

We only stayed one day in Novo-kievsk, and then returned to our friend Colonel Sokolowski's post, dining with him there again, and meeting there the commissaire. The talk turned on the subject of English encroachments. These two Russian officials said people were always talking of English designs against Russian territory, and it was curious to find here the same kind of alarmist rumours and suspicions of hyper-crafty designs and deep-laid schemes of aggression that we are so accustomed to in India. The British fleet had only a few weeks before visited Possiet Bay, and immediately all the cacklers had set to work to find a hidden object for this. The English intended, they supposed, to bombard Possiet and seize a port here in Eastern Siberia as they had just done at Port Hamilton. Fortunately for Mr. James and myself, both the military and civil officials in charge on this frontier were more wide-minded, even-tempered men, and, as I have shown, treated us with marked civility and without any sign of suspicion, so that we were enabled to carry out a most interesting little visit.