

CLIMBING:
MEMORIES
of
A MISSIONARY'S WIFE
by
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CHAPTER FIFTEEN
MANCHURIAN MERCIES

"Go . . . and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee" (Mark 5:19)

FROM the time of my conversion, when a young girl, the above words have come to me again and again as a direct command from the Master Himself. Nothing so inspired and strengthened faith in those early, impressionable years, as hearing a clear, ringing testimony to GOD's power or grace or to some definite answer to prayer.

So, dear fellow climbers, I desire that these final pages may be just a "call back", message, telling of the Lord's faithfulness to keep through storm and tempest, **"even to hoar hairs"** (Isaiah 46:4).

When, after church union, the field in which we had been laboring became the province of the United Church and my husband was asked by our Presbyterian Board to undertake the important mission of securing a new field in China, it seemed quite out of the question that I could possibly accompany him. I was very ill; but as he stood by my couch, with the cable calling for his immediate return to China in his hand, he said, "I ought to go, but I dare not leave you as you are."

For only a brief moment I closed my eyes and prayed, "Lord, show me what I should do."

Then, clearly came the answer, "Go with him."

Looking up, I said: "Jonathan, I'm going with you." And even as I spoke, the thought came, "I would rather die with him, when traveling, than die alone here."

It was a step of faith, and by taking it I learned how marvelously the Lord could work for me: so much so I was even encouraged to ask for strength to deliver a brief message at our farewell meeting in Knox Church, Toronto, a few days later. This I did only by His enabling.

How can I tell in one brief paragraph the story of the following nine months, traveling almost constantly, while day by day going down ever deeper into the valley of the shadow until, at last, on a stretcher, I entered the great Rockefeller Foundation Hospital at Peking.

One month later, the doctors were rejoicing over the fact that the rigid diet prescribed by them had been demonstrated a success, for had I not actually gained several ounces in the course of the month?

(A loss of over fifty pounds had been registered in the previous eighteen months.) So once again He brought me through!

But the hard two years' fight back to health had only begun when the call to Manchuria came.

Before passing from that year of supreme testing, I would like to give a "call back" testimony to the Lord's keeping power in the hour of weakness and suffering. All through those months He revealed Himself in a most blessed way, giving rest and peace of spirit I had never known before.

On reaching Manchuria, which has a climate as cold as central Canada in the most bitter mid-winter zero weather, we had three months of waiting at a strange station before a way opened to make our mission headquarters at Szepingkai. To save the time of others - for our band was small - I simply gave myself to obeying the strict injunctions necessary to win the battle back to health. It seemed a selfish life. Often I became discouraged and wondered how I could bear to live on the foreign field without some definite ministry of my own.

Then the time came when we moved to Szepingkai, to the upper room over the chapel and Chinese quarters, which was to be our mission home. Too weak to ascend or descend the ladder-like steps leading to the court below, the future looked black for me.

Then (oh, praise the Lord!) He opened to me a ministry that later all united in declaring was second to none in importance!

Our little band had settled in Szepingkai but a short time when my husband was led to take the step of faith for Chinese evangelists and money for their support. This story has been told more fully in *Goforth of China*. The Lord so honored this step of faith that before many weeks passed it became evident to all that someone must give much time to the secretary-treasurership of the evangelistic funds now coming in ever increasing volume for the support of evangelists (before many months the number of evangelists had increased from six to sixty). As the number increased, in like proportion, gifts came for their support, absolutely unsolicited, chiefly from the United States.

All of our small band of only five missionaries except myself were almost overwhelmed with the responsibilities of the work. So it came about that the secretarial work was laid on me. From the first, I felt it to be a God-given ministry. The increasingly great correspondence it entailed, though at times almost too strenuous, was a great joy. My coworkers assured me it was as vital a part as any in the evangelization of our vast, needy field.

Most of the donations were quite small. Some were touching. Of the many hundreds of letters

and donations received, I may take space to mention but two.

A postal order for three shillings, from London, England, all accompanied only by a torn slip of paper on which was written in a shaking hand:

"From an old woman on an old age pension, to help make JESUS known."

The other I shall mention was from a little boy in Winnipeg. His mother wrote that one morning the boy came and emptied his money box in her lap saying, "Mother, I dreamed last night I was fighting with those terrible heathen bandits in Manchuria. I want you to send this to Dr. Goforth to help tell about JESUS." He then ran off to school. A moment later he appeared, saying: "Mother, don't delay, but send the money off at once. I don't want the Lord to tell me to do it the second time."

Some time later, I told this story to an audience in Boston. At the close of my address, the chairman rose and said: "Although we have taken up a collection, I'm going to give all who feel like that boy, that you don't want the Lord to tell you the second time, another opportunity to give." The collection taken, and later given us, was sufficient to support at least two evangelists in Manchuria for a year.

As I attempt to recall those years in Manchuria, there comes to mind time after time when the Lord undertook for us in cases of illness. Having no doctor or nurse in our mission, we could only look to our never failing Lord when sudden acute illness came.

One outstanding experience I shall endeavor to give somewhat fully, as it lifts the veil on conditions as we faced them at that time.

The city of Taonan, a most important center bordering on Mongolia, was reached from Szepingkai in about nine hours by express train. Our young colleague, Bro. Allan Reoch, had been left in charge of the work there during the summer of 1938. But it was thought best my husband should be with him for at least a few months, in laying the foundations of such an important center. On our return from a long mission journey to Indo-China, we moved from Szepingkai to Taonan.

Most alarming reports were rife of bubonic plague spreading rapidly along the railway westward towards Taonan. A few days after our arrival there, the report came of twenty-five deaths from plague having taken place in one small section of the city. Then the Japanese took charge of plague suppression and as a result, no doubt, multitudes of lives were saved, for the plague was stayed.

It is quite a personal story that now follows, perhaps some will say - too personal! I give it for the first and only time, believing it will be to the **"glory of His grace."**

The only room available for us in the Chinese mission home in Taonan was at the end of a row of rooms. It was in an isolated part of the court yard. Heavy rains had fallen during the summer. On the roof, immediately over the corner of our room, an eaves-trough had been emptying volumes of water all summer into a hole in the ground just below. Unknown to anyone, the water

had been seeping down under and into the earthen floor of our room. When we entered the room, the floor was so wet we were obliged to put on rubbers and when sitting to keep our feet on bricks. The mud wall close beside my bed was so damp and soft I could press my fingers, without effort, inches into the wall. My husband loosened the many-ply wall paper some three feet above the floor and, to our horror, found literally thousands of small gray "damp-bugs" scurrying for cover.

After reading this, it may not surprise anyone to hear the result. Within a week tonsillitis had laid me low. Then when still weak, but temperature normal, I again faced the conditions, but only for a day or two when lumbago and sciatica laid me low again. Two pretty hard weeks followed. Then inflammatory rheumatism of the joints started. By this time I had begun to realize the conditions under which we were living were impossible, at least for me. My husband seemed in no way affected. He was, however, greatly troubled about me. But what could he do! We had come to give the winter to the Taonan field.

Then, as often before, we were to see what GOD could do.

Realizing I needed to get to a dry, sunny place, I cried to the Lord with the cry of desperation to open a way to return to Szeping kai, for, though the place there was somewhat barn-like, it was high and dry and sunny.

A day or two later came a letter from the evangelists at Szeping kai, urging my husband's immediate return, as there was no one to take charge of the work there. After consultation with Mr. Reoch, it was decided we should leave for Szeping kai at once. I could see GOD's hand working.

But the most wonderful evidence of His divine power was yet to come. Reaching Szeping kai, the first day or two I kept going. Then what seemed like all the pent up virus of rheumatism centered in my hip. I became very ill with high fever and agonizing pain. A day passed. Then suddenly my heart seemed to be giving out. It would jolt and stop for so long I would open my eyes wondering that I was still alive. My husband was at his desk.

"Jonathan," I whispered, feel my pulse."

Immediately he felt the pulse and said: "Don't stir; I'll pray." His face was white, but as he prayed, my pulse began to steady. In a short time it seemed quite normal. The fever and pain had lessened. Two days later I was around as usual, with a song of joy and gratitude in my heart.

Why are we so prone to deny to the Lord credit for what is distinctly evident as the result of HIS working?

The following is, to me, one of the most blessed experiences of GOD's understanding and interest in me of my whole life.

From the time we moved to Szeping kai in April, 1927, until the autumn of 1933, our only bedroom was a screened off portion of a large room over the chapel. The rest of the room was used as study and sitting-room. It was the general rendezvous for all missionaries, where prayer-meetings and important interviews with Chinese leaders were held. Indeed it was, in winter, the

only safe place to keep perishable things, as vegetables, fruits, etc., from freezing (carefully packed under the bed!), as we had no storeroom.

The Chinese are gifted with at least an ordinary, (some say extraordinary) amount of curiosity and have a very dexterous and satisfying way of attaining vantage for sight through paper windows and screens. It is simple and silent. The middle finger of the right hand is moistened with saliva, then applied gently to the paper with a circular, rubbing movement which soon results in a tiny hole large enough for the pupil of the eye to take in what is on the other side of the paper screen. I found that even a Japanese screen is not entirely impervious to this plan.

Such conditions were not "ideal." Sometimes, I fear, I was hard to get along with; especially during the first year when I was fighting desperately but successfully to regain strength after the attack of sprue. I do not want to justify myself, however, for I know GOD's grace would have been sufficient to keep me calm and sweet always, but sometimes I just failed my Master. On the whole, those years were busy, happy years, though at times extremely testing.

Then, in April of 1933, my beloved husband became blind. One result was that Chinese evangelists and leaders were constantly coming to see him. Very often, for many hours together, the "sitting" part of our room was filled. I literally had no place for quiet when working at my desk, as I had to, many hours a day; nor, indeed, for a moment of assured privacy.

I began to get nervous. More and more the need for a bedroom to myself became an urgent necessity. Yet there seemed no possible way to get one. Oh, how I prayed; but no light came.

Then one night, when at an outstation with my husband, I could not sleep. I kept praying the Lord to open up some way for me to get a quiet private room. Suddenly, in the dark I saw before me a plan, clear and distinct, as if it were sketched on paper. To my amazement, this plan revealed that by taking down a wooden partition, changing one door and adding another, our room next to our sitting-room could be made into a fair-sized bedroom and the adjoining hall into a bathroom.

The following morning, when I told my husband, he was delighted. After a little thought, he said: "I think you can even have a storeroom by using part of the hall for that purpose!" No time was lost, on returning to Szepingkai, in carrying out the plan. In less than a month, we were settled in our comfortable suite consisting of sitting-room, bedroom, bathroom, and storeroom, at a cost of less than twelve dollars. Ingenuity was needed to find places here and there for trunks, etc. A place was found in the lower court for stoves, pipes, and such articles.

But, oh, the blessedness of at last having a room where one could lock the door and be alone! I know GOD gave the vision. Praise His name!

For just one year we were permitted to enjoy the luxury of that extra room. We thanked GOD many times for what we both felt to be our God-given refuge. Especially was this so during my husband's serious illness, and latterly at the time of my collapse, when we were both hurried back to Canada.

What can I write now other than has already been written of those eighteen strenuous months together holding meetings throughout eastern Canada till the morning when I awoke to find my

companion, friend, husband, and hero of almost fifty years had passed through the invisible but impenetrable Veil quietly, in his sleep.

Then followed the greatest miracle of my life the writing of his wonderful life, *Goforth of China*.

The time has come when visions of the past must fade as we turn toward the summit now almost in sight - so near a trace may be seen of the glory awaiting us when we reach the end of the road. NOT the foot of the hill, as some have said, for that would lead us back into the Valley of Shadows, but rather to the SUMMIT, from whence may be glimpsed the glorious light of the Celestial City.

As we think of these things, one more vision of the far past comes:

Once again I seem to be a little child facing my desk in the old schoolroom. The evening shadows have lengthened, and the ending of the day's work has come. The rustle of putting away books and pencils has ceased. All sit upright, quietly watching the master's hand poised above the bell ready to give the signal for the pupils to rise and return home.

So once again at the close of Life's little day, the pen must be laid aside as we await in quietness and in confidence the signal from the Master's hand to rise and GO HOME.

THE END