

gol, following the course of this purling little brook. The vegetation becomes comparatively rich; in sheltered crannies flourish wild roses and blue iris; the valley widens into green meadows.

Some of the villages we come to seem to be abandoned, yet even here the fields appear to be freshly ploughed. Other villages borrow a pastoral air from willows and wild elms. Time and again we come across grim evidence of the passage of the »Christian» general, FENG YÜ-HSIANG — pieces of shrapnel, a couple of aeroplane motors and the wreckage of two motor-cars. No wonder the countryside looks desolate and abandoned where Chinese war-lords have passed by.

The valley of the Khundulun-gol becomes wider and more open. The road follows the left foot of the mountain. The brook here forms long pools or meres rich in algae. The lush meadows are a relief to the eye in this grey-yellow, desolate countryside, so poor in vegetation. We camped, this second night, at the village of Wu-fen-tze.

On the morning of May 22nd the guard was changed; our thirty soldiers with their white and red arm-bands returned to Pao-t'ou and were relieved by twenty others with yellow and red arm-bands and a standard having the same colours affixed to the lance of the leader. We were now coming to the district that was supposed to be most infested with bandits.

ADVANCE OF CHINESE PEASANTS

Wu-fen-tze is surrounded on all sides by low hills. At a little distance begins an extensive plain, a broad longitudinal valley between two low mountain-chains. Everywhere the soil is cultivated or has recently been under the plough. The products are oats, mustard, and opium. Not many years ago this tract was inhabited by Mongol nomads, who sold their pasture-lands to Chinese settlers for trifling sums. Unfortunately it is the poppy that is chiefly cultivated — this poisonous flower that encroaches on areas that might be devoted to cereals and that undermines the physical and moral forces of the people. A few Mongols still live here in this region invaded by Chinese peasantry; but they are doomed to disappear unless for some reason the Chinese are forced to move south again. They have little chance of defending their old positions in competition with the tough Chinese peasant, with his uncanny skill in the mysteries of agriculture. The Mongolian tribes, descendants of CHINGGHIS KHAN's once so powerful people, are now being pushed slowly and surely northwards. I had noticed a similar movement on my motor-car journey from Kalgan to Urga in the year 1923. These peaceful migrations are doubtless somewhat disturbed by the long civil wars. In the fields of the village of San-fen-tze we saw only a single peasant with a plough and a couple of black oxen.

As we proceeded we saw evidence of quite a lively traffic between and through