Next Day the Emperor sent two *Mandarins*, with fifty Horses for his Retinue; and a Message, importing, that it was his Majesty’s Pleasure, that if the Ambassador desired to see the City, all that was worth his viewing should be shewed him. Hereupon he rode-out with those Officers, who, by the King’s Command, brought him to a Sort of Play-house, or Court of Diversion; a very lofty, large Building, with a great Stage in it, adorned with carved Imagery finely painted. In the Middle of this Palace was an open Place encompassed with Galleries: Here the *Mandarins* desired the *Russians* to sit-down on Chairs; and having entertained *Isbrand Ides* with Tea and *Tharasin*[[1]](#footnote-1) Wine, they were treated with a Comedy, and the Diversion of many different Sorts of exquisite Jugglers, who seemed to produce all Sorts of Fruit, live Birds and Crabs; performing all the Dexterities of that Kind practised in *Europe*. Others played with round Glass Balls, as big as a Man’s Head, at the Point of a Sharp Stick; tossing them several Ways without breaking or letting them fall, that it was really surprizing. After this a Bambû-Cane, about seven Foot high, being held upright by six Men, a Boy about ten Years old crept up to the Top of it as nimbly as a Monkey, and laid himself on his Belly upon the Point or End of it, turning himself several Times round: After which, rising up, he set one Foot on the Bambû, holding fast to it with one Hand, and them loosing his Hold, clapped his Hands together, and run very swiftly down; and shewed several other Feats of Agility, which were really wonderful.

The Comedies also appeared very well, by reason they were acted by the Emperor’s Players. They frequently appeared in Changes of very rich Dresses, embroidered in Gold and Silver; and the Plot turned on the Story of a triumphant Hero, in which were brought-in their Images, and a late Emperor, whose Face was painted of a Blood-Colour. This was interlaced with a Farce, or diverting Entertainment, of two young Women well-dressed, who stood each on a Man’s Shoulder, and nicely played with their Fans; bowing to one another, and keeping Time to the Music as exactly as if they had danced on the Ground. Two little Boys played as *Hosticki*, in very fantastical Habits, and recited their Parts very well. These Diversions ended, the Ambassador thanked the Mandarins, and returned home. On the same Day the King went-out a Tyger-Hunting without the great Wall, pursuant to his annual Custom, and returned in the Evening to *Pe-king*.

The same Day also his Excellency was invited to a Repast by the Vice-Roy, or *Sungut Doriamba*, who received him in his Bed-Chamber; and after some Discourse, led him into his best Hall, or Parlour, where several Tables and Stools stood ready. The Tables were adorned with rich Tapestry Carpets of Silk and Gold, which were full wrought with Figures. They were also set-off with very beautiful, artificial Flowers, (for want of the natural, it being Winter) made of Crimson Velvets, and the most charming coloured Silks. On the fore Part of the Tables were placed Silver Cups, with lighted Pieces of *Kalamba* Wood, which afforded a very good Perfume. Next these stood delicate Wooden Images, and Variety of small Figures, or Puppets, finely painted and gilded. The Chairs or Stools, on which the Vice-Roy and the Ambassador sat, were, according to the Tartarian Fashion, hung at the Backs with Leopard and Tyger Skins, which appeared very magnificent.

Before each Person there was placed a larger Dish of Tea than ordinary; in which were put peeled Walnuts and Hasel-Nuts, with a little Iron-Spoon to take them out. After the Tea was drank-off, whichtasted very agreeably, little Agat Cups filled with Brandy, mixed with distilled Waters, were served about; and after that several Dishes, or rather Cups, of fried or broiled Fish, cut into small Pieces, were set in Heaps one upon another, garnished with fine Herbs and Flowers; and, as an Ornament, set on the fore Part of the Table in a Row. By them were placed six Cups of very agreeable Soops, dished up with stewed Flesh and Fish. This Course was followed by several others of the richest Edibles, which were succeeded by all Sorts of delicate baked Meats. The Whole was closed with all Sorts of delicious Confects; as, candied Grapes, Lemons, Oranges, Chestnuts, and shelled Nuts[[2]](#footnote-2).

During the Entertainment, a Play was acted in the same Room, interlarded with Songs and Dances by little Boys dressed in Man’s Cloaths, who kept very good Time; and played on the Flute withal, distorting their Bodies into antic Postures, and dexterously managing a Fan. The Vice-Roy’s Lady and Daughter also appeared at a Door half open. They were very richly dressed, according to the Mode of the Mongolian Tartars. Here they very divertingly spent about three Hours.

1. Before called *Tarasu*, and *Tarasun*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Isbrand Ides*’s Travels to China, p. 72, & *seqq*. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)