

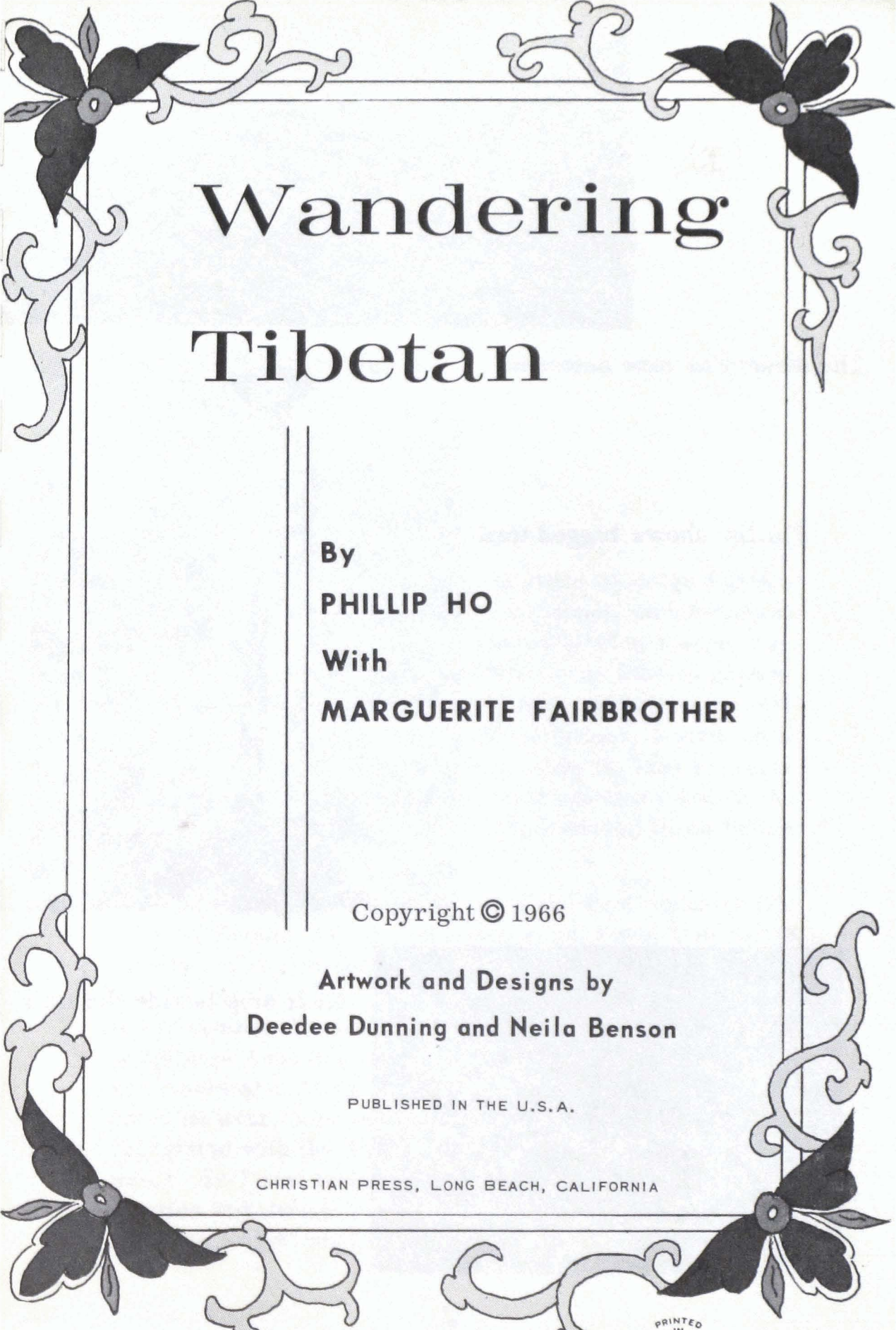
Wandering
Tibetan

By

PHILLIP HO

With

MARGUERITE FAIRBROTHER



Wandering Tibetan

By

PHILLIP HO

With

MARGUERITE FAIRBROTHER

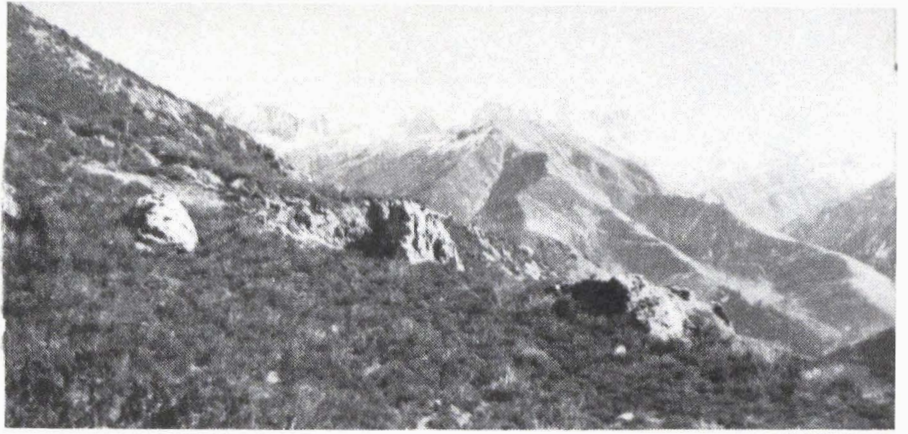
Copyright © 1966

Artwork and Designs by
Deedee Dunning and Neila Benson

PUBLISHED IN THE U.S.A.

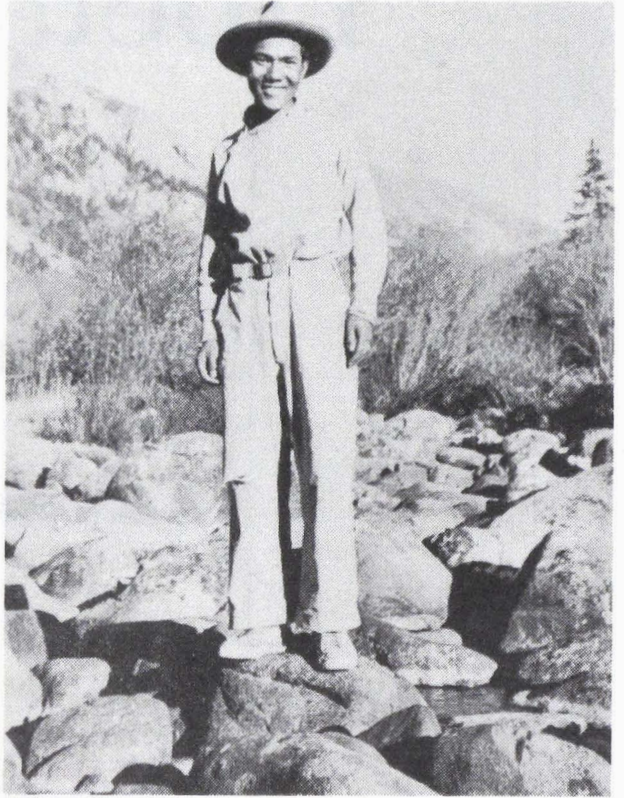
CHRISTIAN PRESS, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

PRINTED
IN
U.S.A.



The mountains rose before us

Phillip shows rugged trail



Rest stop beside the trail

Preface

I was born in Batang, a little place in Eastern Tibet. Due to the fact that Tibet is a small, isolated country, Batang, situated on the Chinese-Tibetan border, was not completely under either the Chinese or Tibetan government. I was born into a very poor family, and for many years we suffered starvation and family illnesses. I grew up a witness to the trouble in Tibet caused by its lack of stable government. People became very wild and there were many bandits – my family was robbed about eleven times before I was born.

I can vaguely remember when the first white people came to Batang and settled close to my home. Due to our poverty, my mother used to climb the high mountain and collect ice for the American family to use in making ice cream in the summer. I can still remember how my mother used to bring home American food from these people. Occasionally, she would also bring home old clothes for me; I was very proud to wear those clothes! When I was big enough, I got acquainted with the American children and we became playmates. As I saw their way of life, I began to dream about America and thought it must be a wonderful country – never dreaming I might really come to America!

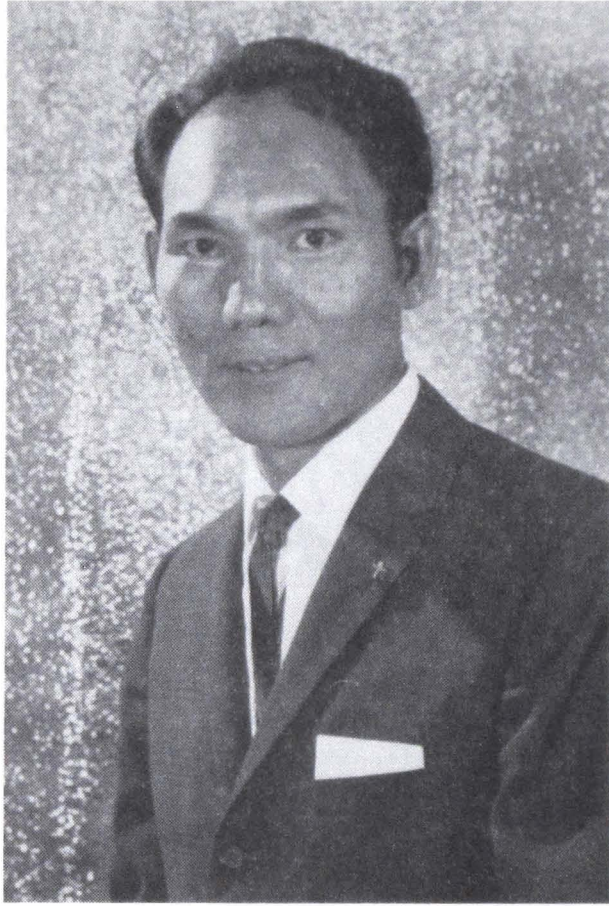
In the 1940's I attended church with the American children because I liked to sing and enjoyed the hymns. Later I was interested in going to church whenever I had the chance.

After I had received as much education as I could in Batang, I had the opportunity to go to China to school for three years. While there I occasionally attended church at the China Inland Mission. In all I attended schools in China three different times for a total of almost six years. I became a Christian while home in Tibet between two of my stays in China.

In 1950 the Communist had completely taken over China and had advanced to the border of Tibet. The pre-Communist party in Tibet had begun persecuting Christians, putting the missionaries in great danger. I was able to help one of the mission families escape from the Communists, and thus began our six month journey over the highest mountains in the world. Our permissions from the Tibetan government to travel this shorter route into India was very unusual, as white people were generally not permitted to travel in this country.

On July 24, 1950, we arrived in Sadyia, India. With much difficulty I was able to stay in India, learn my fourth and fifth languages, and try to make myself useful and earn my living.

I was happy when, in 1952, the Archie Fairbrothers came to Assam as missionaries. Marguerite Fairbrother had been my childhood playmate in Tibet when her father, Dr. Norton Bare, served on that mission field. This book is an outgrowth of that fact; since Mrs. Fairbrother had lived in Tibet and knew the customs, she could work with me with understanding and write my story. This present edition is only the first part, telling of my childhood and education. The second and third parts, to be published later, tell of the terrible trip out of Tibet into India, and of my life in India and journey to America – the country I had so long dreamed of.





Tibetan Prayer Wheel—

Prayers are written on slips of paper and placed inside, so that the spinning wheel "says" all the prayers each time around

Chapter I

The willows showed a lacy green in the morning sunlight, but patches of snow remained in sheltered spots and hollows. Ko-Ko and I were out looking for dandelions, nettles, and pig-weed greens.

“Let’s go down along the river, Bao,” Ko-Ko suggested. “Maybe we’ll find enough so we won’t have to pick so long. Then we can play.”

I was carrying the basket because Ko-Ko could pull the greens faster than I. It was my job to watch out for our friends.

“Oh look! Here’s a big patch of nettles young enough not to prickle if I grab them right!”

Quickly and deftly he pulled, and I held the basket right before him so that he could drop them at once. Our attention became so concentrated on the job that we didn’t see Shao-ku and Ngu-tsee come around the boulder between us and the river. Our first intimation that we had company was shrill, jeering laughter and the familiar chant, “The Hos are eating pig-feed! The Hos are eating pig-feed!”

Ko-Ko jumped right over the handful of nettles he had just pulled, and rammed it right into Ngu-tsee’s astounded face. Then he started after Shao-ku. Both boys fled yelling for help, but as soon as they had retreated a safe distance, the hateful chant began again. A meeting with them under any other circumstance would have been the beginning of hours of happy play, but now, our whole day was ruined.

I hollered, “Of course we’re picking pig-feed. How else can we fatten our pig for the feast?”

Shao-ku yelled back, “What pig? What pig? We know you don’t have a pig!”

Ngu-tsee added, "How can you feed a pig when you don't even have food for yourself?" And the hateful chant continued.

I picked up a stone to throw at them, but Ko-ko grabbed my wrist. "Forget it, Bao, let's fill our basket and go home. Nettle soup the way Grandma makes it sounds awfully good."

"They're probably going home to rice and *dofu* (bean curds) fried with pork!" I sniffled angrily. Turning my back to hide the tears of frustration, I added bitterly, "We haven't had anything since we finished our New Year's cakes yesterday morning. Why can't Father have a shop in town like Shao-ku's father, or make shoes, or be a carpenter? Then we could eat everyday!"

A sharp kick in the seat of my pants was Ko-ko's angry reply.

"Get that basket back here where I can reach it, stupid! Now look what you've made me do."

Red welts were rising on the back of his hand where the nettles had stung him when he tried to reach the basket.

Penitently I dropped the basket at his feet and ran in search of a piece of granite and one of limestone. Rubbing them together as I ran back, I smoothed the powder on the nettle welts, and we returned sullenly to our picking. The thought of having something to eat, even though it was only 'pig-feed' spurred us on. I kept hoping we had a little salt left. No matter how hungry you are, unsalted nettle greens are almost too bitter to eat.

Then I began thinking of Father again, and I guess Ko-ko was too, because after awhile he said, "Maybe Father will bring home some big fish this time and get enough money to buy some pork. We could go to the mill and ask for sweepings and Mother could make some *mien-pansa* for supper!" The thought brightened my whole outlook, and Ko-ko and I chattered merrily as we went home with our basketful of greens.

Father hadn't come yet, but Mother said it was still too early in the day to look for him. She was sitting by the fire, knitting, too great with child, now, to do much of anything else.

Dee-dee was crawling around on the floor, and he chortled with glee when Ko-ko picked him up.

"Here," Grandmother ordered, holding out the small wooden barrel for carrying water, "put the baby down. He was playing all right before you came. That's a fine mess of greens, but I have to have water to wash and cook them. Hurry!"

Ko-ko set the baby down and put the barrel strap over his head. Grabbing the copper dipper he ran out and down the path toward the river. I was going to follow him, but Dee-dee's screaming and Mother's complaining that he would have to upset the baby, stopped me. I reached into my pocket and pulled out the red yarn I'd found tangled in the bushes that morning. As I dangled it back and forth in front of him, he stopped crying and started reaching for it.

Grandmother had taken a piece of smoked tallow down from over the fireplace. She began cutting it up into small pieces.

"Do we have salt, Grandma?" I asked, hopefully.

"Yes, Bao, we got lots of salt as New Year gifts this year, and it will last awhile if you'll keep out of it."

I grinned guiltily. Grandmother always knew when I got into mischief, but she never slapped me for it as she did Ko-ko or our older brother. When she got into one of her scolding moods and had the whole family quivering under her sharp tongue, she rarely included me. Her voice always seemed to put the real meaning ("precious") into my name. But best of all were the long evenings when she told stories to us as we sat around the fire.

My reveries were interrupted by the return of Ko-ko with the water.

Dee-dee squealed with delight and started crawling off to him, dragging my yarn along.

Ko-ko poured the water into the larger barrel and turned to go for more. Grandmother stopped him.

"No, that's enough for now. Tie the baby on your back and go out with Bao to gather wood."

I had gotten back my yarn from Dee-dee. I might need it to go fishing sometime. Carefully winding it up, I put it in my pocket and followed Ko-ko out. Dee-dee was bouncing with glee at getting to go out, and squinting in the bright sunlight.

By the time we had each gathered an armload of driftwood and small branches, we were sure the soup must be about ready.

Dee-dee started howling when we went back into the house, but Mother was blowing and cooling a bowl of soup for him and soon had him quieted.

We threw down our wood and scrambled for the biggest bowl of soup. As we ate, I began complaining again of having no bread to eat with our soup.

"Why do we have to be so poor? Why can't Father have a job in town so we can buy food?"

"We're poorer than the beggars in town," Ko-ko put in. "At least they get *tsamba* and tea, and some people even give them meat."

"All we have is 'pig feed'," I sniffed, tears of mortification brimming in my eyes at the recollections of the taunts of our friends. "It's because Father is lazy. Everyone says so!"

A stinging slap almost over-balanced me.

"Ill-omened child!" My mother's eyes flashed. "Dare you speak so disrespectfully of your father?"

Rubbing my burning cheek I turned to Grandmother for sympathy, but she had the quizzical look of someone watching a play and wondering what the outcome will be.

“You know he has the fields to tend. How can he have a job in town, too?”

It was on the tip of my tongue to point out that everyone else in the valley had already planted their wheat or barley while our fields still lay fallow. My throbbing cheek kept me quiet, but it didn't still the bitterness welling up in my heart.

“When I grow up,” I thought, “I'm going to be the richest man in Batang.”

But Mother hadn't finished yet. “Who says he's lazy? What business have you going about listening to town gossips? He gets the fields planted when he isn't fishing. At least times he gets a good price for his fish, and we eat well then.

You don't even know yet what it is to suffer from hunger,” she continued, “but being a child of ill-omen you'll doubtless learn soon enough. I wonder you've lived this long!”

Grandmother had refilled my bowl, but it sat there untouched, as I listened, amazed, to Mother's tirade.

“If you think we're so poor now, you should have seen us when you were born! That was a terrible winter. Every time we got a little ahead we were robbed.”

Grandmother interrupted, “It was your own fault for living outside of town.”

Mother shot her an angry glance, but went on as though uninterrupted. “Eleven times in that one winter! I'll never forget the last time.

Father had come home with an unusually good catch of fish just in time to sell them for the New Year feasts. With some of the money I bought some new cloth, nice and

soft, one piece for wrapping, and with the rest I made two little shirts.

Then we bought some New Year treats for ourselves and for exchange gifts for our friends. It was the best we had ever done." Her tone had softened.

"For once, it was with pride I sent the gifts to our friends. And we, in turn, received better than usual.

It turned suddenly colder, and we went to bed earlier that night. The blaze of torches and rough voices aroused me. We were rudely rolled out of bed as our bedding was snatched right from around us.

I grabbed Ko-ko in my arms and Da-ko by the hand (He was too terrified to make a sound) and dragged them to the farthest corner, shouting to your father to save the baby clothes.

They beat him about the head and shoulders and threw him into the corner with your brothers and me. This time they even took our cooking kettle and wooden bowls. We were lucky to be left with our clothes on, I guess. There was nothing else left—not even a pot for heating water.

Groaning, your father fanned the coals in the fireplace into a small fire. There we huddled until dawn. Ko-ko had cried himself to sleep. Da-ko sat silently leaning against me, his eyes still wide with fright.

Suddenly I knew my time had come. I quickly gave Ko-ko to your father and went to our empty bed to suffer the birth pangs.

For all we had suffered while I carried you, you came with a hearty cry. Another man-child. My fourth; and I had not a rag, even, in which to wrap you. Not even a rag!"

Mother's voice faded out. The tense silence created by her story was shattered by Dee-dee. He tipped his bowl of soup into the fire.

I knew the story-telling was over for the day, but one thought kept bothering me. Mother said I was her fourth son.

Vague recollections began coming to me of references to a first child who had died in infancy. I wished to know more about our oldest brother, but one glance at Mother's face told me she would not welcome questions now. The past had been thrust from her to cope with present problems. Maybe I could get Grandmother to tell me sometime.

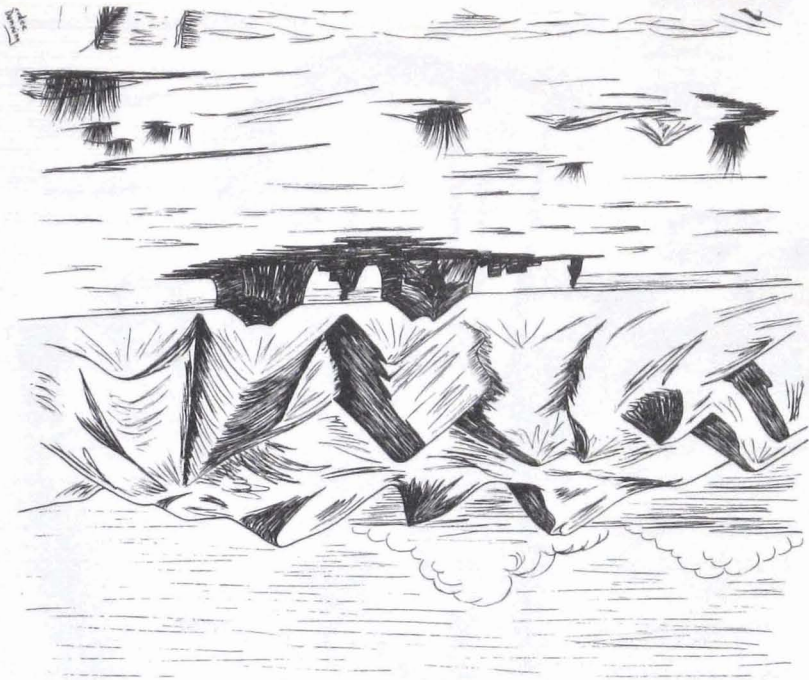
Ko-ko and I wandered outside where the lovely spring sunshine called to us.

"Let's go down where the rivers meet and watch for Father," Ko-ko suggested. "Maybe he'll be coming with a good catch today." (We could always hope for the best.) But Father didn't come.

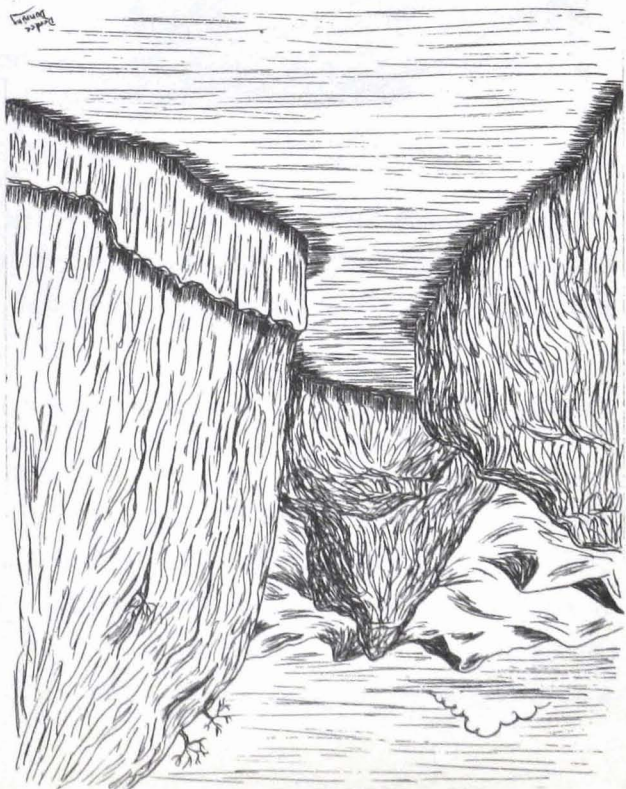


Tibetan woman working in her kitchen

Nomad camp in the high mountains



We fished in the Yangtze – along precarious trail



Chapter II

One evening after our *tsamba* and tea, Grandmother started telling stories. Mother was very tired (we'd worked in the fields all day because Father finally got around to planting, so we all had to pitch in and help), and she had already gone to sleep with Dee-dee.

This was my opportunity. "Grandmother," I asked. "What happened to our oldest brother?"

"It is good, Bao, that you ask while your mother is asleep. The recollection grieves her deeply, for it was a direct blow from the gods.

"He was a fine, fat boy; a beautiful child, her first born; but she put off making any offering for him until she could bring him back home to Bamding.

"Since you have never yet been there, you cannot appreciate the austere heights of our town, and the barren, windswept plateau where we lived.

"Our mountain rises to a modified peak behind the town and on the peak is a *chorten* and a *mani* pile.

"On a bright morning your mother with the baby on her back, and her younger sister carrying a votive offering, started up the *chorten*. There they went through the ceremony of presenting the baby to the mountain god. Your mother then handed the baby to her sister and proceeded to

light the incense at the shrine and to properly arrange the offering.

Suddenly the sky darkened, and before your mother could turn from the shrine, swirling snowflakes had shut her sister and the baby from sight. The roaring of the wind which had brought the snow drowned out their cries for one another.

As suddenly as the storm had come it blew itself out. There sat my daughters, just a few yards apart, completely swathed in snow. They rose and staggered to each other, their limbs numb with the cold.

‘My baby! How’s my baby?’ gasped your mother.

He was frozen dead with a dreamy smile on his tiny round face.”

Ko-ko and I crept quietly off to bed, leaving Grandmother gazing into the flickering fire, a far-away look on her face.

The summer passed rapidly. We had harvested our corn, and with careful use it *might* last through the winter. Mother had managed to get some barley from relatives in Baming for a much lower price than we could buy it in town. The prospects for the winter looked good, for once.

Our new baby sister was learning to smile and Ko-ko and I often vied for the privilege of carrying her on our backs. Dee-dee was running all over now, getting into everything, and having tantrums if Mother went anywhere without him. Da-ko still spent most of his time fishing with Father. How I longed for the time when I would be old enough to go with them!

One morning when Mother was taking Ko-ko to the tailor to have some pants made, she left Grandmother and me in charge of Dee-dee and the baby.

Dee-dee threw himself on the floor and began kicking and screaming. I was angry because I couldn’t go along, but

having to stay with this howling brat was too much. I hauled off and slapped him full in the face. He stopped for one startled moment, only to double his volume.

Grandmother jerked me back by the elbow. "Bao!" she exclaimed reproachfully. "Your own little brother, and he no more than a baby!"

"He doesn't have to scream like that." I had to shout my reply to be heard above his wails.

Gently pulling my head toward her, Grandmother said, "Feel the back of your head, Bao."

Suspecting that a story was forthcoming, I quickly complied.

Dee-dee, realizing he was no longer the center of attention, came crawling over to us, and sniffingly laid his head in my lap.

Remorsefully, I patted his cheek where my finger prints still showed red. With my other hand I was still exploring the odd bumps and knobs on the back of my head.

"If you think Dee-dee is so bad when your mother leaves, consider yourself."

"I don't understand, Grandmother," I said, still feeling the back of my head. It didn't hurt.

"When you were Dee-dee's age, you not only kicked and screamed, you beat the back of your head on the floor. Those lumps are a lasting testimony of your temper."

I felt them again in amazement.

"Dee-dee is very good compared to you," Granny smiled.

Dee-dee pulled his fingers out of his mouth and turned to grin at her. Then he looked up at me, and when I smiled he started sucking his fingers again, lying on the floor with his head in my lap.

Again I felt my head, scowling in the attempt to understand. "You mean I bumped my own head so hard it left bumps like this?"

"Yes, Bao. It almost seemed like you wished to kill yourself in your anger at your mother for leaving you."

"Did it make sores that bled?"

"Some became running sores that would not heal for weeks. Sometimes you would cry the whole time your mother was gone."

"Dee-dee is good, isn't he?" I murmured, as a sobbing sigh shook him. "Oh, look! He's asleep."

Grandmother slowly rose to her feet with the sleeping baby tied to her back. She gently lifted Dee-dee and carried him across to the bed in the corner of the room. It was built up just enough above floor level so that we wouldn't make the mistake of walking on anyone sleeping there during the day.

The baby made a few little crying noises, but Grandmother swayed and jiggled, clucking and crooning to still her.

"Now, Bao, you run out and pick up some sticks. I'll stir up the fire, and we'll have a bowl of tea while the house is quiet."

I dashed out eagerly. I knew a bowl of tea with Grandmother meant a story. Would she tell about when she was little? Maybe she'd tell about Mother. She knew many stories and legends about our religion and our customs, and how they began. Maybe she would tell some of them.

As I gathered twigs and small branches, a sudden blast of cold wind made me shiver. I realized Ko-ko and I would soon have to be gathering all the drift wood we could find along the river banks for our winter supply of fuel.

I hurried home puffing with my small load. Grandmother knelt by the fireplace and soon had a handful of my twigs blazing and added a few sticks. Then she set the

black clay teapot on the fire. We sat together in silence, watching the flames and listening for the teapot to start singing. Sometimes it sounded just like a Chinese funeral.

As soon as it started singing, I jumped up and grabbed our wooden bowls from a shelf in the corner, automatically blowing them as Mother and Granny always did.

Granny poured mine first and handed it carefully to me. Yummmmm! That warm, buttery smell. There's nothing like it in all the world!

Grandmother set her bowl on the palm of her left hand and watched the steam curling slowly up and disappearing in little swirls.

"That's our lives, Bao," she said softly. "Our lives starting up from warm mother earth—and vanishing into nothing."

Her very tones gave me a sense of mystery and awe. I leaned a little closer to her, hoping desperately that nothing would break the spell she was beginning to weave.

"Bao, you will live to see many strange things. Things I cannot even dream. The world will change greatly during your life and you will be in the heart of some of those changes."

Again she gazed silently into the steam. I was afraid to sip my tea lest my action break the spell. Slowly she blew the butter in her bowl to the far edge and took a sip. Half fearfully I followed her example.

"In our religion, Bao, kindness to every creature, no matter what station in life, is our guide. Always remember, wherever you go, whatever you do: Be Kind. You will not always find kindness; nevertheless, let kindness rule your life."

'Why is Granny saying these things to me?' I wondered. I thought she was going to tell me some stories, but instead she says things hard to understand but good to listen to.

She saw the question in my eyes and laughed. Refilling our bowls with hot tea, she said, "Let me tell you about my pilgrimage to *Khawa-kabo*" (the mountain of Silver Snow).

Our older brother who had spent the summer fishing with Father was back home now, for the winter had turned suddenly severely cold.

That winter there was a typhoid epidemic. People were dying every day. Grandfather was the first to go from our family. He wasn't sick very long. I wasn't yet accustomed to the thought that he was dead, when one of my cousins came running with the news that his mother, our aunt, had died.

The very next day Ko-ko was sick. He lay on a pallet by the fire and moaned and tossed. Dee-dee and the baby were fussy and feverish, too, so Mother was kept busy with them.

Grandmother, with a white cloth tied around her head to show her mourning for my aunt, was busy day and night, preparing meals, soothing the fevered limbs of the sick ones. Da-ko and I carried so much water. We had to break the ice to get it. I was glad Ko-ko and I had gathered so much wood in the fall, but we were using it up fast.

It was late afternoon two days later when Ko-ko died. I was aware that he had stopped moaning, but I didn't realize he was dead until Mother covered her face with a cloth and began wailing for her son. Granny and the little ones joined in the wailing. Father picked up his body gently. We had nothing in which to wrap him, not even an old gunny sack as other poor families use. Da-ko and I followed Father out of the house and down to the river.

Not until I saw my father poised to throw Ko-ko into the river did I find my voice. "No! No!" I screamed, "Don't throw him in that cold water."

He landed with a splash out in the main current, but the river was too low to carry him far. I ran down stream,

following the body and screaming and crying for Ko-ko. Then his clothing caught on a snag midstream. I wanted to wade out into the water and bring him back. My father and brother had to drag me away from there forcibly.

Every day for twelve days I went down to the river to see Ko-ko bobbing up and down in the shallow water, and I spent hours each day just sitting there and remembering the things we used to do together. Even now, in troubled dreams, I still see his body bobbing up and down in the river where we had spent so many happy hours during our early years together.

The following spring I started to primary school. Most of the other children went home for their midday meal. However, I knew most of the time that there would be nothing to eat at my home, so ordinarily I stayed at school and took a nap. Sometimes I walked home just to be doing something. Once in awhile I would visit one of my relatives in hopes of getting a bowl of soup or some leftovers; but they too, were poor, and often my visits were as fruitless as it would have been to go home.

When our baby sister had learned to walk, we had another baby brother. He was fat and healthy, and somehow I felt like he had come to comfort us for the loss of Ko-ko.

That year we had another good crop of corn and our prospects were again looking up. When the baby was five months old, our entire family went out for the corn harvest. When the corn is ripening, a straw house is built in the field for shelter for those who guard the corn. Sometimes my father stayed out there, and sometimes my brother and I took a turn guarding the corn.

When we went to harvest our crop, we took our meals in the little straw hut. In the afternoon the baby took his nap in the shelter.

After the noon meal, we covered the fire with ashes and went back to work picking corn. I was working nearest

to the shelter when I heard the baby crying and went to see what was the trouble. The shelter had caught on fire!

Yelling at the top of my voice for my parents, I dashed right into the flames to try to save the baby. The fire was too hot and I staggered back only to try again from another side. I burned my face, hands and feet, but the baby's agonized screams drew me again into the flames. I couldn't reach him. By the time the rest of the family came, it was too late. Just as Ko-ko's body in the river haunts me in dreams, so do my baby brother's screams as he burned up that summer day in our cornfield.

Now only three of us boys were left, Gway-sen, Tsai, and I—and our little sister. Gway-sen was getting old enough to get work to help support us, and I began taking his place with our father.

Vacations came in the winter and mine were spent fishing with my father in the Yangtze River. It was a long fifteen mile walk in the cold weather, and we dared not take extra clothing for fear of robbery.

My father had a small fish basket for me to use in carrying the fish back to town to sell, and it was my job to run back to town with the fish before sunup so they would be fresh on the market.

Before I was old enough to go along on the fishing trips, my father had discovered a large cave near the river. This was always used for our shelter. We spent our days watching the poles and carrying wood to heat our cave in the long, cold nights. There was no vent for the smoke, and the wind prevented it from escaping through the entrance. However, the warmth from the fire was necessary, so the smoke had to be tolerated.

Worse than the smoke, in my estimation, was the nightly hooting of the owls, which were, in my imagination, the moans and cries of the dead who had been buried in the river.

The mouth of our cave overlooked the river, and the rocky trail to our fish lines followed the river for half a mile. One false step anywhere along the trail meant instant death in the roaring river below. The lines had to be checked twice nightly; once late in the evening, and again before dawn.

One night stands out vividly in my memory. I had groped my way step by step along the face of the cliff to our fishing poles. Having checked them all, I was just turning to grope my way back to our smokey cave. Nearby an owl hooted; almost at my feet an otter squeaked in reply, chilling my bones to the marrow. In my terror I ran all the way back to the cave over a trail which even in daylight required the utmost care to negotiate. How I reached the cave is more than my father or I will ever know. Was God watching over me even then, before I knew Him?

Whenever we caught a few fish my father started me back to town before dawn. Often I completed the trip before sunrise. It was important to get the fish sold before they died, otherwise no one would buy them. I always took the short cut over Kooey La, though it was known to be badly infested with bandits. All I had to lose were the fish.

Upon reaching the craggy crest of the mountain early one morning, I stopped to rest for a few minutes, setting the fish basket down beside me. After a moment I raised my eyes—to meet the eyes of a leopard staring down from a rock above me. In abject terror I crouched behind my little basket, at the same time screaming for my father though he was far beyond the reach of my voice. Glancing up again I discovered that the animal was running away. That filled me with boldness and I quickly picked up a stone to throw after him wondering why I had not done so in the first place! Nevertheless, it was a relief to get away from there and to see the familiar sights of home again.

The place where I met the leopard is an historic spot. It was there that Dr. Shelton was shot by Tibetan robbers. As far back as I can remember, I was told stories about the

attack and his death, and I always thought of them whenever I stopped there to rest. What impressed me, and, in fact, all who heard the stories, was the fact that he did not resist. He was armed with a loaded pistol with which he could have fought off his attackers. Instead he took it with both hands, muzzle-end, and handed it to the robbers, taking death himself rather than taking the lives of others to save himself. After he was shot, he tied up his wounds with handkerchiefs and crawled up into the rocks to pray. He was carried back to the hospital he himself established, but he died that afternoon.

From fishing with my father I became fond of the sport, and when I couldn't go with him I went fishing in the Gen Chu, the larger of the two rivers flowing through the Batang Valley. Not being able to afford a pole, hook and line, I found myself a stout stick and stole a needle and some thread my mother used for patching our clothes. At this time my chief job was being the family "cowboy", so I spent my time fishing while I watched our cow and calf.

That summer, when the river was swollen from our usual summer rains, tree branches, boulders, and tons of mud came down from the mountains in the torrents.

Disregarding the condition of the river I was hopefully fishing from the bank one sunny afternoon. Suddenly my hook caught onto a branch, and it took everything with it. In my dismay at losing my precious equipment (I might not get away with stealing another needle and more thread), I jumped into the rushing waters to catch my pole. I had forgotten the danger of being swept out into the main current and carried away to the Yangtze. Fortunately, my clothes caught on a sharp projection of rock. I clambered up onto the rock and waited, soaked and shivering, with the muddy water swirling around me until I could be reached by rescuers.

Chapter III

“**H**ey, Ngu-tsi, have you noticed that the pears in Ja-Hala’s orchard are ready to eat?”

“They should be. When shall we go?”

“How about after school this afternoon?”

Shao-ku came up just then and asked suspiciously, “What’s after school?”

Ngu-Tsee promptly replied, “Ja-Hala’s orchard. The pears are ready.”

Tsai, my little brother, said, “I’m coming too.”

Shao-ku sneered, “Aw, you’re too little.”

“Why couldn’t he watch outside the irrigation ditch?” Ngu-Tsee suggested.

“Does he know the signal?” Shao-ku demanded.

Tsai promptly popped two fingers in his mouth and whistled shrilly.

Reluctantly, Shao-ku nodded.

Just then two of the other fellows came up. We appointed one to watch from inside the orchard wall and the other to be general look-out. I would climb the tree and throw the fruit down to Ngu-Tsee and Shao-ku till they had all they could carry. Then we would crawl through the irrigation ditch and divide the pears equally amongst us.

Ja-Hala’s orchard, like all the other orchards in Batang Valley, was surrounded with a stone wall re-inforced

all the way around with a dense growth of thorn bushes. That is why we had to use the irrigation ditch for entering and escaping.

We made a good haul that afternoon, with no mishaps, and from that time on Tsai was a part of the gang.

One bright fall morning Ngu-Tsee and I went by ourselves to the orchard of a cranky old man whom we all feared more than any other orchard owner in the whole valley. We played hookey to go there in the morning. The only other person living on the place was his old mother, and she was so deaf that even if the mastiff barked its head off she wouldn't hear it.

"You check and see that the dog is chained," I told Ngu-Tsee, while I rolled away the stone that blocked the entrance of the irrigation ditch through the wall.

In a moment Ngu-Tsee was back. "He's chained. Come on."

We looked over several trees before choosing one that looked particularly fruitful. I took off my black school jacket and threw it on the ground at the foot of the tree. Ngu-Tsee spread his out to collect the fruit into, and soon I was dropping fine big pears down to him.

"When you think we have about enough," I called down to him, "start counting them."

I slowed down the picking when I heard Ngu-Tsee start counting, but I kept seeing lovely pears I hated to leave behind.

Suddenly, I stopped and listened. It sounded just like someone was helping Ngu-Tsee count. Fearfully I looked down. I closed my eyes and gulped, and then looked again. Yes, there was the owner helping Ngu-Tsee count the pears.

As they finished counting the neat pile into Ngu-Tsee's jacket, the owner asked, "Is that enough?"

Ngu-Tsee nodded dumbly.

The man immediately with one deft movement tipped my friend over his knee and started spanking him, one stroke for each pear.

Still holding Ngu-Tsee by the back of the neck with one hand and indicating my jacket with the other, he asked gruffly, "Where's your friend?"

Ngu-Tsee wriggled to free himself, whining, "I don't have a friend. I came alone."

"Then what's that other jacket there?"

"That's mine. I have two."

"Stop lying. Call your friend down."

"I'm alone, I tell you. Let me go. I'll never steal again."

I was sitting above, hoping the man would believe my friend. Suddenly a pear dropped out of the tree and the man looked up.

Seeing me perched on a branch up above him, he released Ngu-Tsee, who made a bee-line for the irrigation ditch, and began railing at me. He shouted, threatened and cursed at me. Then, to make matters worse, he unchained the dog which came tearing straight for the tree, barking ferociously and jumping as though it would come right up the tree after me.

Now I was getting cramped from sitting in the tree so long, but I was terrified to try to get down.

All at once, the man came back with a completely changed attitude.

"Come on down, son," he said kindly. "I know your parents, so I won't punish you for picking my pears."

Seeing that I was looking fearfully at the dog, he took it back and chained it up again.

When he returned he called up, "You can't stay up there forever. Come on down and I'll give you all the pears you've picked to take home to your parents."

There lay the pile of pears, now slightly scattered by the dog's wild leaps, but still on Ngu-Tsee's jacket. They looked so tempting and the man sounded so convincing, that I started down.

Before I had reached the ground, he had grabbed me and pulled down my pants. He proceeded to give me a thorough thrashing with a bunch of nettles he had kept concealed in the sleeve of his robe all the time he was talking so nicely.

At last he released me, and he really let me take the pears. But, oh, the misery I suffered. I couldn't get home fast enough to wash and soothe that painful portion of my anatomy.

Stealing fruit was not the only mischief my friends and I enjoyed. One of our favorite games was to wait beside the cattle trails each morning and evening as the cows went out to and returned from pasture. We threw stones at the horns of the cows. The trick was to see how many horns we could hit with one stone. Another interesting phase of it was to watch the cows' reactions to having their horns struck. Some merely toss their heads, others prance around awhile, and still others run in circles.

In the winter, late in the afternoon, a bunch of us boys would slip down to where the irrigation ditch crossed the road on the steep Japoding Hill. We'd break down the wall of the ditch and let the water run down the road. Then we'd carefully repair the break and go home.

The next morning, on the pretext that we had to be at school early, we'd leave our homes and gather on the hillside above the ditch. There we'd wait in the bright morning sunlight until the cows came past on the way out to pasture. It was highly amusing to watch them go sliding down the hill on the ice we had helped to create. Yaks were not so entertaining. Somehow they could keep their footing on the ice. Donkeys were also fairly sure-footed, but horses were even worse than cows.

While I was still very young, fighting broke out between the Chinese and the Tibetans in Batang. Our house

was burned down by Chinese soldiers. For three months we had no place to live. Then we asked permission from the church to live in a small house on the mission compound. There was no missionaries there at the time, though Mrs. Odden came back later to work there alone. She permitted us to continue living there.

During the rainy season of 1939 missionaries came to Batang again. I had just started to secondary school that year, so I was more aware of and interested in things beyond our valley. We had been hearing rumors that quite a party of Americans were on their way to Batang. We had seen white people from time to time, but this was a family with children who, we heard, were planning to stay at Batang.

The Nichols family, Miss Schwake, Miss Palmer all moved into the old hospital which had been built by Dr. Shelton. Most of the other buildings on the mission compound had been in ruins ever since the fighting in which our house had been burned.

These missionaries, we learned, had only recently come from America, so they didn't know Tibetan or Chinese. They had brought Marguerite Bare with them to be their interpreter. My aunts, Naomi and Gwayin, had known her since she was born, for her parents used to work in Dr. Shelton's hospital.

Now, Tsai and I had a new diversion, as did a lot of our school mates. Every afternoon as soon as school was out we went up Japoding Hill to watch the white children at play. We found them very interesting, and, at times, amusing. Also we learned that we were welcome to attend their services each evening. Since I loved music and this gave me a chance to sing, I rarely missed a service. Even so, it was many years before I realized that missionaries had a definite purpose in going to some other country away from their homeland. I thought, as did most of my friends, that missionaries were fabulously rich people who did nothing but travel wherever they pleased. I thought their services were merely one of their foreign customs which they permitted us to witness.

Although the arrival of the missionaries was a great event in our lives, still, school was my chief interest. Unlike most Tibetan boys, I loved to study. It was the law that each family had to send one child to school. The Tibetans called this a "student tax". If none of the children in the wealthier families wanted to go to school, the parents would hire a child from a poor family to go to school as a substitute, and they would provide his uniform, food, and school expenses. Then their children were free to roam the mountain sides, herding cattle.

Because I liked school, I did well in it and came home repeatedly with prizes. The prizes were mainly for achievement in sports, for getting good grades, and for good conduct. Instead of silver cups or medals or school letters, however, we won practical prizes like towels or articles of clothing. The occasion which stands out in my memory was a celebration of the 7th of July, a Chinese national holiday. Our school put on a program of sports during the morning in the *yamen*, and Colonel Fu, commander of the local Chinese garrison was present. I received special commendation from him for winning the dressing relay race.

When school wasn't demanding my entire attention I enjoyed getting better acquainted with the Nichols and Bare children. Sometimes in the afternoon Tsai and I would stand on the path overlooking their lawn while they played ball. Sooner or later someone would call us to join in the game. The Bare children knew Tibetan very well, and some of the Nichols were picking it up quite fast.

Before long, I learned that Tsai and Garland Bare were the same age. Both Tsai and I were impressed by Garland's interest in bugs, birds, and animals. He could tell us the most amazing things about them. It seemed that John Nichols shared the same interests and knew even more about some things, but he was very quiet.

When the two boys went on long hikes all over the surrounding mountain sides to collect birds eggs, and later, empty birds' nests, Tsai and I couldn't see much value in it, but we enjoyed going along and helping them

find new kinds; and Garland would entertain us for hours with all kinds of strange tales.

One day we were coming home from a long hike, and as we neared our home I invited Garland to come in, doubting that he would accept the invitation. He did, however, and sat right down on the floor with the rest of us. He gravely accepted the bowl of tea my mother offered him, and hungrily ate the fresh cornbread we were having for lunch. He delighted my mother by saying it was the best cornbread he had ever tasted. I was glad we could share something with him, because he had a habit of carrying biscuits and cookies in his pockets and sharing them with Tsai and me when we went on hikes with him. I really missed him when the Bares went back to their own country.

There were always students from Batang going down into China for further education and coming back to take high positions in Batang. There were also those who went down but never returned because they succumbed to Tuberculosis. Those who succeeded and returned in honor fired my ambition to do the same.

At the end of my third year of secondary school, three of my schoolmates were planning to go to Kangting to attend middle school. They were all ahead of me in school as well as being from wealthy families. Even so, they invited me to go along with them, promising to share expenses. It sounded like the chance of a lifetime. We spent hours planning thrilling adventures on the road and what we would do at Kangting. I still had a year of secondary school to attend, but I decided to skip it in order to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

I went home from school and told my parents I had been chosen by the principal of the school and the faculty to go to Kangting. At school I told the principal that I wanted to go with the other three boys and that my parents were willing for me to go.

My mother was truly dismayed at the thought of my going so far from home when I was only fourteen, and she begged me repeatedly and tearfully to abandon the idea. I

clung to it stubbornly. Finally, she insisted that I go to the temple and inquire of Lingisoh, the god of new ventures, whether I should go or not.

The procedure in finding the will of the god is to pour out some oil before his image and burn incense to him. Then you must kneel before him three times. Following this you ask the attendant for a box containing sticks with scriptures written on the end of each one. You shake the box before the image as you tell him what you want to do and why, asking his guidance in selecting the proper scripture. When you have finished pleading your cause before Lingisoh, you draw a stick from the box without looking. The attendant then tosses out a pair of sandals. If they landed as a pair the right scripture had been selected. If not -- if they landed at angles, or upside down, or any other position -- you had to keep drawing until the sandals signified that you had chosen the right stick. Once the right scripture has been drawn, you must pay the attendant to look it up for you. The attendant will bring you a strip of paper on which the scripture passage is written and explain to you the message of the scripture in relation to your quest.

When I went to the temple in obedience to my mother's demand, I met one of my friends just coming out. He wished to get married and had gone to seek Lingisoh's approval. He was jubilant, for the answer he had received was favorable. Realizing that the same scripture could possibly apply to my quest, I asked him for the paper on which the scripture was written. Having no further use for it, he gladly gave it to me. I was delighted at getting an answer without having to go through the usual ceremony, and went happily home to show my mother the scripture:

"In the boat is a road,
In the road is a boat."

According to the explanation my friend had received, that meant whatever you proposed to do would prosper. That convinced my mother, and she gave me permission to go to Kangting for further education.

Chapter IV

The preparations for the long journey began, and with the preparations, the waiting for a caravan. When we had ascertained who all were planning to take the trip, and about the time that all of us would be ready to go, we sent word to the Wahee, a nomadic tribe who lived on the plateaus above Batang and who specialized in providing animals for caravans along the route from Batang to Kangting.

Our preparations, in the main, consisted of gathering food supplies and preparing clothing and bedding for the trip. All the others hired horses and made all the necessary arrangements for riding and carrying loads.

My personal preparations were simple. I had only the clothing I was wearing; and for bedding my mother's robe and a sheet that had once belonged to the Bares. When they left Batang two years before to return to America for furlough, some of my friends and I traveled with them the first day to see them off. One of their loads on a wild young mule was knocked into the river. The following morning the Bares went on and we turned back towards home. As we walked down the pass, I saw something white floating along in the river. Fortunately the river was low at that time of year, and whatever it was was making slow progress, catching repeatedly on snags. As soon as we got down near the river I clambered on down the mountainside, off the trail to the river bank. I had to chase it for quite a distance before I finally fished it out with a long stick. It was a sheet, and I took good care of it for two years before I really needed it. However, it and my mother's robe had to serve as saddle-blankets for one of my traveling companions to earn their transportation.

My mother had sewn me a stout knapsack in which to carry my few possessions. Also she made me a silk purse for my nineteen rupees. Ten of them were from my parents, though they could hardly spare that amount. The other nine were stolen by one of my friends for me from his parents. He thought I needed it worse than they did.

The day set for our departure arrived with a chilling rain. I went the rounds of my friends at Japoding, thrilled and proud to tell them goodbye. At last I was actually going down country.

When I told the Nichols goodbye, Dorothy May gave me a broad-brimmed sunhat to wear during my journey. The Shoas gave me a cone of brown sugar to nibble on as I crossed the higher passes, to ward off altitude sickness. Miss Schwake gave me a pair of long stockings and a first aid kit.

Early that morning my mother went to the temple of Woong-toh, the patron goddess of Batang Valley, to pray for a safe journey for me. First she had to take a small bunch of cedar branches which she waved around my head counter-clockwise three times, praying all the while for my safety and prosperity. Next she collected a handful of each kind of grain – wheat, barley, buckwheat, and corn – which she mixed with a handful of tealeaves, and washed the entire mixture thoroughly in cold water in the tea strainer. This mixture, the cedar branches, a dipperful of tea and a fingerful of butter she carried to the temple. On the altar before the goddess she placed the cedar branches and lit them. As soon as they were burning well she dumped the grain and tealeaf mixture onto the fire. With the tea she filled all the little copper bowls that were set in a row before the goddess, and she daubed a little of the butter on the edge of each bowl. Following that she let down her braids and prostrated herself nine times before Woong-toh. Once more she prayed fervently for my safety and prosperity.

As I started down the Japoding Hill, Mother and Tsai followed me. I didn't like their being out in the rain, and more than that, their crying was about to break me down. I ordered them home repeatedly and almost harshly, at the

same time hurrying to keep ahead of them. At last, they turned back for home, my mother weeping aloud, and Tsai tearfully trying to console her.

Gway Sen, my older brother, walked all the way to Bajukhee with me, where we spent our first night away from home. On the way, we passed all my fellow travelers at the hot-springs where they had gathered with all their friends for a final farewell feast. Gway Sen slept with me that night and gave me some big-brotherly advice.

“Bao, you must be very careful in fording the rivers. Some of them are very treacherous. Grab on to the tail of a yak and hold on till you reach the other side.

“A mule or a horse will resent your holding his tail, and they are more likely to slip on the wet stones, anyway. A yak doesn’t mind it at all and he is surefooted, besides.

“Another thing, Bao, since you are the only one a-foot in the whole caravan, never go forging ahead nor lagging behind. Always stay near the middle of the caravan.”

“Why?” I wanted to know.

“I know your adventurous spirit,” he laughed. “It will be hard at times for you to control it; but there are two dangers for a lone wanderer, especially someone as inexperienced as you.”

Swallowing the irritation I felt at being called “inexperienced”, I asked what the two dangers were.

“Bandits and getting lost”, he said tersely.

Bandits I could understand, and I subconsciously felt for my side purse; but getting lost? Didn’t we just stay on the trail all the way from Batang to Kangting?

As though reading my thoughts, Gway Sen continued, “There are great wide plateaus between here and Litang. I have heard of many men who are used to our narrow mountain trails completely losing all sense of direction on the plateaus.”

“All right,” I conceded, “I’ll be careful.”

The next morning the caravan started up the winding trail. Gway Sen walked along with me a little way, telling me not to worry about folks at home, for he would look after them. He warned me again to be careful and wished me the best of everything. Then I was on my own.

For two days we climbed up Tsumbeh La (Merchant's Pass), and on the third day we finally crossed it.

The pass got its name from a merchant who went through with his ninety-nine mules and his servant who had but one mule. They stopped for lunch near the pass, and while they were eating and resting, they looked up at the snow-capped peak towering high above the pass. They began discussing the possibilities of climbing it and the servant said, "I'll climb it if you'll give me your ninety-nine mules."

"No, I won't give you my mules even if you do climb it," the merchant said, "but I'll climb it for your mule."

The servant agreed, so they swore an oath: the servant that he would give the merchant his mule if he reached the top, and the merchant that he would climb all the way to the top before returning. As a signal that he had reached the top, he would burn a branch of cedar, and the smoke would show that he had reached his goal.

Early the next morning, the merchant started the long difficult climb up the rugged peak, through the snow. All morning the servant watched for some sign of the progress the merchant was making. At last the servant saw a thin wisp of smoke rising as incense from the highest promontory; but that was the last known act of the merchant. The cold and altitude were too much for the merchant, he never came down. The servant inherited the ninety-nine mules, but the merchant inherited immortality by having the pass named in his honor, Merchant's Pass. They say that whenever a merchant caravan goes through the pass, the merchant, remembering the life he left behind, weeps upon the passing caravan, and that is why it always rains or snows on caravans going through Tsumbeh La.

Just after we went through the pass we stopped for lunch. When we had gone on about an hour we met a caravan approaching Batang. The older brother of one of my companions was just returning from Chengtu. They only had a few minutes to talk, but the older brother gave the younger a fine raincoat he had been using, and some other equipment for the road.

Shortly after we started on, it began raining, and then my troubles began. I had nothing to protect me from the cold, driving rain, and I had to keep plodding on regardless of the misery.

That night when we stopped to camp, I discovered that my legs had been chaffed raw and were bleeding because my heavy woolen trousers had stiffened from the rain. I had nothing else to wear. Then I began to repent with tears the lies I had told in gaining permission to take the trip. How often I regretted them for the rest of the trip; and how I longed to turn around and go back to my parents. But it was too late to turn back.

We had no tents, so we slept in the rain that night. The wood was too wet to build a fire. We had to eat hard, dry bread for supper -- not even a bowl of hot butter tea.

The next day we remained where we had spent the night. One of the yak had been shot in the leg by bandits, so we had to butcher it. Having fresh meat to eat was comforting, and we managed to build smokey fires for cooking it; but the miserable rain kept on.

The journey was continued the following day, but the threat of robbery separated us. Those who had horses went on ahead, while we who had to walk stayed with the slower moving yak. This was through wooded area, and we followed a small river, which we had to cross two or three times, all the way to its source. I enjoyed going through the woods. There were so many interesting things to see. Now and again, between the trees I could see the towering peak of some snow-capped mountain, draped in clouds. Slowly we started climbing up out of the woods. Soon two of the men went ahead to put up the stakes and string the ropes for tethering the horses and yaks, so I knew we would shortly

be striking camp. At length we came to a high grassy plain above the tree line where we camped for the night.

The next morning, I got up early, built the fire, and made tea for all of us, it being the Tibetan custom for the youngest to serve the rest.

After I had eaten, I started on ahead toward the highest peak in sight. Soon we were across the plain and climbing again. I was still ahead. After awhile I thought I saw a black head appear now and then between the rocks, and believed it was coming toward me. Sure enough, there was a man coming down the trail, and I began imagining him taking my clothes from me, for I had nothing else to lose. But what would I do without my clothes?

I walked on, afraid to raise my eyes, but as we met, he asked me what a little boy like me was doing out alone on the trail. I looked up and recognized him as one of the mail runners. I told him I was on my way to school in Kangting. He reproved me for leaving my parents so early, saying that he knew them. Then he went on to warn me of the dangers of the road ahead.

“You should know better than to get so far ahead of the caravan.” he admonished.

“Yes,” I answered meekly. “My brother warned me, also, before I left.”

“Whatever you do, don’t try to cross the river alone. I have just been waiting four days to cross it myself, as it is in flood. I was afraid of losing the mail bag in the swift current. It has gone down a little now, but even so the current could easily carry you away. You must remember to hold on to the tail of a yak with both hands, and let it pull you across.”

“Yes, sir,” I nodded, thankful for his friendly advice.

“Now, you be careful. Go slowly. I’ll tell your parents I saw you and you are well.” Then he hurried on with the mail.

"Go slowly." I called after him. Then I continued the long, weary climb up Harruh La.

We didn't go far that day; and the next day I had my first look at the black nomad tents and the terrifyingly huge black mastiffs that guard them. Those who have horses to ride have nothing to fear, but what about me? What had I to protect me from them? I began having visions of being torn apart by them. However, as our caravan approached, the owners came out and held their dogs until we were all safely past.

Then we reached the river and the caravan started splashing in, but I could see no place where a small boy on foot could safely cross, even holding on to a yak tail.

I walked up and down the bank looking for a shallow place where, perhaps, I could wade; or a narrow place where, perhaps, I could jump to the opposite bank. All the while the rain-swollen river flowed relentlessly and swiftly on, and the caravan got farther and farther away.

Finally, the owner of the horses in the caravan turned back and came across to me. As his horse splashed up the bank, he asked me how much I'd give him to carry me across. Knowing I'd have no other way to cross I promised him whatever he'd ask. He asked for six rupees, so my treasured store of coins dwindled to thirteen rupees. He said he wouldn't ask that much when we had to re-cross the river two days later

The next day we came out on Bonya Tongding. There we saw great herds of antelope, and when we camped that afternoon, my friend and I followed a herd for quite a distance. We also saw a lot of prairie dogs on that plateau.

It was at Bonya Tongding that all the medicine in my first aid kit was used up. Some of the men claimed that coming out on the wide plain made too much light for their eyes and they needed some of my medicine. They quickly finished up the mercurochrome — one man spilled it all over his face, clothes, saddle, and horse; and how they all

laughed. Others gathered around, and with one complaint and another, took care of all the rest of the precious supply Auntie Gladys had given me at parting.

For cooking our food that night and in the morning, we had to go out and gather cow chips.

A Cantonese who was traveling with us caught a prairie dog that night, prepared it in a tasty dish, and invited us to share it with him. My, how we enjoyed it.

After we had eaten supper that night, one of the Tibetan men in the caravan told us about having been in India and what a wonderful country it was. He showed us an Indian rupee. It was the first I had ever seen, and little did I dream as I looked at it that within ten years I'd be handling them myself in India.

The next morning we crossed the big river, but this time I did not have to wait. Aku Nongluh took me on his horse, but I had to pay five rupees, and it left me only eight. We were to reach Litang that evening, so those who had horses hurried on ahead. Most of my fellow-travelers had friends or relatives in Litang.

It rained all afternoon. I had thought to stay with the caravan which wouldn't reach Litang until the next day. However, my friends had gone ahead with my bedding and all our food; so the men in the caravan advised me to go on, assuring me that I could still get there in good time. A Chinese boy who had been there before and was traveling with us offered to accompany me. We started on in the rain. It was a cold, miserable day and we ran much of the time to keep warm. The icy wind whipped our faces till we cried from the misery. One thing kept us going -- there were hot springs ahead where we could stop and warm up with a bath.

When we finally reached the hot springs, we bought a basket of cow chips and built ourselves a fire in the shelter. Then we undressed and sat soaking in the hot water. At last we decided we better go on, but we took a bowl of hot tea apiece to brace us on our way.

The trail led upward, and when we topped the small pass we could see Litang ahead, nestled in the dip of the plain where the two rivers met. That gave our spirits more of a lift than the hot bath or the tea. The sun was just setting; but in that high clear atmosphere we were deceived by the apparent proximity of the town -- the highest town in the world. We were sure we could reach it by dark.

On and on we tramped in the gathering dusk. My companion was even more anxious to reach the town than I, for he knew the dangers of the town after dark. All the dogs banded together like a pack of wolves and were known to attack and eat any hapless wanderer at night. His tales filled me with horror, and I wondered bitterly why I had even thought to attempt this trip.

Darkness settled, and the freezing rain continued. We stumbled on, for there was nothing else we could do. Afterwards we learned that it was fifteen miles from where we had first seen Litang to the town itself. It must have been around ten o'clock when we finally reached the city gates, which, of course, had long since been barred. We could hear the dogs barking and howling as they roamed the streets, but by this time I was so numbed with the cold that I scarcely cared about anything else.

My companion knew a family who lived on the wall and started calling them. At long last, a woman came and let us in. She built a roaring fire so we could dry our clothes and brought us sheepskin lined robes to wrap around ourselves. While our clothes were drying she prepared us a delicious hot meal and poured us all the butter tea we could drink. It took a long time of huddling close to the fire with chattering teeth before I finally felt warm, but my heart was warmed by kindness of the woman who had welcomed us into her home so generously. It was simply the fact that we were from Batang, her home town, which caused her to treat us with such kindness. By the time I went to sleep that night I decided maybe the world wasn't such a cruel place after all.

The next morning we joined our fellow-travelers, and we all spent the next two days sight-seeing. I was ashamed of my appearance as we went around visiting, but what could I do? I had nothing else to wear, and it certainly wasn't my fault my wealthy companions chose to dress in all their finery.

Litang was an interesting place. The houses are very low and are built of sod. Since the altitude is too high for trees, the only fuel available is cow chips. I thought it very odd to see the walls of the houses plastered with cow dung, but the purpose was to dry it out for fuel. Another thing that impressed me was the quantities of meat available and the low cost of it.

We spent nearly a day in the huge monastery. They told us there were six thousand priests living there. That monastery has one of the biggest libraries in Tibet. The priests were doing a lucrative business selling cloth, grain, tea and other merchandise otherwise unavailable on that high plateau. Much of it, they said, was from India. However, I was most deeply impressed by the golden lamps that were kept burning perpetually before the idols. I never saw so much gold in my life. They were protected by a strong screen and were also chained with golden chains to their stands. The floor was worn smooth and shiny from the prostrations of thousands of worshipers.

On the third day we started up and around the mountain, leaving behind us the highest city in Tibet. This was the day we were to go through the most dangerous robber territory for we were coming to the junction of several trails. The robbers like to take advantage of such an unusual place, for it is more difficult to pursue them when they have several directions in which to flee.

Not many in our caravan were armed. One of my friends tied his umbrella across my back, so that it would look from a distance as though I were carrying a gun. All the others who were unarmed used sticks in a similar fashion, and soon the whole caravan was bristling like an

army. Before long we spotted quite a number of horsemen on the plain ahead of us, and our hearts began to quail. However, we went on, trying to look and feel bold.

A young rider broke away from the group at a gallop, throwing his hat to the ground. His horse went in a wide circle, the rider yelling the robber call. As he came back to his hat he swooped down and scooped it up without slowing his horse in the least. I had never seen such horsemanship and was so impressed that I completely forgot my fears. Aku Lakha Jitsen immediately identified him as a friend, and our laughter chased away the dread of robbery as the wind drives clouds from a snow peak.

Later that day we came out on another wider plateau with a lonely *chorten* located in the center of it. There are prayer wheels in the shrine and bells hung all around the sides of it which are kept ringing constantly by the wind. There the nomad tribes gather from all over every year and set up their black tents for a three month period of worship and consultation with the gods.

We camped before we reached the shrine spending our last night out in the open; but we continued our journey early the next morning. We rode along through the plain the whole day and passed the twin mountains which resemble the humps of a pack saddle. Between the two mountains I noticed a group of men digging and asked what they were doing. They make their livelihood, I learned, by gathering wormgrass and other medicinal herbs which they sell down in China. A favorite pastime, I was also informed, is to gauge the strength of a caravan as it passes, and if it is a small one, to rob the travelers. The Tibetan name for wormgrass is *Yatsa-gimbu* which means "summer grass-winter worm." It is a favorite delicacy among the Chinese.

That afternoon we went down a steep pass, leaving behind us the high windswept plateaus and going down into one of the most beautiful valleys I have ever seen – Nguh-lohih. There was a small stream winding through the valley, and we noticed as we forded it, that it was full of fish. We

found some good stout thorns, and made ourselves fishing tackle, using them for hooks. There were plenty of worms for bait, and in a short time we had a big mess of fish for supper. That was one of the best meals of our whole trip.

It was almost with regret that we left that pleasing place and started the tedious climb up Rama La. Up and down, up and down we traveled, getting higher and higher in spite of the frequent descents.

As we were climbing, one of our teachers who was traveling with us fell off his horse and cracked his leg. From that time on I was delegated to the task of leading his horse, helping him on and off it, and running all his errands for him.

When we stopped for lunch that noon, on the pass, I saw a squirrel and began chasing it. It was too high for trees and too barren for any other hiding place except one little bush. I chased it around and around that little bush, determined to catch it; and the caravan went on without me. I caught the squirrel at last, and kept him in spite of the fact that he bit me right through the fingernail. Then I hurried to catch up with the caravan. I found them on the very top of the pass, where they had stopped for tea. One of my Tibetan friends skinned the squirrel alive, keeping the skin himself to wipe his eyes, for it is believed that squirrel skins are very beneficial for sore eyes.

From the top of Rama La we could see ranges of mountains in every direction. The experienced members of the caravan pointed out to the rest of us the mountains we were yet to cross — storied Mynya Ginka, and the mountains surrounding Kangtine, our destination.

Then began the long descent. Towards evening we came to Magendrung, a three-family village, nestled deep in the woods. The people there make their living weaving all types and sizes of bamboo baskets. There we bought enough *tsamba* to last us to Nyachukaw, for our supplies were dwindling fast.

The next day was spent continuing our descent. I was delighted by the warm weather and the discovery of ripe peaches, corn, and squash. From that valley we followed a stream that led us to the Nyachu (Fish River).

Just as we turned the bend that brought us our first glimpse of Nyachukaw, we met a woman carrying a full keg of water on her back. The Tibetan members of the caravan became highly excited about this good woman and presented the woman with a *khata* (a white scarf of blessing), put some butter on the edge of the water keg, and took a little of the water to sprinkle around as a votive offering as they prayed many prayers.

I was impressed by the tile-roofed houses of Nyachukaw. They were the first tile-roofs I had ever seen. Some of the men of the caravan shot their guns to signal that we were ready to cross the river. A young boy clacked a wooden cymbal, and people gathered from all over to watch us cross. It was rather difficult to get some of the horses into the boat. Nevertheless, in two crossings we were all across and settled to spend the night on the other side of the river.

We spent two days at Nyachukaw; the first in washing our clothes and resting from the rigors of travel. We also visited friends there, presenting them with apples and flour from Batang. The second day we spent sight-seeing. We were also invited to a feast by the magistrate of the town.

The most interesting sight was the bridge heads of a beautiful bridge that had been erected under the direction of a French engineer in the fifteenth year of the Republic. Then there was fighting among the Chinese and one general retreated across the bridge and cut it behind him. It could have been repaired, but it had taken the livelihood from the boatmen, so they completely demolished it. Now they make enough with their boating to drink and to smoke opium, so they are satisfied.

There are mineral waters at Nyachukaw, and we were urged to drink as much as possible for our health. We'd all go down to the stream and drink all we could hold and then we'd carry more back to drink where we were staying.

While we were there I made friends with a boy whose father had once been the city magistrate. He had just died a few months previously, but the family stayed on there. The boy invited me to spend the night with him, and since it was so hot, we went up on the roof. We spent most of the night teaching each other all the songs each of us knew.

The third day we again resumed our journey up over a small pass, following the river eastward toward the plain of Minyadrung. At the end of fifteen miles or 45 lee, we came upon a high eight-sided stone tower, evidently well built. I was informed that it and others we would be seeing along the route were relics of the Manchu Dynasty. They were government rest houses which had been erected every 45 lee between Kangting and Nyachukaw. Some of them were still usable. Others were falling into decay. We stopped for tea at the first one and spent the night near the second, at the town of Wahlungsu.

From the top of the pass, which we climbed the next day, we could again see the mountains surrounding Kangting. They seemed much nearer, and I began wondering what kind of place I would find this Kangting to be.

Slowly we wound our way down the mountain side into the wide low plain of Minyadrung. It had been a source of amazement to me to find people eating corn on the cob so early in the year at Nyachukaw, but I was even more surprised to see the people here already harvesting their grain. Their flails for threshing were several thongs attached to a handle instead of two joined sticks as we use at Batang.

We traveled along between fields of green peas. Some of us lay down between the rows and ate peas. Later when we went on and reached the town, we found peas sell-

ing for a dollar (Chinese National Currency) a *gin*. Imagine peas so cheap. We bought a dollar's worth and enjoyed them almost as much as the ones in the field. We also found peanuts numerous and cheap, so we enjoyed plenty of them, too.

Since it was early afternoon when we reached the town, some of us went out to watch Chinese panning gold along the river. I found and picked up a nugget a little larger than a grain of rice. One of the men who was panning gold told me what a good omen that was for my future days as a student in Kangting. However, I didn't get to keep my nugget long, for one of the Tibetan men took it to keep in his charm box.

The process of panning the gold was very interesting to me. The men dug up the sand along the bank of the river. Only in certain kinds of soil did they find gold, but they dug all around testing the ground for the right kind of earth. The dirt or sand is placed in small amounts on a board resembling a washboard. A shallow stream of water is permitted to flow over the board washing away the dirt and leaving the heavy sand in the slots of the board. Then it is placed with water in a dipper which has a circular depression in the bottom. The contents of the dipper are swished around until the gold has settled into the depression. The water is poured out carefully, and the gold dust is put in a papee.

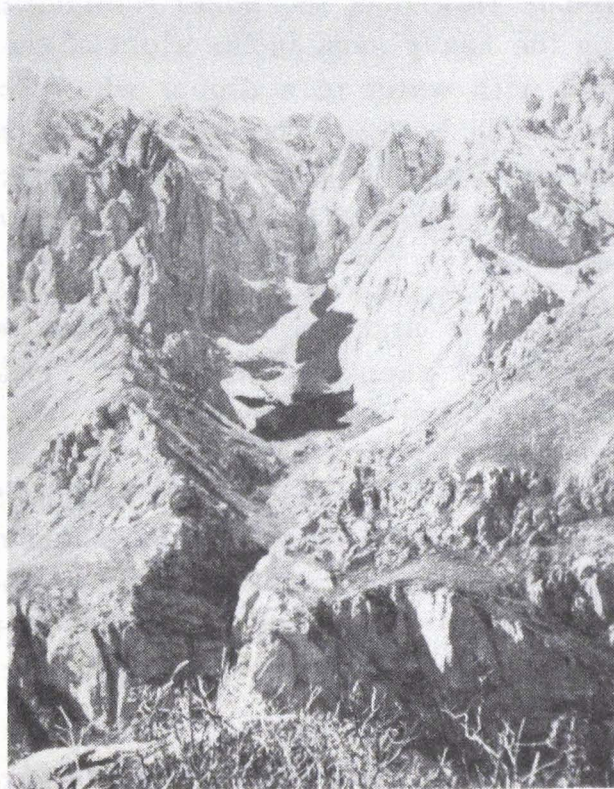
We spent the night in a large house where we enjoyed a wonderful supper of *nzuna* — small square of dough cooked in butter and cheese.

The next morning we crossed a bridge. Beyond it we paused for awhile to watch the construction of an airport, which we also crossed. Then we came to another bridge, and after we had crossed it we met groups of people building a motor road which was to connect Sikang and Chenghai provinces.

It was that day that we reached the legendary boundary between China and Tibet — Jido La. The story goes

that Tsu-koliang, the Emperor's right-hand man, decided to join all the kingdoms of China under the Emperor. He was successful until he came to Tibetan territory. There he decided that Tibet was a worthless wilderness, but to set a boundary he shot an arrow, declaring that where it landed would be the line between China and Tibet. It landed in Kangting, and though that is not the legal boundary, there are few Chinese west of there and few Tibetans east. The old name for Kangting, Tatsienlu, means "Place where the arrow landed." The Tibetan name of the town, Tatsendo, comes from the fact that it is in a deep valley between three high mountains. "Center of the camp fire" is the meaning, indicating the three mountains as the stones of the fire place.

We spent our last night of the trip in Jido, on the side of the mountain where there are hot springs. It was with eager anticipation and a little trepidation that I looked forward to the next day.



The trail led through many passes like this one

Chapter V

Early the next morning we started down the mountain for the last day of our long journey. Those who had horses rode on ahead. Our first glimpse of Kangting was huge piles of boulders left by a great flood which had completely wiped out the original city. Then, on the side of Dehto we saw the gleaming white walls of the Kangting Lamasary.

Finally we were down in the valley. As we approached an arched stone bridge, I recognized two of my friends who had walked out of the city to meet me. They conducted me proudly through the South Gate and down the cobbled main street of the town. The Kangting River flows right through the town, and they led me back and forth across several bridges. Since I had no particular destination (except the ultimate destination of school) they finally led me to the home of the sister of one of my traveling companions.

Wang Shoru's sister welcomed him enthusiastically and urged him to come upstairs for a bath and clean clothes and to rest awhile on a bed with springs. She had married a Chinese man and they were doing a prosperous business selling opium. Wang told me to wait downstairs, and I was immediately forgotten.

The room in which I was left was small and dark, and had a bamboo mat on the floor. I saw no more of the family for the rest of the day. I thought about going out and looking around, but my friend had told me to wait. Also, I thought some of our other traveling companions might come to his house, so I waited and waited; and as I

waited my mind began filling again with doubts. What if I would not be accepted into school after all? What if my long journey was entirely fruitless? Where would I go from here and what could I do? The hours dragged on and the darkness in the room began to deepen.

In the evening a servant came in and asked me where I was from and why I had come. I explained that I was a Tibetan from Batang and that I had come down to go to school. His interest and sympathy lifted, for awhile, the dark mantle of gloom which had settled over me as I sat alone listening to the excited conversation and gay laughter of my friend and his family in another part of the house. The servant soon returned with a bowl of rice porridge for my supper. I spent the night sleeping on the bamboo mat, and in the morning I was given another bowl of porridge.

I began wondering if I was to spend another day sitting in that waiting room. Then, a former Batang school-mate, Tsang Susho, came in and greeted me warmly. He asked all about our trip and how I thought I would like Kangting. He told me not to worry about anything, for he would help me get into school and in every way possible make my new life easier. He assured me that I could rely on his experience, and though he, too, was poor, he would share with me what he had. We had been good friends in Batang, for though he was older than I and ahead of me in school, our father's fields adjoined and we had often worked in them together. He suggested that we visit Colonel Fu who was in Kangting at the time, and ask him to help us get into school.

For the next day or two we did little except wander around the town. Wang's sister took us shopping one day. We had to buy our school uniforms. I bought a black cloth cap to go with my uniform (which I hoped some day to have) for four dollars (C.N.C.), but that was too cheap for Wang, so his sister took him around to where they found a fancy cap for four hundred dollars.

When we visited Colonel Fu he graciously promised to help us get into school. He appointed one of his men as a personal representative to conduct us to the principal of the school. The principal explained that every Tibetan student had to send in a personal application to the Educational Department of the Central Government at Chungking. However, he had recently returned from Chungking vested with the authority to accept Tibetan students. He would gladly enroll us in the school, particularly in consideration of the pains we had taken to further our education.

Then came the formality of registering – having our pictures taken, being interviewed by the school officials, and paying the entrance fee. All this took several days. In the meantime, we visited the school and became acquainted with the surroundings in which we were to spend the next three years.

At first I thought the school was a wonderful place and could hardly wait to move in and get started. There were electric lights; we would all live together in the dormitories; boys and girls could eat together. The students seemed jolly and carefree and looked so polished in their black uniforms. How I wished I could afford one.

School had been in session for three weeks when we were finally through with all the formalities and could move into the dorm and get started in school. Since I had only a robe and a sheet for bedding and nothing at all to show off, I took a top bunk and was quickly settled in my place. My companions had to have several others help them move in all their possessions and took much longer to get settled.

Then began the task of learning. Our classmates had already learned the alphabet, and we had to hurry to catch up with them in English. The other subjects, being in Chinese, were not so difficult.

Since I was one of the youngest and smallest students, I felt that maybe I had been presumptive in thinking I could compete with older, better educated students. Then when I discovered that there was a student from Derge who had

never been to school at all and another who had only had a little schooling, I regained confidence.

This was not to last long. The nights were cold, and with my meager bedding I could scarcely keep warm enough to sleep. Also we had only two meals a day. For breakfast we had a thin porridge, and for dinner two bowls of rice with one vegetable. There was pork once a week, but the advanced students got all of it. We were lucky if we got a bone or piece of rind to gnaw on. I was miserably hungry all the time. Because of that I could not study well, and my grades for the first term were very low. I often wondered why I had even tempted to come to school.

The fact that I was youngest and smallest as well as the poorest made me the scapegoat for everything that went wrong in the dormitory. Even the two with less schooling than I had money to give them some standing.

For the first few days, every time the bell rang I thought it was surely for a meal and wondered at the calm indifference of the older students. However, I soon learned that when it was for a meal there was a mad dash for the dining hall. The older students had the priority, no matter who got to the line first. We all had to gulp our food like dogs if we wanted seconds.

Since it was cold weather there was hot water every morning for washing, but it didn't take me long to learn that it was also only for the advanced students. One of the first mornings I dashed into the washroom and filled a basin with hot water. One of the older students kicked my basin across the room, spilling all my water, and I had to wait until they were all through before I could wash. All the advanced students went out of their way to insult us new students and to make us feel as though we did not belong there. The common saying was, "Your footprints have no long standing here."

Every Saturday all the students walked three miles to the hot springs for baths. There, too, the new students had to wait until the advanced students had bathed before we

could have our turn. Then we would sneak into the potato fields with a bag and steal potatoes which we would fry to eat with our rice. Also we would steal corn and turnips in season, to fill out our meager diets. I always looked forward to Saturday because we had more to eat. We never got caught stealing because the fields were so far from town.

There is a lake near the hot springs where we often went swimming. We tried fishing there, too, but we never caught anything.

I was not yet a Christian, but I went occasionally to church at the China Inland Mission compound on Sunday. Usually, however, Sunday was the day on which I worked at odd jobs to earn a little money for haircuts.

One day I received a wonderful surprise. A package came for me in the mail. I couldn't imagine who it was from or what could be in it. When I opened it my surprise was almost without bounds. It was full of lovely cookies. I had never dreamed that such things could be sent by mail. The package was from Aunt Gladys, so, thereafter, in gratitude, I went to church more often.

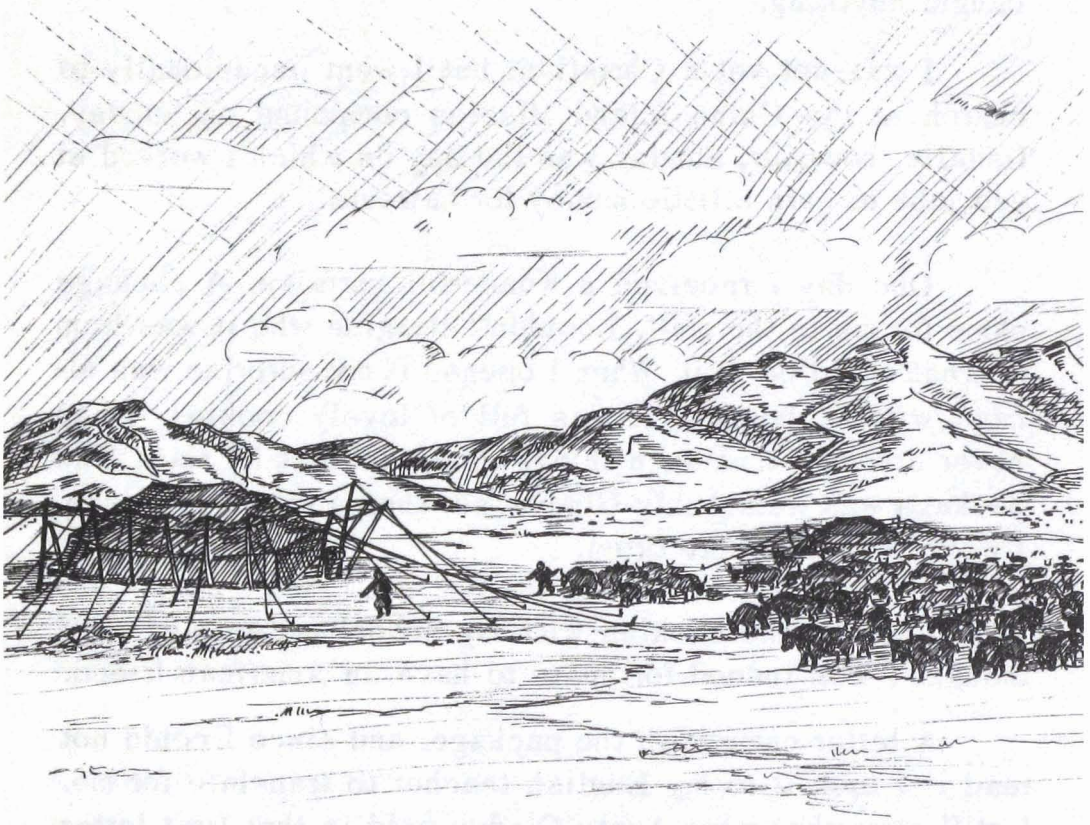
I shared the cookies with my school mates, and they thought I was indeed fortunate to have an American friend.

A letter came with the package, and since I could not read it I took it to my English teacher to translate for me. I still remember what Aunt Gladys said in that first letter to me. She told me to attend church services and to pray and she also assured me that she was praying for me each day.

That reminded me that I had heard in the church at Batang that one should pray every night before going to sleep. Although I still had only a vague concept of God and the meaning of Christianity, I was determined to pray every night thereafter. I tried it and it really helped.

I was also careful not to smoke or do other things I had heard the Christians teach against although many of my

fellow students indulged in such things. Whenever anyone asked it I was a Christian I replied in the affirmative. As I began to attend church more regularly, I was often asked to take part in the services and I never refused. More and more I was called upon to read the scriptures in Chinese or to lead in prayer, but I always enjoyed the singing the most.



One of our camps in the high mountains

Epilogue

Part two of my story will tell such experiences as: the day the communists tried to hang one of our missionaries in Batang, the escape from Batang, the dinner we refugees had on fish caught by bare hands, the rope bridge that broke, drowning a young man and a horse, a small pox epidemic, and, finally, refuge in India.

The third part of my story takes place in India and America and tells how shortly after my arrival in India I was in an area shaken by a great earthquake, leaving us isolated for three months, how I met the Dalai Lama's brother, studied for and obtained my compounder's (pharmacist) license, served as a missionary, and was finally able to come to America, even though I was "a man without a country", having fled Tibet with no papers. Concerning my stay in America: my first confused impressions of Los Angeles, a year of study at Pacific Christian College, camp work and speaking engagements, medical studies at Platte Valley Bible College, and my impressions of New York City and of the western states.

Nomad woman in typical dress



Inside a Tibetan tent—
showing packs ready for the trail, guns,
and, in the foreground, an altar

