

Aksai Chin and the adjacent country. At length he laid aside his displeasure and said he had no objection to my plans, showing Macartney a telegram from the Tsungli Yamen respecting me. This message, enjoining the Taotai and other officials to afford me due protection while in Sin-Chiang, had come in consequence of representations made at Peking by Sir Claude Macdonald, but had probably been accompanied by secret instructions of a hostile character.

On a later day I was invited to dine at the Yamen and found neither the company nor the dishes to my liking. The Chinese, both the host and the guests, whether because they were sullen, or because the numerous dishes set before them demanded their whole energy, had nothing to say, and I found it impossible to draw any one into conversation on any subject. When a public post was mentioned, the Taotai said curtly that there was no public post, and there was no need of a telegraph line to Yarkand or Khotan, since these places had no Taotai. When I turned to Loo, the head of the telegraph office, who could speak English fluently, my advances were met with very brief replies. Nothing appeared to have any interest except the dishes. Every one, save myself, seemed to appreciate the ducks, ham, sea-weed, gizzards, eggs, lotus leaves and seed, sharks' fins, bamboo roots, soup, pastry, rissoles, Chinese potatoes, stewed pears, &c. The *pièce de resistance* was roast pig, which was regarded as a great delicacy and served with special ceremony. When the time for this dish came, the guests withdrew a little from the table, the top of which was then removed and another put in its place. On this the roast pig was served; then the former table-top was restored, and the dinner proceeded to its natural termination. When that consummation was achieved, the Taotai, a short man, escorted me to the door, holding my hand in his, swinging