

A RETROSPECT

BY

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

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CHINA INLAND MISSION

CHAPTER XIX

THE FORMATION OF THE C. I. M.

IT was thus that in the year 1865 the CHINA INLAND MISSION was organised; and the workers already in the field were incorporated into it. W. T. Berger, Esq., then residing at Saint Hill, near East Grinstead, without whose help and encouragement I could not have gone forward, undertook the direction of the home department of the work during my anticipated absence in China; and I proposed, as soon as arrangements could be completed, to go out with the volunteers and take the direction of the work in the field. For the support of the workers already in China, our friends at home were sending in unsolicited contributions from time to time, and every need was met.

We had now, however, to look forward to the outgoing of a party of sixteen or seventeen, and estimated that from £1500 to £2000 might be required to cover outfits, passage-money, and initial expenses. I wrote a little pamphlet, calling it "Occasional Paper, No. I." (intending in successive numbers to give to donors and friends accounts of the work wrought through us in China), and in that paper stated the anticipated needs for floating the enterprise. I expected that GOD would incline the hearts of some of the readers to send contributions: I had determined never to use personal solicitation, or to make collections, or to issue collecting-books. Missionary-boxes were thought unobjectionable, and we had a few prepared for those who might ask for them, and have continued to use them ever since.

It was February 6th, 1866, when I sent my manuscript of "Occasional Paper, No. I.," with a design for the cover, to the printer. From delays in engraving and printing, it was March 12th when the bales of pamphlets were delivered at my house. Now on February 6th a daily prayer-meeting, from 12 to 1 o'clock, had been commenced, to ask for the needed funds. And that we had not asked in vain, the following extract from "Occasional Paper, No. II." will show:—

"The receipts for 1864 were £51: 14s.; for 1865, from January to June, £221: 12: 6, besides two free passages; from June to December, £923:12: 8. Hindrances having occurred, the MS. of the 'Occasional Paper, No. I.' was not completed till February 6th, 1866. Up to this time we had received (from December 30th) £170:8: 3.

"We felt much encouraged by the receipt of so much money in little more than a month, as it was entirely unsolicited by us—save from GOD. But it was also evident that we must ask the LORD to do yet greater things for us, or it would be impossible for a party of from ten to sixteen to leave in the middle of May. *Daily united prayer was therefore offered to GOD for the*

funds needful for the outfits and passages of as many as He would have to go out in May.

“Owing to the delays mentioned above in the printing of the ‘Occasional Paper,’ it was not ready for the publisher until March 12th. On this day I again examined my mission cash-book, and the comparison of the result of the two similar periods of one month and six days each, one before and one after special prayer for £1500 to L2000, was very striking:—

“Receipts from December 30th to February 6th £170 8 3

“ Feb. 6th to Mar. 12th £1774 5 11

“Funds advised, since received 200 0 0

———— £1974 5 11

“This, it will be noticed, was *previous* to the circulation of the ‘Occasional Paper,’ and, consequently, was not the result of it. It was the response of a faithful GOD to the united prayers of those whom He had called to serve Him in the Gospel of His dear SON.

“We can now compare with these two periods a third of the same extent. From March 12th to April 18th the receipts were £529, showing that when GOD had supplied the special need, the special supply also ceased. Truly there is a LIVING GOD, and HE is the hearer and answerer of prayer.”

But this gracious answer to prayer made it a little difficult to circulate “Occasional Paper, No. I.,” for it stated as a need that which was already supplied. The difficulty was obviated by the issue with each copy of a coloured inset stating that the funds for outfit and passage were already in hand in answer to prayer. We were reminded of the difficulty of Moses—not a very common one in the present day—and of the proclamation he had to send through the camp to the people to prepare no more for the building of the Tabernacle, as the gifts in hand were already too much. We are convinced that if there were less solicitation for money and more dependence upon the power of the HOLY GHOST and upon the deepening of spiritual life, the experience of Moses would be a common one in every branch of Christian work.

Preparations for sailing to China were at once proceeded with. About this time I was asked to give a lecture on China in a village not very far from London, and agreed to do so on condition that there should be no collection, and that this should be announced on the bills. The gentleman who invited me, and who kindly presided as chairman, said he had never had that condition imposed before. He accepted it, however, and the bills were issued accordingly for the 2nd or 3rd of May. With the aid of a large map, something

of the extent and population and deep spiritual need of China was presented, and many were evidently impressed.

At the close of the meeting the chairman said that by my request it had been intimated on the bills that there would be no collection; but he felt that many present would be distressed and burdened if they had not the opportunity of contributing something towards the good work proposed. He trusted that as the proposition emanated entirely from himself, and expressed, he felt sure, the feelings of many in the audience, I should not object to it. I begged, however, that the condition agreed to might be carried out; pointing out among other reasons for making no collection, that the very reason adduced by our kind chairman was, to my mind, one of the strongest for not making it. My wish was, not that those present should be relieved by making such contribution as might there and then be convenient, under the influence of a present emotion; but that each one should go home burdened with the deep need of China, and ask of GOD what He would have them to do. If, after thought and prayer, they were satisfied that a pecuniary contribution was what He wanted of them, it could be given to any Missionary Society having agents in China; or it might be posted to our London office; but that perhaps in many cases what GOD wanted was not a money contribution, but personal consecration to His service abroad; or the giving up of son or daughter—more precious than silver or gold—to His service. I added that I thought the tendency of a collection was to leave the impression that the all-important thing was money, whereas no amount of money could convert a single soul; that what was needed was that men and women filled with the HOLY GHOST should give themselves to the work: for the support of such there would never be a lack of funds. As my wish was evidently very strong, the chairman kindly yielded to it, and closed the meeting. He told me, however, at the supper-table, that he thought it was a mistake on my part, and that, notwithstanding all I had said, a few persons had put some little contributions into his hands.

Next morning at breakfast, my kind host came in a little late, and acknowledged to not having had a very good night. After breakfast he asked me to his study, and giving me the contributions handed to him the night before, said, "I thought last night, Mr. Taylor, that you were in the wrong about a collection; I am now convinced you were quite right. As I thought in the night of that stream of souls in China ever passing onward into the dark, I could only cry as you suggested, 'LORD, what wilt Thou have me to do?' I think I have obtained the guidance I sought, and here it is." He handed me a cheque for £500, adding that if there had been a collection he would have given a few pounds to it, but now this cheque was the result of having spent no small part of the night in prayer.

I need scarcely say how surprised and thankful I was for this gift. I had received at the breakfast-table a letter from Messrs. Killick, Martin and Co., shipping agents, in which they stated that they could offer us the whole passenger accommodation of the ship Lammermuir. I went direct to the ship, found it in every way suitable, and paid the cheque on account. As above stated, the funds deemed needed had been already in hand for some time; but the coincidence of the simultaneous offer of the ship accommodation and this munificent gift—GOD’S “exceeding abundantly “—greatly encouraged my heart.

On the 26th of May we sailed for China in the Lammermuir, a missionary party of 16 (besides my four children and their nurse, and Miss Bausum (afterwards Mrs. Barchet); in all 22 passengers. Mr. Berger took charge of the home department, and thus the C. I. M. was fully inaugurated.