



Then came what was really the opening scene of the great tragedy. The railroad station at Feng-tai, the first stop on the road from Peking to Tien-tsin, was burned. And as direct evidence of the propitiation of the gods, heavy rains fell upon the parched fields. This drove the fanatics wild, and all manner of lawlessness followed. Native Christian refugees began flocking into the city, telling stories of murder and rapine. The squabbling diplomats were for once harmonious in their demand for guards to protect the legations. The guard arrived from Tien-tsin on May 31st, cut down by the silly jealousy of rival powers to 18 officers and 389 men, an antiquated British Nordenfeldt, which jammed at every fourth round, and one American Colt machine.

About the end of May news began to reach Peking of the murder of foreign missionaries. One Englishman named Norman was handed over to the tortures of a mob by a local magistrate to whom he had fled for protection. Demands from the diplomats were received with a new and incomprehensible insolence. In the midst of the British Minister's protest against this murder one of the four members of the Tsung-li Yamen present was discovered to be fast asleep. "What can you do with such a nation as this?" he cried out to them in his indignation.

And while the plains about Peking were bright with burning stations and missionary villages; while Christians, both foreign and native, were being butchered throughout the provinces, the Court was amusing itself with theatricals at the Summer Palace. On June 9th the Court returned to town from the Summer Palace, ostensibly to exert a pacific influence. In reality it came to enjoy the bloody festivities planned, for on the same day the railroad to Tien-tsin was destroyed by Imperial troops, and the little band of diplomats and refugees, convinced that they must fight, actively began their plan of fortification and gathered in their siege supplies. Their repeated demands for a reënforced guard were only granted by the Yamen after the railroad had been destroyed, and it was impossible to reach the capital. When, to their great relief, the ambassadors received the telegram announcing the setting forth of Seymour's expedition, they all rode out, on the morning of June 11th, to meet their rescuers. They waited half the day, and met

