

Practicing the Presence

How to make our Heavenly Father real in the melee of everyday life

"Lives Transfigured by His Presence-7"

Desmond Ford

In Shanghai, upon arrival from England, Hudson Taylor had hard times. He had no money, he was homesick and lovesick, and his eyes gave him trouble. He had constant headaches, and his stomach was upset as he tried to live on the food of the local Chinese.

Hudson also decided to dress in the style of the local Chinese. He knew he had come to Christianize the people, not denationalize them.

Other missionaries did not appreciate his methods. They said, "This fellow's letting down the British Raj." The people in the commercial banks looked down on him. The young men jeered at him. The women whispered things behind the backs of their hands.

To begin with, Hudson Taylor was despised.

Hudson Taylor's method

He had practically no education. He had been unable to complete his medical training. He had no money, lacked good health, was lovesick and homesick, headachy, and suffered from constant stomach upset.

This is the man God was going to use to bless a quarter of the world in a way that no one else has ever blessed it.

During Hudson Taylor's life, this was his method. First, he prayed for five helpers; then for 18; then for 70; then 100; then for 500; and then for 1,000.

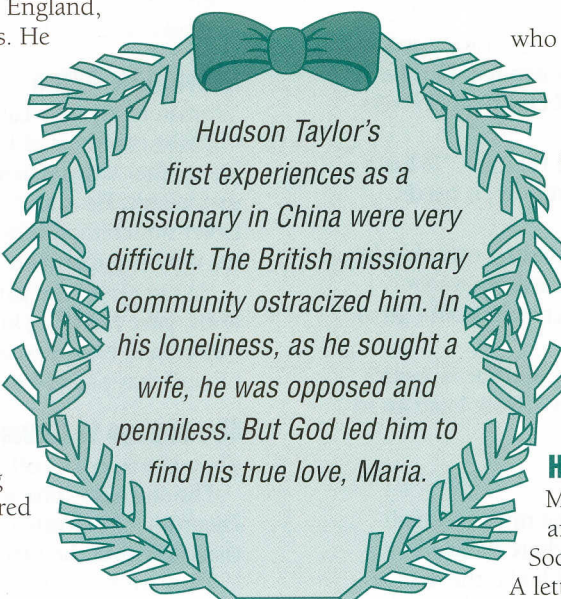
When he first went to China, there were 300 Chinese Christians. At his death, there were 100,000. Because of his work, which seeded the Christian church in China, the number of Christians in China today is over 50 million.

China's civil war

A letter from Miss Vaughan arrived telling Hudson their relationship was all over. But he received another letter from a Miss Elizabeth Sissons.

Hudson remembered Elizabeth. She had comforted him back home in England when things were not going too well with Miss Vaughan. Hudson, who could not live without love, wrote to Elizabeth, and asked for a lock of her hair.

In the next three months, Hudson visited 57 towns in China, 51 of them having never been entered before. The day he left England, the British and Foreign Bible Society had passed a resolution to print a million Chinese New Testaments. When the Society heard of this young missionary



Hudson Taylor's first experiences as a missionary in China were very difficult. The British missionary community ostracized him. In his loneliness, as he sought a wife, he was opposed and penniless. But God led him to find his true love, Maria.

who was visiting all these places, they said, "We will pay your travel expenses and provide you with New Testaments." During this time of great travel and activity for Hudson, China was suffering civil war. As he traveled through the cities, Hudson often heard shrieks and cries. He saw heads and pigtailed rebels attached to walls. He knew that the rebels hated foreigners so much that at any time he could be castrated, then beheaded. Occasionally, refugees cried out to him, "Honorable sir, protect me"—then he saw them beheaded.

Hudson robbed

Months dragged by, and still no help arrived from the Chinese Evangelization Society. Hudson became desperate.

A letter arrived from a man in England named Berger. The man had heard of Hudson's exploits. He sent enough money to keep Hudson's work afloat.

Then Hudson was robbed. He lost his medical instruments, his Bible, and most of his clothes. He wrote home, "I will not prosecute. That's not the Christian thing to do. And God will somehow restore to me all that is lost."

George Mueller heard about this and sent Hudson more than enough money to cover his expenses, and promised he would keep sending, which he did until the end of Hudson's life.

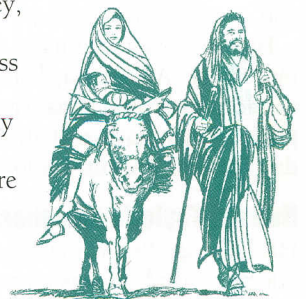
Hudson meets Maria

Hudson still had a heartsick desire for a companion. It is tough to be in a foreign land, to be despised and hated, and have no company.

In the city of Ling Po, he met a beautiful young girl named Maria.

Maria Dyer was an orphan. She and her sister had been left as orphans early in their lives, and she had gone out to China to be a teacher. However, Maria was under the authority of a rather fearsome ogre, Miss Aldersey, who bossed Maria around. (The Chinese nationals thought that Miss Aldersey was probably next to the king in England because of the way she bossed everybody around.)

One day all the missionaries were at the home of Miss Aldersey for a meal. Maria played and sang. Hudson felt an attraction that he



hadn't felt for either Miss Vaughan or Miss Elizabeth Sissons. This was different.

He wrote Maria a letter, "Please don't turn me down too quickly. Please pray about this. I would like to get to know you better."

Maria showed the letter to Miss Aldersey who said, "Well, you shouldn't think about having anything to do with that nobody."

But, of course, Maria did think she wanted to have something to do with that somebody. Miss Aldersey commanded, "Now, you take pen and we'll send him a letter." So the dragon dictated a letter to Hudson as though it were from Maria. Hudson was not stupid. He knew that the girl he met in Ling Po wasn't the girl who wrote the letter.

Hudson and Maria in love

One day there was a great storm in the city, and Hudson and a minister friend had been helping opium addicts. Returning home, they noticed that at the school where Maria was teaching there was a Chinese servant outside waiting for a rickshaw to come to take Maria home. Hudson said to his fellow worker, "Go in and ask if I can see her." So Brother Jones went into the school and said, "Mr. Taylor's outside. He'd like to have an interview with you, Miss Dyer."

Maria answered, "Of all things, that's what I would most desire."

Hudson had a minute's interview with Maria. On the basis of the handshake and the meeting, Hudson and Maria were persuaded that God had plans for them both together.

Opposition to love

But there was still the obstacle of the formidable Miss Aldersey.

She sent a fearful giant by the name of Russell (the future Bishop of China) to threaten Hudson. "Sir," declared Russell, "you should be horsewhipped. You are not a Christian, you are not even a man. However, if you were to go back to England and get your medical degree or be ordained, then we would extend to you the right hand of fellowship."

Maria heard about this. "If Hudson goes back home to prepare himself for further service," she said, "I'll wait for him. But if he's only doing it to get my hand, he's not worthy of me. I'll have nothing to do with him."

Hudson heard about this statement and said, "She's a wonderful girl. That's the girl for me."

Americans save the day

Often, Americans are not as conservative, narrow, or rigid as those of British background. This was true of an American missionary couple who lived on the edge of the Shanghai missionary community. They sent Maria a message, "Please come and visit us at 2:30 p.m." When she arrived, Hudson was there.

They spent six hours together. They talked, laughed, planned and kissed. Everything was quite moral but unusual for that age. By the time the six hours were over, Hudson and Maria were engaged.

Miss Aldersey was furious! There was a social explosion in the missionary community. There were two camps: those who were for the young couple and those who were opposed.

Difficult path of true love

Hudson was spending his life in service. He was feeding the poor and ministering to the sick.

An American missionary became very ill with smallpox. No one would care for him because they had children and didn't

want to risk exposing their families. So Hudson cared for the missionary—and caught smallpox.

Fortunately, he suffered only from a high fever, and did not die. He was recovering when a new Dutch missionary arrived. No one else would befriend him, so Hudson invited him to come live with him in his tiny living space.

The Dutch missionary told Hudson, "I've just proposed to a girl in Holland, and I've also proposed to a girl in Germany. I think Miss Dyer looks very nice. I'm going to propose to her."

Hudson asked, "What will happen if they all say 'yes'?"

Another missionary arrived, and Hudson learned that he, too, was courting Maria. Things are not always easy on the path of true love. This fact is always well-illustrated in biographies.

Party for Maria

Hudson Taylor was a man who believed that God could do anything.

Hudson had written to Maria's guardian in England, seeking permission to marry Maria. He had to wait four months for a reply because the mail took so long. Finally, permission arrived to take Maria as his bride.

But Hudson had nothing to offer Maria. Two weeks before their wedding date, Hudson and his fellow missionary roommate had a very ragged breakfast and acknowledged that there was no more food in the house and only one coin left in the household budget. And Maria was coming soon for a small party as a prelude to the marriage.

What should the two young men do? They were not expecting any mail with money in it from the home country. They agreed, "There's a big stove here. We might be able to sell it to the scrap metal merchants." But the yard was across the river, and it cost too much to cross on the ferry, so that was out of the question. Then they thought, "We have a clock in the house." Off they went to the clock shop. The owner said, "I'll take the clock and give you a good price if it runs well for a week." That was no good. They needed money immediately.

In desperation, they fell on their knees. A friend rushed in and cried, "Mail! Mail! Mail!"

There was unexpected mail from England. The enclosed money delivered them out of their financial problem.

Married at last

But by the time he married Maria two weeks later, Hudson was again penniless from feeding the poor. All he had to get married in was a cotton robe.

Before the wedding, Hudson told Maria, "Our life together will not be without stresses and strains. You are absolutely free to withdraw from your promise to me." Maria responded, "Have you forgotten that I was left an orphan in a far-off country? My God has cared for me all these years. Shall I not trust him now?"

The only minister who could perform the wedding was the man, Russell, who had previously been so hard on Hudson. Russell refused to help. He knew that only a certain government official had the right to complete the paperwork, and issue the marriage certificate. So Russell invited the official away on a shooting tour at the time set for the marriage.

Fortunately, the government official was smarter than Russell. He signed the necessary documents beforehand and asked an understudy to promise that he would take care of issuing them. A much younger missionary who wasn't afraid of Russell declared, "I'll do it."

And Hudson and Maria were finally married.

