

CHAPTER III

THE HWA SHAN

HAVING made this brief incursion into Honan, Pereira recrossed the Yellow River, returned to Kwanyintang and from there set out for the Province of Shensi and its famous capital, Sian—often spelt Signan—once the capital of China. But on the way he made a short detour to visit the beautiful mountain of pilgrimage—the Hwa Shan, one of the five sacred mountains of China—and for this excursion he received every assistance from the Chinese officials.

On entering Shensi he found practically all the villages were surrounded by a mud wall, thus showing that brigandage was prevalent. The inns, too, were very poor, consisting of two rows of rooms, like cells without windows, each about 8 feet square, on either side of the yard. As a set-off was the goodwill of the Chinese officials: the magistrate called on him late at night and insisted on his taking up his abode in the yamen, and offered to make all arrangement for the trip to the Hwa Shan.

Starting off on a fine April day, Pereira crossed a plain green with wheat and budding trees and sprinkled with the pink of peach blossoms and