

I saw a striking evidence of this change some years ago. It was my duty to make an official visit to Ningpo, and exchange courtesies with the ruling Mandarin, in company with the late Admiral John Lee Davis, then commanding our squadron in Asia. It was part of this mission to impress our Chinese friends with the strength, and especially the discipline, of the American navy. And where could this be better done than on board of a man-of-war? When the Mandarin made his visit he inspected the ship and witnessed a drill. The function was finely done, and the Admiral was proud of his brave and skilled men.

We returned the visit next day, and were received with fine Chinese ceremony, Admiral Davis paying the Mandarin the compliment of taking with him, in the blaze of full dress uniform, as many of his officers as could be spared. After the tea drinking and gracious speeches, our host tendered Admiral Davis a review of his Chinese soldiery. A battalion was put through the manual of arms. The tactics and word of command were English. The business was perfect, no military performance of that nature more commendable. I recall the Admiral's astonishment, amounting to chagrin: "To think," he said, "that I should have asked that Chinese Mandarin to look at my people, when his own soldiers could show them how to drill." This incident made a deep impression. There in that quadrangle of Ningpo, visible to the Admiral's keen, professional eyes, was a unit of the force which, under proper conditions, might make a strange dream come true. It was my first evidence of the awakening of the warlike spirit of China, and not only awakened, but trained to the best offices of war.

I saw something at that time of Chinese troops at various ports. While in no case was there the perfection of Ningpo, the development of the military art wherever we visited was evident. At some points there were parcels of Bannermen, grotesque, not military, tumbling over one another, guarding some Tartar general. This was the incongruous mass, dumped into semblance of martial form, pensioners, loungers, who had never felt the real test of war. The Taeping rebellion was little more than one body of Chinese troops falling over another, soldiers pausing in the middle of an action to dine, and resuming hostilities after dinner. Battles were continued like some of those Chinese dramas which require a week for the exemplification of the plot. Matters, however, were advancing with emphasis. The Ningpo incident was a pregnant lesson.

There is no reason why the same discipline, the same teaching in the art of war, which sent an American Admiral dazed and grieving out of the quadrangle at Ningpo, should not, if applied to the Chinese Empire, result in an army as large as the armies of Europe combined. It would be as well armed,