

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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CHAPTER IV

FURTHER ANSWERS TO PRAYER

THE remarkable and gracious deliverance I have spoken of, was a great joy to me, as well as a strong confirmation of faith; but of course ten shillings, however economically used, will not go very far, and it was none the less necessary to continue in prayer, asking that the larger supply which was still due might be remembered and paid. All my petitions, however, appeared to remain unanswered; and before a fortnight had elapsed I found myself pretty much in the same position that I had occupied on the Sunday night already made so memorable. Meanwhile, I continued pleading with GOD, more and more earnestly, that He would graciously remind my employer that my salary was overdue. Of course it was not the want of the money that distressed me—that could have been had at any time for the asking—but the question uppermost in my mind was this: “Can I go to China? or will my want of faith and power with God prove to be so serious an obstacle as to preclude my entering upon this much-prized service?”

As the week drew to a close I felt exceedingly embarrassed. There was not only myself to consider; on Saturday night a payment would be due to my Christian landlady which I knew she could not well dispense with. Ought I not, for her sake, to speak about the matter of the salary? Yet to do so would be, to myself at any rate, the admission that I was not fitted to undertake a missionary enterprise. I gave nearly the whole of Thursday and Friday—all the time not occupied in my necessary employment—to earnest wrestling with God in prayer. But still on Saturday morning I was in the same position as before. And now my earnest cry was for guidance as to whether it was my duty to break silence and speak to my employer, or whether I should still continue to wait the FATHER’S time. As far as I could judge, I received the assurance that to wait His time was best; and that GOD in some way or other would interpose on my behalf. So I waited, my heart being now at rest and the burden gone.

About five o’clock that Saturday afternoon, when the doctor had finished writing his prescriptions, his last circuit for the day being taken, he threw himself back in his arm-chair, as he was wont, and began to speak of the things of GOD. He was a truly Christian man, and many seasons of very happy spiritual fellowship we had together. I was busily watching, at the time, a pan in which a decoction was boiling that required a good deal of attention. It was indeed fortunate for me that it was so, for without any obvious connection with what had been going on, all at once he said, “By-the-bye, Taylor, is not your salary due again?” My emotion may be imagined! I

had to swallow two or three times before I could answer. With my eye fixed on the pan and my back to the doctor, I told him as quietly as I could that it was overdue some little time. How thankful I felt at that moment! God surely had heard my prayer, and caused him, in this time of my great need, to remember the salary without any word or suggestion from me. He replied, "Oh, I am so sorry you did not remind me! You know how busy I am; I wish I had thought of it a little sooner, for only this afternoon I sent all the money I had to the bank, otherwise I would pay you at once." It is impossible to describe the revulsion of feeling caused by this unexpected statement I knew not what to do. Fortunately for me my pan boiled up, and I had a good reason for rushing with it from the room. Glad indeed I was to get away, and keep out of sight until after the doctor had returned to his house, and most thankful that he had not perceived my emotion.

As soon as he was gone I had to seek my little sanctum, and pour out my heart before the LORD for some time, before calmness—and more than calmness—thankfulness, and joy were restored to me. I felt that God had His own way, and was not going to fail me. I had sought to know His will early in the day, and as far as I could judge had received guidance to wait patiently; and now God was going to work for me in some other way.

That evening was spent, as my Saturday evenings usually were, in reading the Word and preparing the subjects on which I expected to speak in the various lodging-houses on the morrow. I waited, perhaps, a little longer than usual. At last, about ten o'clock, there being no interruption of any kind, I put on my over-coat, and was preparing to leave for home, rather thankful to know that by that time I should have to let myself in with the latch-key, as my landlady retired early to rest. There was certainly no help for that night; but perhaps God would interpose for me by Monday, and I might be able to pay my landlady early in the week the money I would have given her before, had it been possible.

Just as I was preparing to turn down the gas, I heard the doctor's step in the garden which lay between the dwelling-house and surgery. He was laughing to himself very heartily, as though greatly amused by something. Entering the surgery, he asked for the ledger, and told me that, strange to say, one of his richest patients had just come to pay his doctor's bill—was it not an odd thing to do? It never struck me that it might have any bearing on my own particular case, or I might have felt embarrassed; but looking at it simply from the position of an uninterested spectator, I also was highly amused that a man who was rolling in wealth should come after ten o'clock at night to pay a doctor's bill, which he could any day have met by a cheque with the greatest ease. It appeared that somehow or other he could not rest

with this on his mind, and had been constrained to come at that unusual hour to discharge his liability.

The account was duly receipted in the ledger, and the doctor was about to leave, when suddenly he turned, and handing me some of the bank notes just received, said, to my surprise and thankfulness, "By the way, Taylor, you might as well take these notes; I have not any change, but can give you the balance next week." Again I was left—my feelings undiscovered—to go back to my own little closet and praise the LORD with a joyful heart that after all I might go to China.

To me this incident was not a trivial one; and to recall it sometimes, in circumstances of great difficulty, in China or elsewhere, has proved no small comfort and strength.

By-and-by the time drew near when it was thought desirable that I should leave Hull to attend the medical course of the London Hospital. A little while spent there, and then I had every reason to believe that my life-work in China would commence. But much as I had rejoiced at the willingness of GOD to hear and answer prayer and to help His half-trusting, half-timid child, I felt that I could not go to China without having still further developed and tested my power to rest upon His faithfulness; and a marked opportunity for doing so was providentially afforded me.

My dear father had offered to bear all the expense of my stay in London. I knew, however, that, owing to recent losses, it would mean a considerable sacrifice for him to undertake this just when it seemed necessary for me to go forward. I had recently become acquainted with the Committee of the Chinese Evangelisation Society, in connection with which I ultimately left for China, and especially with its secretary, my esteemed and much-loved friend Mr. George Pearse, [Since the above was written Mr. George Pearse has died.] then of the Stock Exchange, but now and for many years himself a missionary. Not knowing of my father's proposition, the Committee also kindly offered to bear my expenses while in London. When these proposals were first made to me, I was not quite clear as to what I ought to do, and in writing to my father and the secretaries, told them that I would take a few days to pray about the matter before deciding any course of action. I mentioned to my father that I had had this offer from the Society, and told the secretaries also of his proffered aid.

Subsequently, while waiting upon God in prayer for guidance, it became clear to my mind that I could without difficulty decline both offers. The secretaries of the Society would not know that I had cast myself wholly on GOD for supplies, and my father would conclude that I had accepted the other offer. I therefore wrote declining both propositions, and felt that without any one having either care or anxiety on my account I was simply in the hands

of GOD, and that He, who knew my heart, if He wished to encourage me to go to China, would bless my effort to depend upon Him alone at home.