

*The Face of Manchuria* ch. i

for Hulan, a Chinese town about sixteen miles to the north of Kharbin.

No Chinese vehicle is allowed in the Russian quarter, so we were obliged to take a droshky to the Chinese town, about a half mile distant, where our belongings were transferred to the sleigh, which was the only possible vehicle for crossing the open country. It was of a most primitive description, a sort of raft on runners, with a little straw on it covered with a rug. Our luggage was somewhat insecurely corded on, and we seated ourselves in the midst of it, only too soon to become acutely aware of the extraordinary number of corners which it possessed. Between the shafts, which consisted of two sapling birches denuded of their branches, was a shaggy pony, and another little pony ran alongside to give what further assistance he could, both animals having a miscellaneous harness of bits of old cord, which looked incapable of enduring any strain, though the event proved quite the contrary. We passed through the old town, which was gay with New Year decorations, the doors all bright with tutelary deities, freshly pasted up. Already the streets were filled with traffic, heavily-laden waggons of corn drawn by teams varying from four to eight, stacks of straw on rafts, fitted with runners similar to those of the one we were on, and all the various equipages likely to be found in such a nondescript place. The drollest of all was a little wooden house on runners, with a tall chimney, which we supposed to be on its way to some other permanent position. This, however, proved to be the