

Chinese soldiers took to it readily. On parade they moved like clockwork. The defect was that they totally lacked initiative. They would carry out an attack like a drill movement. But until they learned to use their wits they would have a poor time in fighting a trained army.

The famine was more severe in Honan than in most other Provinces. Pereira saw a beggar gloating over some dirty bones which he would not like to have given to a decent dog in England. And some of the districts were overrun by bands of brigands. It was said that there were fourteen to seventeen of these bands, some four to five hundred strong. But the authorities did nothing to put them down and little to cope with the famine. In one village which put up some resistance several bands combined and killed about three hundred of the inhabitants. In other places a band would capture three or four villages and drive out the inhabitants. Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries working together did their best to relieve distress; but in the face of the apathy of the officials and the lawlessness around them theirs was an uphill task.

The opinion of one of these missionaries of the character of the Chinese peasant is worth noting. Père Pelerzi had spent seven years in a Chinese village, and he considered that the Chinese peasant led an ideal life, according to his own lights. He knew not what comfort and luxury meant, and so did not miss them. He was accustomed to and satisfied with what little he had, and enjoyed life. There was very little vice among them, and their chief faults were thieving and anger. In