

pagne and other delicacies and evening dress. The man who aroused my admiration by wearing the latter was M. Alphonse Splingerdt, the Chinese interpreter to the Belgian Embassy in Peiping, at present on leave at Lanchow, where he is a »grand faiseur», a kind of factotum to the Viceroy and particularly to the Taotai. He is the son of a very well-known Belgian, who died at Hing-anfu a couple of years ago. He came to China as a servant of one of the Belgian missionaries and was subsequently taken into the Chinese service, where he did so well that at the time of his death he was a mandarin with a red knob. He must have had some interesting adventures during his chequered career. Many European explorers were entertained in his hospitable yamen and had referred with gratitude to this interesting man, who murdered all languages with equal assurance. Full of good-nature and joie de vivre in success as in failure, he had led a busy life and left behind him a little swarm of 22 children, for whom he had apparently been unable to provide much beyond a careful upbringing according to Chinese standards. One of them was M. Alphonse, who, though he may not enjoy the same measure of success in life as his father, has certainly inherited his ignorance and self-assurance. He makes commercial and technical calculations for the Chinese in practically any sphere with the same air of conviction as he sits in a drawing-room and murders French, English, German or almost any European language. Geerst, who has to make extensive investigations before he can tell them what lies hidden in the mountains, seems like a child to the Chinese compared with Splingerdt, who can say, at a distance of dozens of miles, what percentage of mineral wealth they contain. It is hard to imagine that such »bluffing» should succeed for any length of time, but after all this is China.

Among the other guests were Herr Delo, the youthful representative of a German firm in Eastern China which had undertaken to build a steel bridge over the Hwang ho, and an American engineer connected with the construction, Goldmann, who remained stubbornly silent in all languages. In addition to these representatives of European and American culture there is a small group of Belgians who form a community of their own. Thasbart, a foreman, Coutellier, an ex-soldier, and Scalier, a soldier still in active service, with his wife, formerly a governess. They are employed as foremen at the works and mines that are under construction.

To anyone coming, as I did, from the west, Lanchow is of interest at present for the reason that the reforms planned in Sinkiang were introduced here 2 or 3 years ago and it is possible to observe not only the manner in which they are being carried out, but also their extent and success. My work in this direction was interfered with considerably, however, by the Chinese holidays which continued for rather more than a fortnight to the accompaniment of deafening noises which the Chinese call music. Bands of amateur musicians, usually made up of 6—8 drummers with drums about twice as high as ours and the same number of cymbalists, parade the streets daily, and with two flag-bearers at their head, they belabour their unmusical instruments in the sweat of their brow. As custom demands that they should, while playing, leap into the air like acrobats, the