

among the mountains. When autumn approaches a fresh set of falcons is caught, and it may happen that on this occasion birds who have already served for a spell are lured into the net again.

### CEREMONIAL DINNERS

January 30th was the date fixed for the dinner in YOLBARS KHAN's house. YOLBARS KHAN, or the »Tiger Prince«, was the right hand man of the Moham-  
medan king, and was also on a good footing with the Chinese authorities.<sup>1</sup> He was of great use to us, helping us to manage our affairs, taking charge of our camels, procuring us provisions and carts for the journey to Urumchi, and was, in a word, our all in all. Needless to say, he did nothing gratis, but that is another story. His house was built in the Turkish style and had intricate lattice-work in the windows and as balustrades. Over the courtyard extended a balcony or verandah from the upper storey, and up to this led an open stairway.

We were met with military music and soldiers presenting arms. In the big room on the upper storey waited our hosts, a couple of whom at first showed us round the house. Roses were blooming in the winter-garden, while pelargonia and oleanders added a magnificent splash of colour. From the verandah facing the street one had a good view of both the Turki town and the wall-surrounded Chinese town, while to the north loomed the T'ien-shan with its dazzlingly white snow-fields and glaciers.

The dinner, which was Chinese throughout, was served at three round tables in the big room.

With shark's fins, bamboo-shoots, sea-algae and other wonderful delicacies that had been transported all the way from China's coast, the king persuaded us to drink hot Chinese brandy. As a faithful follower of the Koran he himself did not drink, but he insisted that one would feel only beneficial effects from as much of the stuff as one could manage to swallow.<sup>2</sup>

The dinner was a success — a curious, colourful meal over which hovered something of a mediaeval air.

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<sup>1</sup> According to later information he was actually half-Chinese. F. B.

<sup>2</sup> He was evidently speaking from his own experience. Readers of Asiatic travel-books with a memory for details may perhaps recollect VON LE COQ's description in »Auf Hellas Spuren in Ost-Turkistan« of a dinner with French champagne and innumerable Russian liqueurs given by the same potentate in the year 1905. On this occasion SHAH MAQSUD was continually drinking to the health of his guests, and seemed to be completely impervious to any effects from the consumption of alcohol. Evidently he could drink these foreign wines with a quiet conscience, without transgressing the commandments of the Koran. They were probably considered as something quite other than the wine forbidden by the Koran, and in this he was undoubtedly perfectly right. On the other hand, however, he could not drink the wine of his own country, that was served at the dinner given to us. F. B.