

the whole place was crowded up with military stores—for a Russian colonel seems to be his own quarter-master and store-keeper—and all about the room were piles of saddlery, racks of arms, and heaps of miscellaneous articles of Cossack equipment.

We had some light refreshment, and then the colonel took us round to see the barracks. Here the Cossacks were still hard at work, completing the building before winter set in. They were hard, strong-looking men, fair in complexion, with cheery good-natured faces; and there was about them a workmanlike air, which gave one the idea that they could and would turn their hands to anything. An English soldier is perfectly right when he has shaken down on active service, but in barracks he produces the impression that his dress is his main interest in life. A Cossack, on the other hand, wherever one meets him, looks as if he were ready to buckle to and fight there and then; and certainly dress or appearance is the last thing in the world he would trouble his head about. The barracks they had just constructed were rough but clean, and about as good as those of our native troops in India. They were inferior to those of the Chinese troops over the way at Hunchun, but they were evidently of a temporary description. The rations of the Cossacks consisted principally of black bread, and they received also an allowance of soup-like stew or stew-like soup; but the whole ration was decidedly inferior to what the British soldier gets. Their pay is twenty roubles—about fifty shillings—a month, which would be very liberal if they had not out of it to pay for the whole of their equipment. The amount which actually reaches their pocket was, according to the colonel, about a halfpenny a day! It must indeed require conscription to induce men to go through all a Cossack does for this ludicrous remuneration.

In the evening the colonel had a small dinner-party, when three of the officers of the post and a Chinaman, who spoke