

CHAPTER V

THE CHING LING (MOUNTAINS)

PEREIRA now entered upon one of the most enjoyable parts of his journey, and we wish he could have lived to describe it more adequately. It was now the full spring of the year and he was leaving the plains to cross the beautiful range of mountains which divides the basin of the Yellow River from the basin of the Yangtse. This range is known as the Ching Ling or Sin-ling.

The first stage out of Sian took him to the foot of the mountains. And as he was off the regular mule track and away from the haunts of soldiers, he found none of the usual filth at the inn, and the doors had not been removed by the soldiers for firewood. A mile south of Nantou Kioh the path leaves the plain and ascends a steep narrow valley to the Tu-ti Ling (5220 feet), a rise of 2430 feet. On the way he passed quantities of wild flowers, including white and violet lilies, pansies and honeysuckle. The climb was a hard one for the mules carrying heavy loads. The traffic over the pass is mostly carried on by coolies bearing long bamboo baskets on their backs with a pole on which to rest the load. On descending from the pass there