

Russian, and acted as interpreter between the Russian and Chinese officials, came in. After eating some small dishes, such as sardines and salmon chips, at a side table, and washing them down with a glass or two of vodka, which the colonel informed us was a quite necessary proceeding, to clear our throats for the dinner that was coming, we sat down to the main business. First of all, a great soup-tureen was placed on the table, filled with a good substantial soup. "No ceremony, gentlemen; *je mange énormément*," said the colonel. And he proceeded to ladle himself out a good helping, and every one round the table then did the same. Each of us had at his side six bottles of wine and beer, and these we were expected to attack indiscriminately. "You're drinking nothing," shouts out the colonel, as he stretches across the table and fills your glass with claret—a very excellent sort of claret, he said, they got from the Crimea. Before that was finished, another officer would fill your glass—the same glass!—with sherry. Then the colonel would insist upon you trying the beer. Meanwhile course after course of the most substantial dishes were being served up. Each one helped himself from them, but in addition one or other of the officers would cut off a huge slice and put it down in one of our plates. The hospitality was genuine and most hearty; but how we got through that evening was a marvel to us. We had been leading a hard, healthy life lately, so had good appetites, and were able to keep fairly well in line with the Russians in the eating way. But the drinking was terrible. If we had been allowed to keep at one liquor we might possibly have survived; but the mixture of port and beer, and sherry and claret, and Guinness's stout and vodka, backwards and forwards, first one and then the other, was fatal.

In the middle of dinner a jingling of bells was heard, and up drove a tarantass. The door opened, and in came a young Russian officer. He had arrived with his wife. "Just in time