



Hudson Taylor and Maria

John Pollock







HUDSON TAYLOR AND MARIA

A Match Made in Heaven



JOHN POLLOCK





In memory of

A. J. Broomhall and Leslie T. Lyall

Missionaries and writers in the Hudson Taylor mould

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AUTHOR'S NOTE



Those who would like to read about the remaining thirty-five years of Hudson Taylor's life – the great advances of the CIM; his second, very happy marriage to Jennie Faulding; his journeyings in many parts of the world, unselfishly promoting all China Missions, and deepening spiritual life; the further times of opposition, criticism, peril and pain; his reflections and meditations – are warmly recommended to study the late A. J. Broomhall's magisterial seven volume life, *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century* (Hodder and Stoughton/Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1981-90) which includes full use of the Hudson Taylor Papers. Those are now deposited in the archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, and may be consulted on prior application to Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Station Approach, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN15 8BG.

Hudson Taylor died suddenly at Changsha in the heart of China on June 3rd 1905, at the age of seventy-three.



PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

Hudson Taylor's greatness has become yet more widely recognized. Thus, the *Dictionary of National Biography* volume which covered the year of his death in 1905 (published 1912) ignored him; he now has an honoured place in the DNB's *Missing Persons* volume published 1993.

But it is the extraordinary growth of the Christian Church in China which has fully secured his place in history. This book was first published at a time when missionaries had been forced to withdraw, China was a closed land and the persecution of religion was about to enter a most violent phase with the Cultural Revolution. Years later, westerners were again allowed to travel in China. They found that the number of Christians had grown beyond measure despite the persecution, and despite continued discrimination by the Communist state.

More than any other man, under God, Hudson Taylor laid the foundation of this dramatic expansion of Christianity.

John Pollock
Rose Ash, Devonshire
May 1996

Chinese names: for the general reader's convenience, I have retained the familiar 'postal use' and not changed to the recently introduced *pin-yin* system of spelling.





PROLOGUE

This book is a tale of courage and adventure in old Imperial China, that lost world of pigtailed mandarins and dragon-roofed temples. It is the story of a Yorkshire lad of obscure origin, indifferent education and miserable health who dared the seemingly impossible in the teeth of opposition, western and oriental.

More, it is the epic of the love of Hudson Taylor and Maria Dyer – their discovery of each other when it was almost too late, the astonishing attempt of others to stifle and smash their love; and then the flowering of marriage at its highest and best.

Had the love of Hudson and Maria grown in on itself to become selfish, muting rather than deepening devotion to God, it would not be worth more than passing description; at best it could be an interlude, a handicap to an otherwise commendable record of service. Or if, again, they had been cold-blooded, formal figures, their marriage a mere alliance of like minds; or had the original manuscript letters and journals not survived to reveal Hudson and Maria at last as they really were, this book had been best left unwritten.

James Hudson Taylor founded the China Inland Mission. He founded it in circumstances of extreme difficulty for a purpose which most of his contemporaries considered mad. At the time of his death forty years later, in 1905, his interdenominational Mission numbered eight hundred and twenty-five members and associates, British, American and Continental. Having been the pioneers of the Protestant Church in the interior of China they were now the shock troops, sometimes establishing permanent centres, often



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leaving other societies to reap the harvest. 'Always on the move,' a Consular official had written, 'the missionaries of this society have travelled throughout the country, taking hardship and privation as the natural incidents of their profession, never attempting to force themselves anywhere, they have made friends everywhere'.

By 1935, shortly before the start of the Sino-Japanese War, the CIM had a roll of 1,368 western missionaries. It withdrew from China, as did all societies, after the triumph of Communism in 1949 forced the Chinese Church to repudiate contacts with the West, and since 1951 (now known as the CIM Overseas Missionary Fellowship) has operated widely in Japan and many countries of south-east Asia among Chinese and non-Chinese.

The China Inland Mission has had an influence far beyond its immediate spheres of operation. This influence has stemmed partly from a high standard of leadership and the qualities demanded of those who serve; partly from its literature; but largely because it has always sought, in financial affairs as much as in activities, to depend on that element of simple faith in God which is foreign to so much of this modern age but is a sure foundation of all lasting Christian endeavour.

These characteristics derive directly from the adventures and principles of Hudson Taylor himself. To most missions a founder is nothing but a name and, perhaps, a bewhiskered photograph on the office wall. The spirit and personality of Taylor permeate the CIM/OMF still. Through all the changes and developments of an up-to-date, go-ahead Mission they have not lost what he gave them.

And Hudson Taylor would never have been what he was, done what he did, without Maria. Thus, although the story which is unfolded here provides an exciting slice of missionary biography, it has a wider, undying appeal as a proof of the wonder and power of Christian love.

Hudson Taylor influenced millions. His fame still commands wide respect in Europe, America and Asia; he is of that select company who belong to all mankind. Notwithstanding, his stature is recognized only by the discerning. This is curious, for the two-

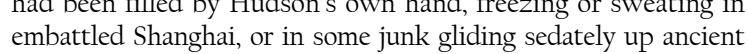


PROLOGUE

volume official *Life* remains a spiritual classic, to be placed on the same shelf as *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Hudson Taylor, by Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor, his son and daughter-in-law, has run through many editions, and is still in print on both sides of the Atlantic and in translations. It is very long, over eleven hundred pages in the literary style of the late nineteenth century, but has a timeless, intrinsic quality. In certain respects it is one of the world's decisive books. Yet a sizeable section of the general public has never heard of the man.

The pity of that came home to me when I began to read the original manuscript letters, journals and papers on which the great two volumes and, through them, all the lesser derivative books, are based. By the very real kindness of the China Inland Mission, and particularly of Mr Norman Baker, Editorial Secretary in London, I was given access to all this material, the first writer allowed to use it since the official biographies.



As I deciphered the close-written pages of thin paper which had been filled by Hudson's own hand, freezing or sweating in embattled Shanghai, or in some junk gliding sedately up ancient willow-lined canals, the rather prim, spiritually precocious youth of the *Life* became a warm, affectionate, sensitive personality. The 'revered father-figure' dissolved into a most lovable young man with a strong sense of fun. The drama of his fight to enter forbidden inland China, risking torture and death, sprang to life when separated from gobbets of meditation and reflection.

Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor collaborated in rather an unusual manner. After researching together, Howard drew up a factual 'gist of the narrative'; his wife Geraldine then moulded this into the text that was printed, and the book in its final form is impregnated with her personality. Unfortunately, in addition to expunging or at least severely censoring her father-in-law's sense of humour she suppressed one complete love affair and half of another, and incidents which to her generation might have seemed derogatory or too private. She was guided by advice typically Victorian from Taylor's successor, D. E. Hoste, which runs against the spirit of modern biography: 'If you begin too much letting the public in behind the scenes you shake confidence'.



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At an important phase she was shackled by respect for the feelings of some who had certainly not spared those of Hudson Taylor: George Moule was alive when the first volume of the *Life* appeared in 1911, and Lewis Nicol was probably still living when the second came out in 1918.

Geraldine Taylor had a Victorian notion of one responsibility of a biographer. The two volumes are notable for copious extracts from Hudson Taylor's letters, set in smaller type between inverted commas. I used to wonder how that young man managed such formal English in his home letters. Now I know. She had pruned and polished him to conform to her own standards of delicacy and elegance. No one would scold her for correcting early spelling and grammar, but she did it right through, sometimes withholding facts.

None of this detracts from her book's weight as a classic. But it does mean that Hudson and Maria come alive in a new way when their adventures together are presented afresh from the original materials.

