



was only a culmination of the trouble which the "foreign devils" had been making for years. Exasperated beyond measure at the height to which their influence had reached, she joined with her immediate supporters in what is now a perfectly revealed plan to "drive the intruders into the sea." In the province of Shantung there was a small organization like old-time militia or train bands, in which her genius saw the germs of a great instrument for the destruction of foreigners. This organization was called I-Ho-Chuan (literally, the Patriotic Harmony Fists), and remained purely local until after the occupation of Kiaou-Chau bay by the Germans as a result of a missionary murder. Incensed, perhaps justly so, at this positive evidence of the motive power behind Christianity, the people rapidly flocked into the I-Ho-Chuan, now become, through Imperial aid, an anti-foreign, anti-Christian organization. Its rites included fantastic incantations, gymnastics, and charms intended to render its members invulnerable to bullets. Three special deities gave it their blessing and support—Kwanti, god of war and patron deity of the present dynasty; Kwang Cheng-tze; and the Joyful Buddha of the Rotund Belly. Other motives than foreign-phobia entered into the "Old Woman's" course. There had undoubtedly been a great following for the Emperor in his reform movement. The opposition to the usurpation and the clamor against her was great. The Boxers were a ready instrument to turn this indignation from her Majesty against the "foreign devils."

Nature lent its aid. There was a great drouth last spring and consequent lack of crops, ascribed by properly instructed priests to the desecration which the sacred graves of the dead were constantly receiving at the hands of foreign railroad builders, and to the impediment which foreign telegraph wires offered to the free flights of guardian spirits. Scarcely had the Boxers received full Imperial approval in the appointment of Prince Tuan, father of the heir-apparent, as their chief, in May last, when their organized operations began. Placards were distributed everywhere suggesting means for the destruction of the "foreign devils" and their works. Frequent outbreaks were reported from the provinces, for the suppression of which only half-hearted steps were taken.

