

the guests are caused to those who care and who never seem to rise to as high a place as they would wish; whilst those who do not care where they sit and would prefer a lowly seat next a friend are placed in exalted posts and sit next the same people whom they are always meeting. A vast amount of wine is drunk, and the only way of getting out of having to drink more than one wants is to drink tea and absolutely decline to drink against one's own desires. The Chinese have but vague ideas about time, and sometimes the foreigners are equally vague. So often a guest arrives punctually and has to wait for an hour or more for a late comer. According to Chinese etiquette the lowest in rank should arrive first and the biggest official last. Sometimes the latter sits busily engaged in his yamen waiting to know if all the guests have arrived before he starts. The wearisome functions last for three or four hours.

Brigandage was still rife in the neighbourhood, and on account of it many country people came into the towns. The brigands were so strong, indeed, that they besieged Hang-chow-hsien for twelve hours, and though a force was sent against them from Chengtu the General in command of it thought the brigands were too strong and he returned without attacking them. It was computed that there were 250,000 brigands in the Province of Szechwan alone, and of these 38,000 were armed with modern rifles. This brigand force is regularly organised and its chiefs speak of it as the brigand army—"fei-chün".

Writing of the Chinese character Pereira says