

now hilly, and covered with copses of wood—oak and birch. Nothing could have been more like an English country scene, and on the edges of these copses we regularly found some excellent pheasant-shooting. All day long, too, flock after flock of geese flew by us overhead, making towards the south. Usually these were a long way out of shot, but on a windy day they would often be forced down so as just to top the hills, and then from the summit we would get a shot at them as they flew over.

We once more crossed the Sungari, and on October 13 reached Sansing, an older town than those we had recently passed through, and with much less life and bustle about it. Very good furs, however, were to be obtained here, and, as hard winter might be on us any day now, we fitted ourselves out with long loose sheepskin coats, reaching well down to the ankles. Sansing is the furthest inhabited place of any importance in the direction of the Amur. The Sungari is here quite navigable for boats of considerable size, and consequently the Chinese had erected near by some fortifications of considerable strength. We rode out to see them, and I was astonished to find a fort constructed of earthwork, and planned on the most approved European lines, and armed with Krupp guns of six or seven tons' weight. We walked straight into the fort, looked all round it, found a Chinese soldier walking inoffensively about, and asked him to unlock the doors of the magazine, which he proceeded to do; and then, having finished our inspection of the fort, we were going quietly away, when the colonel of the regiment stationed in it sent out and begged us to come in to tea. He was most kind and hospitable, but in the middle of the tea came a messenger who had ridden in hot haste from Sansing, with an order from the general there to say that we were on no account to be allowed inside the fort. This was most embarrassing. And, having seen all that was to be seen, we assured our host, with every mark of sincerity, that,