

was not an existence which we could envy. The sable-hunters had a certain amount of excitement. They would set their traps all over the forest, go their rounds to examine them, and now and then, at rare intervals, find they had caught something. But the ginseng plant seekers would wander through the forest day after day and all day long, and if they found one plant in the season they would be content. This plant would be worth perhaps £15, for the Chinese believe the genuine wild plant to have the most wonderful properties.

A remarkable point about these men is the strict code of honour they have amongst themselves. At one place, for instance, we noticed a clearing made in the undergrowth of the forest round a small plant not far from the track. This proved to be one of these much-sought-after plants. It had been discovered by a man, but as it was not fully grown, it had been left there to mature, and the standard of honour was so strict among these people, that, in spite of the value of the plant and the ease with which it might have been carried away, no one would touch it.

Travelling on through the forest, we reached one of the branches of the great Sungari river—an affluent of the river Amur, and, at its junction, of even greater volume than that river. This stream we now ascended, as it was said to flow down from the Ever-White Mountain we were in search of; but after two days' travelling we were brought to a standstill, as regards mule-carriage, by a bog, through which it was impossible to take any animal. One man for carrying loads was all we could secure, and so we had to reduce our baggage to its very minimum, and each one carry his own, while the one porter carried such supplies as we should be unable to obtain on ahead; for though we heard of there being one or two sable-hunters' huts, the owners of these were said to be almost starving themselves for want of food, there having been some hitch about the arrival of the fresh stock of provisions for