

CLIMBING:
MEMORIES
of
A MISSIONARY'S WIFE
by
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CHAPTER TWELVE
BEAUTIFUL PEITAIHO

"He giveth us richly all things to enjoy"

TOWARD the close of the last century, a Tientsin missionary, when touring with his evangelist, discovered Peitaiho. Standing on high vantage ground, he marveled at the beauty, the grandeur of the scene before him - a vast, rolling valley with ranges of mountains to the north and west and the blue waters of the Pacific beating against five miles of coastline to the south, continuing on, at a sharp angle, three miles eastward to the point where the Great Wall of China meets the ocean.

As the missionary gazed upon the scene, there came to him the inspiration that later brought blessing and relief to multitudes: "What an ideal place for a health resort." Hastening to Tientsin, he called a meeting of the missionaries and told what he had found. The matter was taken up enthusiastically. Before 1900, with its wholesale destruction, came, cottages dotted the entire Peitaiho coast line. This was the beginning. In a few years Peitaiho came to be the greatest summer resort of the Far East.

In company with many other interior missionaries with children, my husband and I hailed with eagerness the opportunity of securing a place of refuge for the children from the great heat of Inland China, lasting through at least six weeks in mid-summer. Two of our children had died during the hottest season.

We were among the first to get a cottage. The site was on high ground facing the eastern shore. But it was scarcely completed when the Boxers destroyed every cottage in the Peitaiho region. Two years later the place was rebuilt, and for fifteen years our cottage was an untold blessing to us as a family, though my husband was rarely able to spend much time with us.

Here the children, who were being educated at the China Inland Mission Schools at Chefoo (just across the gulf), were able to spend their summer holidays with us.

Weather permitting, our dining table was placed on a wide, north verandah. Here, for six days in the week, I gave the mornings to sewing, with a small hand-machine, which always accompanied us from Changte. The children's school outfits had to be replenished. I felt it important to get as much sewing done as possible during the summer holidays so as to be free for women's work later. Thirty to forty garments made during the summer holidays were my usual quota.

Sitting on the verandah at my work, I faced one of the most beautiful world views. World travelers have told us it reminded them of the Bay of Naples. From the verandah, we had an unbroken view of both sunset and sunrise, the former dipping behind gorgeous ranges of mountains, the latter rising out of the ocean.

One experience I shall never forget. It had been a very hot night. I had risen about midnight and had lain on a hammock outside. Very early I awoke, thinking the whole place was on fire. When I looked about me, I saw the whole heavens, sea and land, ablaze with a strange, crimson glow. It was all beautiful, yet awesome. I ran into the house to arouse the family, but all continued their sleep except a young woman visitor.

As we came out together, the brilliant, crimson glow was beginning, on mountain and sea, to be touched with gold. The glory of the scene was such that we just sank on our knees, till gradually, as the sun began to herald itself, the glory passed. After that experience, I could understand a little the words: "**The glory of the Lord had filled the house of GOD**" (II Chronicles 5:14).

The following unexplainable incident took place at the time the Peitaiho railway station was situated well back, several miles from the coast line. Our cottage was six miles distant, and the intervening roads were - well, quite indescribable! They would have to be endured to be understood. Corduroy roads in the Canadian bush, sixty years ago, were comfortable in comparison. I know, for I experienced a ride on one once!

One summer I arrived at the Peitaiho station with several children. Our boxes of stores were in the freight shed, where I was taken to sign some papers. Taking off my long distance glasses to write, they were laid on a box and forgotten. They were not missed till late the following day. How I prayed the glasses might be kept safe! The next morning a messenger was dispatched to the station master, with the faint hope that they might have been found. A few hours later the messenger returned with the following extraordinary story:

When half way home from the station (the station master knew nothing of the glasses) he had met a friend. When he told of his failure to get my glasses, the man said: "I have them!" He then told how, the day before, as he walked along the cart road, he spied a pair of glasses almost hidden by a bush, that had evidently jolted off a cart. The glasses were brought to me unbroken - just slightly bent! Knowing the roughness with which Chinese coolies handle boxes, the keenness they have for anything foreign, the roughness of the roads, and the violent jolting of the springless carts, the way the glasses had been preserved and then held by the friend of our servant, all seemed wonderful. How could I help but believe GOD had again answered prayer?

It would be difficult indeed to tabulate the blessings of Peitaiho. The place came to be called "The Children's Paradise"; and many a missionary went up to Peitaiho broken in health, who, a few weeks later, was able to return to his station strengthened in body and spiritually refreshed

for further service. On one occasion, I reached Peitaiho so weak as to be unable to walk without assistance. Within two weeks I was roaming the hills and seashore and drinking in the truly life-giving breezes of that wonderful place.

The children's greatest treat was donkey riding. How they did enjoy making those donkeys go, with the boy owners flying after them! My husband was like a boy again when donkey cantering with the children. But not so the writer, who could scarcely get a donkey strong enough to hold her safely.

The following is an incident which, in more ways than one, made a lasting impression on me. There was to be a large picnic over on the Lotus Hills, four or five miles west of our home. As usual, when it came time for choosing donkeys, one after another of the donkey boys managed to elude my husband as he tried to secure a good, strong animal for me, for each "boy" sought a light load and I was - well, the heaviest in sight.

At last all were off but our two selves and two small donkeys. After considerable maneuvering and help, I succeeded in getting on my donkey's back and started off. When a few yards from the house, the brute suddenly stretched out his hind legs, which caused me to slide off gently to the ground standing! A second attempt was made. This time, when but a few feet from the house, the animal stopped short, dipped his head, and bent his knees to a kneeling position, which caused me to take a most undignified position on the ground, unhurt, except for my feelings. By this time I saw fire in my husband's eyes. He said, "Try the brute once more." I did, but though the donkey boy pulled and my husband pushed, the donkey refused to take a step. Then, as if suddenly awakening to a new stunt, he let his legs go from under him and rested his whole body on the ground. As soon as I had extricated myself from the animal my husband, and I looked at each other completely beaten. At last I said, "Let me try yours." Now, whether this second donkey, which had been a quiet witness of all that was going on, decided to behave itself, who knows? But the fact is it turned out to be as gentle and docile as a lamb.

All went well for some miles, my husband following behind on the very donkey that had refused me. The Lotus Hills were reached safely and we could see through the trees the rest of the party far up the hill. By this time, I had become elated at riding successfully so far. Just as we were coming to a small rivulet, I turned slightly and called to my husband, close behind, "Look, Jonathan; see how well I ride. I will soon be able to compete with the children. "

At that instant the donkey gave a sudden spring, and I found myself sitting in the middle of the stream! No more need be said except that my return journey that day was made in a more dignified mode of travel, by chair. From then on, except on rare occasions, I enjoyed donkey riding by proxy.

A deeper note should now be sounded!

One summer at our Women's Conference, made up entirely of women missionaries, married and single, a woman rose and said (as near as I can quote her words):

"We mothers have heard with mixed feelings of Mrs. Goforth's going with her husband on his country tours and of her taking her children with her. I should like to ask Mrs. Goforth a question, in the name of other mothers, as well as myself, who want to do GOD's will but we do

fear for our children. My question is: Have your children suffered as the result of such a life, for we hear five of your children have died?"

Rising, I replied: "I am most thankful for the opportunity to answer this question. The five children who have gone before all died before I began the touring life. Since I began that life, two children have been given us. Further, I have found the children happier and healthier than before. I have found it possible to give actually more time to them than before, for the time necessarily given to keeping up a foreign house may, when outside, be given to the children. I can truly say I know of no harm that has come to any during these eight or nine years of that life. Not one has contracted any infectious disease and, best of all, GOD has set His seal upon this plan of work by giving a harvest of souls everywhere we have gone."

One further little memory of that dear old Peitaiho home. I had been in poor health. The doctors told my husband they strongly advised my returning to Canada. In the meantime, I was to rest. So, making myself comfortable on a bed-hammock on the verandah, I called for a book; someone brought me Mary Slessor of Calabar, with the remark, "You can at least glance through it; you would not care to wade through it all."

I began at the beginning. Each page increased my sense of thrill at such a character! Such a life! Not a word could I miss. Never had I read anything that had so gripped my highest ideals. After two days, I came to the place where Mary Slessor, at fifty-four, in poor health, was urged to return to Scotland to the loving welcome awaiting her and to her well-earned rest. Oh, how my heart thrilled as I went on. For only a brief moment she hesitated, was it to be rest in Scotland or CALABAR! The decision was made, and at fifty-four, she turned her face toward the life that made her one of the greatest heroines the world has ever known.

I could go no farther just then. I, too, was fifty-four years of age and facing the order to return home. How dare I in face of what I had just read? Praise GOD, grace and strength came with the new vision, and I obeyed. How wonderfully the Lord sustained in the long, strenuous journeys that began less than a month later!

Little did we dream as we left our hill-top cottage that autumn it was to be a final farewell.

The nomadic life such as we were about to enter upon had its compensations, meeting as we did, from time to time, as briefly as ships that pass in the night, personalities that left upon us inspiring impressions that never faded. We came to hear first hand testimonies to the mighty power of GOD, which enriched our lives, strengthened our faith, and sent us on, better able to help others.

Our journeyings often led us through some of the most beautiful regions of China. One memory comes of the scenery we passed through when making a five-day journey by chair through Hunan and Kiangsi. These provinces lie side by side and are so joined by waterways and ranges of mountains and hills as to be separate chiefly in name. The population of the region is said to be about half that of the United States. For day's we passed through scenes of grandeur and rare beauty. Never had we seen such rich and varied coloring in nature. Much of the soil is a deep red and appears in great strips down the mountain-sides, giving the effect, from a distance, of vast flower gardens. Quite frequently beautiful combinations of trees were seen. The most striking of these was the heavy, wide-spreading, dark green, almost black, of the camphor tree, with tall,

stately, pines close by and between, the soft, feathery, pale green of the young bamboo trees. Then, lower down in the valley, was the emerald green of the rice fields, with here and there a patch of gold - the fields of mustard.

In our journeyings through this region, we were constantly reminded of the lines:

Where every prospect pleases
And only man is vile.

Frequently after traveling through scenes such as I have endeavored to picture, changing with every step of our rapid-pacing chair-bearers, a sudden, sharp turn of the road would bring us into a village street where uncovered cesspools abounded by the roadside, causing us to cover our faces and hold our breath in horror till again in GOD's unpolluted air.

~ end of chapter 12 ~
