

the seat of government of the province of the same name, which fills up the whole of North Manchuria. But there was little to see beyond the ordinary shops, the dirty streets, and tumble-down temples of every Chinese town. This was our most northern point. Winter was approaching, and already we had had some touches of frost. We had yet much ground to get over, and so we struck off back again towards the Sungari, making this time for Hulan. We passed over some more of the Mongol steppes, and now, as the rainy season had ended and the roads were dry, we could take our carts along at a trot, and would often cover over thirty miles in the day. The country was rolling prairie as before, and covered with rich grass, on which we often saw large herds of ponies feeding—fine, strong little ponies, like miniature cart-horses, and very hardy.

Suddenly one day we drove right into cultivation. We had crossed the boundary-line between the Mongol and Chinese territory. It is a purely artificial line laid across the downs, but up to that line the Chinese cultivate the land; beyond it the Mongols hold sway, and no attempt to reducing the land to cultivation is made. Consequently, the boundary-line between Chinese territory proper and that which the Chinese still allow to the Mongols is formed by rows of millet and wheat.

Hulan, situated at about two hundred miles from Tsi-tsi-har, we found to be a new and thriving town only recently built, and surrounded with a strong masonry wall. The shops were excellent, and there was a busy, bustling air about the whole place. This town had in the previous year been attacked by a band of brigands, who had sought out the principal merchants, levied black-mail from them, and then decamped. It was here, too, that a French missionary, Père Conraux, had been most cruelly tortured and almost killed in the year previous to our visit.

From this point we turned northward again to visit another