

A RETROSPECT

BY

J. HUDSON TAYLOR, M.R.C.S., F.R.G.S.

“Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord
thy God led thee....” Deut. viii. 2.

THIRD EDITION

TORONTO

CHINA INLAND MISSION

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW AGENCY NEEDED

MY thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah lv. 8) How true are these words! When the LORD is bringing in great blessing in the best possible way, how oftentimes our unbelieving hearts are feeling, if not saying, like Jacob of old, “All these things are against me.” Or we are filled with fear, as were the disciples when the LORD, walking on the waters, drew near to quiet the troubled sea, and to bring them quickly to their desired haven. And yet mere common-sense ought to tell us that He, whose way is perfect, can make no mistakes; that He who has promised to “perfect that which concerneth” us, and whose minute care counts the very hairs of our heads, and forms for us our circumstances, must know better than we the way to forward our truest interests and to glorify His own Name.

“Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
GOD is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

To me it seemed a great calamity that failure of health compelled my relinquishing work for GOD in China, just when it was more fruitful than ever before; and to leave the little band of Christians in Ningpo, needing much care and teaching, was a great sorrow. Nor was the sorrow lessened when, on reaching England, medical testimony assured me that return to China, at least for years to come, was impossible. Little did I then realise that the long separation from China was a necessary step towards the formation of a work which GOD would bless as He has blessed the CHINA INLAND MISSION. While in the field, the pressure of claims immediately around me was so great that I could not think much of the still greater needs of the regions farther inland; and, if they were thought of; could do nothing for them. But while detained for some years in England, daily viewing the whole country on the large map on the wall of my study, I was as near to the vast regions of Inland China as to the smaller districts in which I had laboured personally for GOD; and prayer was often the only resource by which the burdened heart could gain any relief.

As a long absence from China appeared inevitable, the next question was how best to serve China while in England, and this led to my engaging for

several years, with the late Rev F. F. Gough of the C. M. S., in the revision of a version of the New Testament in the colloquial of Ningpo for the British and Foreign Bible Society. In undertaking this work, in my shortsightedness I saw nothing beyond the use that the Book, and the marginal references, would be to the native Christians; but I have often seen since that, without those months of feeding and feasting on the Word of GOD, I should have been quite unprepared to form, on its present basis, a mission like the CHINA INLAND MISSION.

In the study of that Divine Word I learned that, to obtain successful labourers, not elaborate appeals for help. but, first, earnest prayer to GOD to thrust forth labourers, and, second, the deepening of the spiritual life of the Church, so that men should be unable to stay at home, were what was needed. I saw that the Apostolic plan was not to raise ways and means, but to go and do the work, trusting in His sure Word who has said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

In the meantime the prayer for workers for CHEH-KIANG was being answered. The first, Mr. Meadows, sailed for China with his young wife in January 1862, through the kind co-operation and aid of our friend Mr. Berger. The second left England in 1864, having her passage provided by the Foreign Evangelisation Society. The third and fourth reached Ningpo on July 24th, 1865. A fifth soon followed them, reaching Ningpo in September 1865. Thus the prayer for the five workers was fully answered; and we were encouraged to look to GOD for still greater things.

Months of earnest prayer and not a few abortive efforts had resulted in a deep conviction that a special agency was essential for the evangelisation of Inland China. At this time I had not only the daily help of prayer and conference with my beloved friend and fellow-worker the late Rev. F. F. Gough, but also invaluable aid and counsel from Mr: and Mrs. Berger, with whom I and my dear wife (whose judgment and piety were of priceless value at this juncture) spent many days in prayerful deliberation. The grave difficulty of possibly interfering with existing missionary operations at home was foreseen; but it was concluded that, by simple trust in GOD, suitable agency might be raised up and sustained without interfering injuriously with any existing work. I had also a growing conviction that GOD would have me to seek from Him the needed workers, and to go forth with them. But for a long time unbelief hindered my taking the first step.

How inconsistent unbelief always is! I had no doubt that, if I prayed for workers, "in the Name" of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, they would be given me. I had no doubt that, in answer to such prayer, the means for our going forth would be provided, and that doors would be opened before us in unreached

parts of the Empire. But I had not then learned to trust GOD for keeping power and grace for myself; so no wonder that I could not trust Him to keep others who might be prepared to go with me. I feared that in the midst of the dangers, difficulties, and trials which would necessarily be connected with such a work, some who were comparatively inexperienced Christians might break down, and bitterly reproach me for having encouraged them to undertake an enterprise for which they were unequal.

Yet, what was I to do? The feeling of blood-guiltiness became more and more intense. Simply because I refused to ask for them, the labourers did not come forward—did not go out to China—and every day tens of thousands were passing away to Christless graves! Perishing China so filled my heart and mind that there was no rest by day, and little sleep by night, till health broke down. At the invitation of my beloved and honoured friend, Mr. George Pearse (then of the Stock Exchange), I went to spend a few days with him in Brighton.

On Sunday, June 25th, 1865, unable to bear the sight of a congregation of a thousand or more Christian people rejoicing in their own security, while millions were perishing for lack of knowledge, I wandered out on the sands alone, in great spiritual agony; and there the LORD conquered my unbelief; and I surrendered myself to GOD for this service. I told Him that all the responsibility as to issues and consequences must rest with Him; that as His servant, it was mine to obey and to follow Him—His, to direct, to care for, and to guide me and those who might labour with me. Need I say that peace at once flowed into my burdened heart? There and then I asked Him for twenty-four fellow-workers, two for each of eleven inland provinces which were without a missionary, and two for Mongolia; and writing the petition on the margin of the Bible I had with me, I returned home with a heart enjoying rest such as it had been a stranger to for months, and with an assurance that the LORD would bless His own work and that I should share in the blessing. I had previously prayed, and asked prayer, that workers might be raised up for the eleven then unoccupied provinces, and thrust forth and provided for, but had not surrendered myself to be their leader.

About this time, with the help of my dear wife, I wrote the little book, *China's Spiritual Need and Claims*. Every paragraph was steeped in prayer. With the help of Mr. Berger, who had given valued aid in the revision of the manuscript, and who bore the expense of printing an edition of 3000 copies, they were soon put in circulation. I spoke publicly of the proposed work as opportunity permitted, specially at the Perth and Mildmay Conferences of 1865, and continued in prayer for fellow-workers, who were soon raised up, and after due correspondence were invited to my home, then in the East of London. When one house became insufficient, the occupant of the adjoining

house removed, and I was able to rent it; and when that in its turn became insufficient, further accommodation was provided close by. Soon there were a number of men and women under preparatory training, and engaging in evangelistic work which tested in some measure their qualifications as soul-winners.