

It was truly a splendid place for a seige. Half way up the mountain side was a shallow cave; with a wall of rocks across its mouth, we considered it well nigh impregnable. Saunders and I built that wall, and got the inside of the cave ship-shape without any undue waste of time. We had provisions enough to last for a week, if used with care, and as there was a spring inside the cave, we had no immediate fear of hunger or thirst.

I calculated that the coolies would take about half an hour to reach the village, fully double that time to collect their friends and return; we had therefore quite an hour and a half in which to receive them.

Night came on, and still no sign of the Boxers, though both Saunders and I swept the country continually with our glasses until darkness set in. Notwithstanding our apparent security neither of us felt any inclination to rest. We contended ourselves with a hasty meal, and laid out the cartridges in a convenient position.

As we lay there, behind our little wall of stones, we pondered on the erratic ways of Fate. It was certainly a very great pity to see this splendid country overrun with secret societies and outlaws of every description, who make the life of the explorer and scientist a very uncertain commodity indeed. In the hands of a less conservative Government, China might be made one of the richest countries in the world; but with the low standard of education of the average Chinaman, who looks with suspicion on railroads, and holds up his hands in horror at the idea of a standing army, this is not possible.

It must have been about ten o'clock when Saunders crawled up to me and whispered: "I think I hear something rustling among the bushes down below, sir."

I listened intently, and presently heard footsteps approaching; they ceased when about two hundred yards from us. Suddenly the whole surrounding country was illuminated by the glare of many torches, lighted simultaneously.

The scene revealed to us was a striking

one. We perceived about fifty Chinamen, dressed in the loose canvas clothes peculiar to the Boxer's society, on whose faces and shaved heads the dancing light produced a fantastic and weird effect.

The strong light soon revealed our hiding place, and it was promptly rushed. Saunders and I fired together into the approaching mass of humanity, and the attackers stopped short, as if bewildered by the noise of the firearms. But only for a moment, and then, with a savage yell, they dashed towards us once more, and though we fired as fast as we could load, and certainly killed many, the very impetuosity of their onslaught brought them to the level of our breastwork, and a moment later we were struggling for our lives in the midst of a howling mass of raging devils.

The Boxers, in their wild attempts to get at us and skewer us on their long knives, did no little damage to their friends. We kept them off for what appeared to be several hours, but in reality could only have been a few minutes, then their numbers began to tell. We were well nigh exhausted. Two Chinamen, more courageous than the rest, rushed at Saunders, who went down before their savage onslaught. Left standing alone, I was quickly overpowered, bound hand and foot, and placed beside Saunders on the floor of the cave. As I fell, I managed to thrust my revolver into the breast of my tunic without being noticed; Saunders, I knew, always carried another pistol, so if we managed to escape, we should not be quite unarmed.

After resting for about half an hour, the Chinese placed us in the centre of the party, and set off at a rapid pace down the mountain side for their village.

We found the place in a turmoil of excitement. The news that two of the hated foreigners had been captured in the land of the Manchoos spread from mouth to mouth. A motley crowd gathered round to stare at us. Then we were removed under a strong guard to a small bamboo hut into which we were thrust, bound as we were, the sentinel, who was left at the door, taking not the