

THE PLAIN OF MANCHURIA.

THIS forms the largest and most important part of the Chinese dependency, Manchuria, which is bounded on the north by the Amur River—called in its upper course the Argun—and its tributary, the Usuri. The whole of this frontier waterway is navigable, save when frozen in winter, as are also the rivers which drain most of this region—*i.e.*, the Sungari to Kirin, and the Nonni to Tsitsihar.

Though the plain lies in the monsoon area, the seaward ranges cut it off almost completely from the influence of oceanic winds, and the temperature is continental and the rainfall slight. The land is, however, fertile, and yields good crops of millet, wheat, beans, hemp, and ginseng, which is cultivated for the sake of a drug obtained from the root, and highly valued in China. Some gold is mined by the Government in the Lower Sungari basin, and the eastern mountains are rich in coal and iron, though these, as yet, are little developed. The ranges are also clad with forests, which form the home of numerous wild animals, including the tiger, lynx, leopard, bear, sable, etc. The skins of some of these are of high commercial value.

The plain is crossed from north-west to south-east by the Siberian Railway to Vladivostok via Tsitsihar and Kharbin. From the latter a branch runs southward through **Mukden**—the capital of the country—to **Port Arthur**, a great naval station, which was captured by the Japanese from the Russians in 1905, and is now leased by them from China. The line to Port Arthur is connected with Niuchwang, and continued south-westward to Peking. **Niuchwang** is a treaty port—*i.e.*, a port which, by treaty, has been declared open to foreign trade—but is obliged to utilize an outport on account of its diminishing depth, and, moreover, is frozen in winter.

The **inhabitants** of Manchuria invaded North China in the seventeenth century, and established there the Manchu Dynasty, which still exists. In Manchuria itself, however, the native population has been largely supplanted by Chinese immigrants, who now form the bulk of the population.