

done, and that they can act openly and with impunity within 30 miles of a treaty port, where there are foreign gun-boats. The brigands, too, I was told, have opened an office in Chung-king, where the oppressed merchants can buy brigand protection at a fixed robber rate.

Cities, like Lu Chou on the Yangtze, are plundered, sometimes by soldiers and sometimes by brigands, and one wonders how the unfortunate merchant can carry on at all, whilst all over the country luckless coolies are seized and forced to work for nothing.

If there were any gleams of honesty in the officials there might be some hope, but they seem to be going from bad to worse. Matters have got so bad that it looks as if it would be a long time before things can again become normal. The only hope appears to lie in foreign intervention or in the advent of a Chinese Napoleon. The latter would be the better solution, but unluckily there is no sign of the advent of any commanding personality who can enforce discipline and gradually bring corruption at any rate within bounds. No doubt such a man will eventually be found, but this may not be for years. On the other hand, if the Powers decide that the breaking-point has been reached and that they cannot wait indefinitely, the result may be some sort of foreign intervention. If they could work with some sort of unanimity the prospect might be hopeful, but after the fiasco of the Versailles Conference, where friends found themselves hopelessly divided by conflicting interests, it hardly looks as if they could work in harmony in China, where interests