

full ear, were extraordinarily heavy ; the millet especially, both the large and the small, being unusually heavy in the ear. The villages, too, were all of a considerable size and numerous. But separate farmhouses or small hamlets were seldom seen—probably on account of the brigandage, which was very rife all over North Manchuria. We heard frequent tales of carts being attacked on the road, and of villages and even towns being pillaged. We had, however, no personal experience of these brigands, and this part of our journey, though interesting as lying through a populous and thriving district, was lacking in incident and excitement.

Just beyond Petuna we again struck the Sungari, at the point where the Nonni joins it from the north. Here in the swamps by the river we had an experience of mosquitoes which quite eclipsed all former records. Thinking the marsh looked a likely place for snipe, we went down into it. We heard a suppressed kind of roar, like that of the distant sea, and we thought it must come from the river. But it was nothing but mosquitoes. For a foot or two above the marsh they were in myriads. For a short time we tried snipe-shooting, for there were a number of snipe about ; but the mosquitoes bit right through our breeches and gloves, and drove us so mad we had to leave hurriedly.

The Sungari was here spread out in many channels to a width of some ten miles. We crossed it by a ferry, and on the opposite side we soon entered the open rolling steppes of Mongolia. The cultivation ceased, and with it the villages, so that we now only passed an occasional hut inhabited by Mongols, and entered on a quite new phase of our journey. Scarcely a tree was to be seen, and for mile after mile we passed over rolling downs covered with rich grass and exquisite flowers. In the hollows were often lakes of very considerable size, some of them several miles in length. And these were covered with swarms of water-fowl—thousands and thousands