

Pereira was still annoyed at the vexatious inquisitiveness of Chinese crowds. At meals or a halt in a village the crowds would close in to watch him eating and pester him with inquiries. On arriving at an inn the traveller alights in a filthy courtyard which has never been swept out. He then proceeds to his chamber, on the north side of which is the kang or raised platform, beneath which runs a flue which is heated by burning long millet stalks. Lying on the kang the traveller is roasted when the millet stalks are burning and frozen when the fire dies out. The walls are of mud, with the accumulated dirt of ages. The wooden door never fits the doorway, so admits plenty of fresh air. The windows are of paper.

Such inns Pereira found a poor refuge after a long day's journey. In the winter time the traveller is frozen, but free of insects. In summer time the walls are the refuge of countless bugs, who issue forth at night in legions to attack their unfortunate victim. And if they cannot reach him on his bed they climb on to the ceiling and drop on him from above. If he sleeps on the kang without a bed he becomes a victim to lice. And on the cart, too, he must be careful not to get near the wadded clothes of the carters for fear of these pests.

At Chengting Fu, which has a population of about 90,000, he found a large French Lazarist Mission with schools for 150 boys, orphanages where boys are taught various trades, and a convent with sixteen Sisters of Charity who usually look after about a thousand orphans and destitute women, but who during the famine had to succour twice that number.