

lower and lower and the valleys wider as we proceeded, till we soon found ourselves in open undulating country, very richly cultivated and thickly inhabited. The crops, now in 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 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, 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 rich cultivation ceased, and with it the villages, so that we now only passed an occa-