

increased to 0.6 taels per mou. In addition 30 taels are levied on the crop, irrespective of its size. A further tax of 115 taels per 100 djin is imposed on opium exports. Retailers, however, who formerly paid 15 taels per 100 djin, are now entirely exempted from taxation. The present price of opium here is 0.16—0.17 taels per liang (price in copper) or about 2.55 taels (in silver) per djin.

*March 12th.* Though suffering from a cold after several hours' mapping on a cold and windy day on the spurs of the hills near the town, I was preparing to continue my journey on the 8th, when an invitation to dine with the Viceroy forced me to postpone it again to the 11th or 12th. The European colony, or rather, its Belgian representatives were being entertained to dinner and I was to share the honour. A long table had been laid in European fashion for 18 people in a temple built in honour of the former celebrated Viceroy of Kan Su, Tsuo gung pao, close to the southern gate of the fortress. The room, decorated with carpets and lanterns, looked very fine. Two rows of columns supported the roof. The back wall was semicircular and in front of the large windows there was a semicircular dais, on which small, low tables, separated by a row of red cushions and wolfskins, marked the seats. They were continued by stiff-backed chairs with red cushions standing in two rows facing each other towards the entrance. The wall by the entrance was taken up by a stage, beautifully decorated with screens, lanterns and carpets. The side walls behind the rows of columns consisted entirely of windows. Besides our small number of Europeans all the higher mandarins from the Taotai downwards had been invited. The Viceroy arrived a few minutes after everyone had assembled and was greeted with a salute of guns. With his waddling, but easy gait he passed along the row of mandarins towards us and only after shaking hands with each of us he turned with a polite «tching ngan» curtsy to the deeply curtsying mandarins. I was given the seat of honour with Geerst next to me. Splingerdt was seated on the other side of Shen and van Dijk next to him. Thanks to Splingerdt's unusual gifts as an interpreter it was very easy for us to converse. The Taotai sat opposite the Viceroy at the other short end of the table. His immediate neighbours were Goldmann, Thasbart, Scalier and Coutellier.

The dinner consisted mainly of European dishes and had been prepared by Geerst's cook. The wines were supplied by Splingerdt and the tablecloths, crockery etc. by both. It is curious that there is no question of payment for these things. Shen was very talkative, but his conversation consisted chiefly of asking questions and listening attentively to the replies of others. He replied with great reserve to any questions that were put to him. He did not seem to have seen much beyond the life of the streets during his stay in Europe. In St. Petersburg he was most impressed by the clock tower of the Town Hall, by which a great many people set their watches. He had never seen the ballet and had avoided going to balls, as a lady had once expressed the wish to dance with him, a request he was unable to fulfil. He thought Russia was the home of truffles, not because everyone looked fit to look for them, but because he had eaten them there. The wine that was offered most frequently was made of turnip and had an excellent flavour. In the theatres he was most impressed by the sentries. In short, the little he said did not display any great ability on the