of character which, if carefully “bred to,” should take away all the terrors of journeying to the unexplored land called Death?

The village was not entirely a stranger to Europeans. Seven years ago it had sheltered Captain Grombtchevsky of the Russian army while he surveyed the tortured country around it, possibly dreaming of Muscovite empire, to be won in peril and suffering by a soldiery that thinks not, but obeys. Przhevsky also reached it from the north. Both the Russian travellers considered the place as an impossible starting-point for long journeying on the plateau. Then the fated Frenchman, Dutreuil du Rhins, with his brave companion, M. Grenard, twice visited Polu during their unhappy but fruitful travels. Captain Deasey, in 1901, again put Polu on the map, and as far away as 1886 Carey had descended from the plateau by way of the wretched river-bed which we were to climb. It is this absurd, but possible, trail between the plateau and the lower desert, this slanting fissure in the northern slope of the Kuen Lun range, which gives to Polu its geographic prominence.

Even while we were still bearing the scrutiny of many curious eyes, it was announced that another white man was in Polu, and we wondered greatly how this had come to pass in the very jumping-off place of Turkestan, for we had heard no rumour of