AT THE FOOT OF THE FISH-TAIL MOUNTAIN

HILLS AND VALLEYS

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OF THE
FISH-TAIL MOUNTAIN

By LILY M. O'HANLON

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When Abraham, the man of faith, went on a conquest, he took with him "his trained men" ; when David, the man of courage, went to war he took "men who could keep rank, they were not of double heart."

This book is dedicated to the Nepali men and women whom God trained and whose hearts He touched so that, like those of the early church, "they hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We thank God for their fellowship in the gospel, for all they have taught us of patient endurance and loyal comradeship. We acknowledge our debt to God for them and trust what has been written in this little volume may bring glory to His Name and call forth praise and prayer for the band of ordinary men and women whom He has deigned to use in an extraordinary way.

PREFACE

"The land whither ye go to possess it . . ."

THE story of how the Lord gave the pattern for the Nepali Evangelistic Band, of how He prepared the vessels of His choosing, Nepali and European, brought them together and trained them for the service to which He had called them, is told in the booklet *Except the Lord Build.* It is not necessary to repeat here what is recorded there. Joys and sorrows, disappointments and surprises made up the tale of sixteen years of service for God amongst the Nepalies domiciled outside their own country. It was a time of preparation and it was not without fruit. We saw souls born again of the Spirit of God and we rejoiced over men and women who, turning from the world and paths of ease, steadfastly set out to follow the Crucified. But as we lifted our eyes to Nepal, the land of hills and valleys, in our hearts was the cry "How long, oh, Lord, how long?"

"Are you building a hospital in Nautanwa?" we were asked many times.

"No, we are going to have one in Nepal," was our answer.

God gave us the promise and to that promise we clung. We learnt not only to stand on it but to lie down on it and no blast from the Evil One moved us from it.

"The land whither ye go . . ., the land whither ye go . . ." What comfort and rest those words brought to us!

"Though the vision tarry, wait for it."

"Who through faith and patience inherited the promises."

The waiting time seemed long, but God's clocks keep perfect time, and the day came when He set before us the open door into the land. This book tells how that door opened and how He led us in.

May the story be to His praise and glory, "Who only doeth wondrous things."

I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Stewart and Miss Graham for all their inspiration and help in the writing of the book and to Mr. Basil Goodfellow for permission to use his excellent photo of Fish-tail Mountain for the cover.

LILY M. O'HANLON.

July, 1957.

FOREWORD

THIS is a most disturbing book : it is an account of a modern miracle. It is far more than a record of a great missionary adventure. It is convicting and challenging. It has made me thoroughly ashamed of myself, and my so much more easy pilgrimage.

Dr. Lily O'Hanlon, and her colleague, Hilda Steele, set off at the call of God to be ready to enter the closed land of Nepal, directly the "gate" was open and the needed permissions granted.

Nothing daunted by the difficulties, disappointments, and delays, they waited and worked among the border villages for sixteen years, always fully persuaded that what God had promised them He was able to perform.

And now He has done it. The redeeming love of Christ is known to some in that hitherto unopened territory of God's world. His two intrepid ambassadors had none of the comforts of modern travel in reaching their promised land. They walked, they climbed, they trekked, often without knowing where they would rest the following night. But they arrived !

And they did not go alone. During the waiting years in Nautanwa, there had been added to the Church Nepali converts who now became colleagues. As of yore, there went with them a band of men and women whose hearts God had touched.

We of Missionary and Bible Colleges at home are asking—"What kind of Candidates are needed for the Mission Field to-day ?"

This book gives us the answer. What a story it is ! And this is only the beginning. The best is yet to be.

(Signed) MARY R. HOOKER.

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BEXLEY, KENT.

CHAPTER ONE

Entering Nepal

"MAY I introduce my brother to you? He may be going to Nepal as the British Ambassador." A tall grey-haired man stepped forward and shook hands with me.

"If I do," he said, "I hope you will visit my wife and me at Katmandu."

It was early in the year 1951, when Miss Steele and I were home on furlough. At that time Nepal was still a closed land to the Christian missionary. We had been working in Nautanwa on the border since 1936, but beyond short medical calls to Butwal, a town at the foothills, there had been no opportunity to visit the interior.

By Easter of that year we were back on our station taking with us Mr. and Mrs. Wall as new colleagues and in the Autumn were joined by Miss Joan Short, a fully trained Hospital nurse. While we had been away, stirring events had been taking place in Nepal. The old Rana regime had been overthrown in the winter of 1950-1951. King Tribhuvana had flown to India from Katmandu and had returned, not as a mere figure-head, but to rule his kingdom with a Prime Minister whom he had chosen from amongst the people.

Then came an invitation from the Embassy to visit the Capital. Surely this was of the Lord and He would use it to further His purposes; the "gates of brass" were yielding. For a number of years now we had felt that Pokhra was to be the place of His choice. Army pensioners and others had told us of its excellent position for a Hospital.

"If you go there," they said, "many patients will visit you because it is the centre of a big district and everyone knows about it."

Buddhi Sagar*, one of our Nepali workers had come from Pokhra and often tried to describe it to us.

"It's a big flat valley," he told us, "with rice fields and all around are the hills."

During the weeks that followed, plans were talked over and preparations were made. It was decided that Buddhi Sagar should accompany Miss Steele and me, as in the event of permission being granted to visit Pokhra, he would be of the greatest help. Then we might be allowed to trek back from there to Nautanwa, and for this camping equipment and food would be needed.

At last the day came. All was ready, and we set out for Katmandu. Buddhi Sagar was wearing Nepali clothes, a double breasted cotton "coat" which fitted up to the neck and down to the wrists, and was fastened by cloth ties instead of buttons. On top of this was a waistcoat. His trousers were baggy with tight legs; his cap with no brim and the crown higher on one side than the other, gave him a jaunty appearance.

The first part of the journey took us eastwards through North India to Raxaul on the Nepal frontier. From there, early next morning, we made our way to the Nepali railway station, where we were to get the train for Amalekganj. The great Himalayan peaks showed up dazzlingly white against a deep blue sky. The lower hills varied from grey-blue to green and in the foreground were the dark green patches of the mango groves. The clear visibility made the distance deceptive; the folds in the foothills could be seen, the deep shadows in some of the

* Buddhi Sagar pronounced Boodhi Saagur.

valleys; there were forests, giant landslides, bare rocks with knife-like edges; one felt that even the villages should be visible.

The fussy little engine was getting up steam to pull the toy train the twenty miles of line. Officials walked about leisurely, and porters ran here and there with luggage on their heads. The carriages were filling up rapidly; there were Tibetans with jolly faces and bulky clothes; Nepalies glad to be going back to their own land, a few Indians and ourselves.

At last everyone was in, the luggage stowed away, the onlookers stood back and with a piercing whistle from the engine, the little train slowly left the station. We were on our way to Nepal; along with a feeling of exultation we were strangely lonely and not a little frightened for we knew there was an Enemy who would oppose our every move.

At Amalekganj there was a wild scramble for seats in one of the local, jerry-built buses bound for Bhimpedi, twenty-seven miles further on, the terminus of the motor road in those days.

It was a small town set in a semi-circle of hills rising 3,000 ft. above it, the natural stopping place in the olden days for Royalty and Government Ministers on their way to and from the capital. As there were no hotels, several Rest Houses had been built for them and for any visitors who might be passing through. A ropeway coped with most of the freight from here for the Katmandu valley, but cars had to be carried by man-power and this was no mean feat as it involved a twenty mile journey over ridges and down into valleys. There was also a telegraph office and the town was full of the importance of minor officialdom.

After spending a night in the Royal Rest House, we were on the road again as soon as it was light. The first two or three miles were exceedingly steep and we were thankful for the small unshod ponies provided by His Majesty the King. Having crossed the ridge we dismounted, as the path which led down to the river below seemed to be composed of boulders. It was an initiation into the type of roads we were to meet later on. We walked over the suspension bridge and enjoyed looking into the crystal clear depths. Many of Nepal's rivers contain glacier water, a delightful green in the winter, but milky white throughout the rest of the year.

From the far side of the bridge there was a small rise before the track entered the wide fertile Chitlong valley with its numerous villages. It seemed an interminable time before we reached the farther end, only to be confronted by a wall-like ridge which forms the southern rim of the Katmandu valley. Up this our tired ponies took us and there at the top, we found the British Ambassador and his wife waiting for us. How wonderful it was that at this time we should have been granted friends in such a position.

Katmandu and Patan were cities of twinkling lights when we eventually saw them, but we dared not delay as dusk was falling. We had climbed to 8,000 ft. ; the valley below was 4,500 ft. After another welcome cup of tea, we descended with all speed to the road terminus where the Embassy cars were waiting to take us the last ten miles to the capital. How strange it seemed to be travelling once more in comfort along roads lit by street lamps, passing houses twinkling with electric light. Here was this valley completely surrounded by hills and yet enjoying some of the advantages of western civilisation.

Sixteen days were spent in the British Embassy and during that time we were able to learn and to see much of interest. We saw the old red-brick houses of Katmandu with their wonderfully carved wood-work, the square where, over a hundred years ago, the massacre took place, bringing the Ranas into power and the many temples and shrines. In contrast to these, there were the more modern buildings, Singha Durbar, once the residence of the Prime Minister, now given over to Government offices and Reception Rooms, also several hospitals and schools.

The Katmandu valley is roughly twenty miles from east to west and twelve from north to south. The capital is by far the biggest of the three towns in it probably having a population of 600,000 people. Patan lies to the south and to all intents and purposes is fast becoming a suburb. Here, even more so than in Katmandu, the temples dominate the scene. Bhatgaon lies nine miles to the east and, apart from the main square with still more temples, the houses are packed tightly together. The streets are narrow and much of it looks squalid.

Besides the towns there are many villages and everywhere signs of agriculture. The valley was once a lake, and silt left behind has made it more fertile than the surrounding hills. Where irrigation is possible, rice is grown and on higher ground, lentils, wheat, Indian corn, vegetables and fruit.

There are also two famous Buddhist temples, Shambunath and Bodhnath, which are important places of pilgrimage. The large black and red painted eyes of the latter with the question mark for the nose is an arresting sight.

We were able to be present at the public function on Nepal's Independence Day when units of the Army marched past the King, as he took the salute. We drove

through crowded streets to the Parade ground around which may hundreds were already gathered. From a small "grand stand" we watched General Kirin, the Commander-in-Chief, a prominent figure on a white prancing horse, as he dealt with last minute arrangements. We saw General Kaiser, the Minister for Defence, in a long black coat on which he was wearing the Star of Nepal, that much coveted badge. The Prime Minister, Mr. M. P. Koirala, was there and members of his cabinet with their wives and children. Everyone sought to be present on such a day.

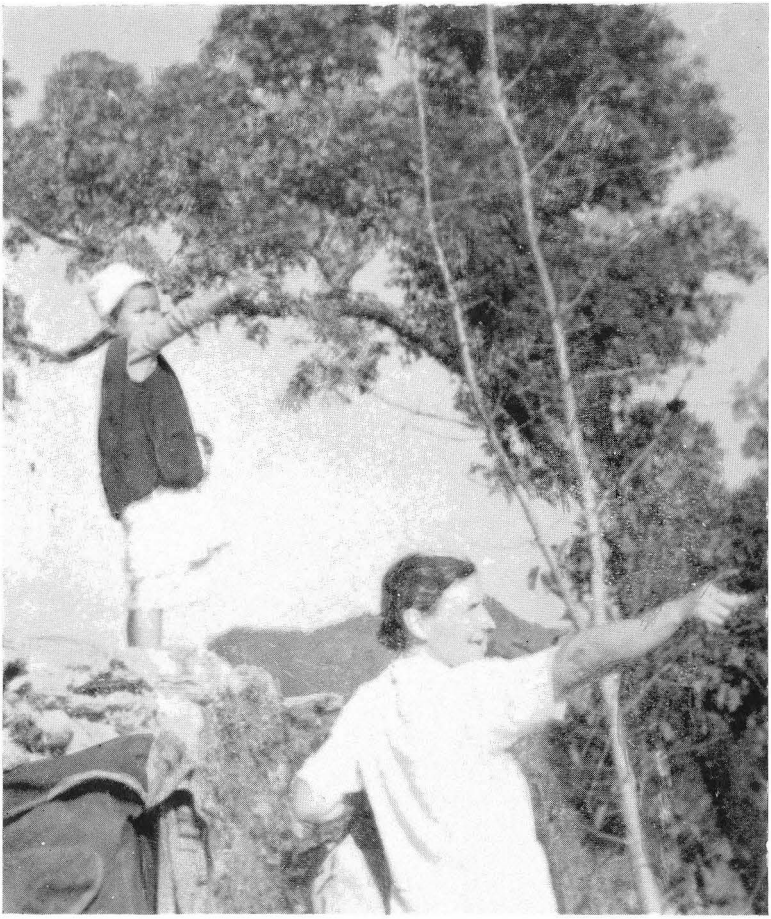
The Crown Prince then drove up and took his place in the Royal Stand followed by the two Queens in a mustard coloured car. Finally, with a fanfare of trumpets, King Tribhuvana arrived and walked forward to the raised dais followed by several ministers.

How our hearts were stirred as we watched that scene. Were we soon to have a share in this land? How would our request to start a hospital be received?

Our first interview was with the Health minister—at that time an ex-Gurkha Captain. He was of the Gurung caste with the high cheek bones and slit eyes of the Mongolian, a stocky figure in a Nepali "coat" and trousers, but instead of a waistcoat he was wearing a Norfolk jacket. He was outside his palace to welcome us and when he found we could speak Nepali the Interpreter was dismissed and we settled down to a delightful half-hour. Except for a small carpet on which was a table, several chairs and a sofa, the room was quite bare.

"I have no money to furnish this large room," he said, "now will you have some tea?"

Sweet, milky tea was produced and then we began to talk of Pokhra and the medical needs of the surrounding



A Distant Village Being Pointed Out to Miss Steele

villages. The Captain himself came from that district and he was deeply concerned for his people.

"I will do my best for you," he told us, "write out your application for me."

This was done the next morning couched in the strongest terms of which we were capable.

Various other interviews followed and all seemed to be going well, so we were quite unprepared for the flat refusal that reached us on the last day of our visit. We were, however, to be allowed to go and see Pokhra, a hundred miles to the north-west, and from there, to return home to Nautanwa, a trek of seventy-five miles south.

"How would you like to go?" we were asked. "You can fly in the King's plane—that takes thirty-five minutes; or you can walk; that takes ten days."

On this occasion we decided on the first mode of transport!

Before we left, the Health Minister came to see us again.

"I will put in your application again," he said, "leave it to me and keep a good heart." With a cheery smile and a firm handshake he bade us goodbye.

There were not many passengers in the King's Dakota the next day. The British Ambassador was going over for a few hours, and the Minister of Commerce was setting out on a tour of the west.

As the plane circled higher and higher, we had a bird's eye view of the valley and then we headed west. To the north stretched the mighty snow barrier with its massive peaks, part of the 500 mile range that has "23 peaks over 25,000 ft. and 100 over 21,000 ft.," and far below us as we passed over the western rim of the valley—were the villages to which we had hoped to be sent. On and on we flew, over ridges of five, six and seven thousand feet; over

glacier-fed rivers; over groups of houses and patches of cultivated land.

As we entered the Pokhra valley, roughly sixteen miles long, and ten miles in width, the plane had to circle three times before the landing ground could be cleared of people. In those days there was no regular service between Pokhra and the outside world and its arrival was not a nine days but a nine months wonder! Villagers would come from far distant places to see it.

Those who had spent all their lives in the hills had never seen a train or car; and now into their midst came this flying monster; to them it was incredible—breath-taking.

To add to their delight, that day there were three Westerners amongst the passengers and two were women. Men they had seen before; there had been the French climbing expedition to Annapurna in 1950 as well as other climbers, and those collecting birds and flowers, but never before had there been women! There was an exciting buzz of conversation as they pressed forward to have a better view. With equal interest we looked at the crowd and then raising our eyes, we saw for the first time, the Matterhorn-like peak of Fish-tail rising nearly 23,000 feet above us.

"That's Fish-tail," we heard someone say, "how it dominates the scene."

We were to stay the week-end with one of Buddhi Sagar's relations in a nearby village, so after seeing our luggage carried over to the house we returned to the air-field to bid good-bye to the British Ambassador. It was a strange experience to watch the plane heading for Katmandu until finally it was out of sight, and to realise we had been left behind with three days to spend in the centre of Nepal.

How busy those days were! We walked up the long cobbled street to the house of the Governor. He was away in the capital at the time, but we met his deputy and other officials. We visited the homes of patients whom we had treated in Nautanwa; we saw as much of Pokhra and the nearer villages as was possible in so short a time, and many came to us for medical help.

All too soon the week-end was over. With four cheerful coolies to carry the luggage we turned our steps towards the south. It would be a five or six days' trek, so we were told. Reaching the top of the southern ridge—a climb of 3,000 feet—we paused to look back at the valley. There was the town partially hidden by trees, the air-strip and near it one of the lakes with its green water. We could see many villages on the terraced hill-sides; there was the Shetey river flowing in a gorge 200 ft. below the surface of the surrounding land and there, above it all, were the Himalayan giants, Dhaulagiri, Annapurna and Fish-tail, the Manaslu range, and still further east Ganesh Himal. In our possession we had a note which told us that there was no permission to open a hospital in Pokhra; in our possession also was a promise given many years before which said "The land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys." To this was now added the Word "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." We would return, of that we were certain, but when would it be?

CHAPTER TWO

Inheriting the Promise

FOR sixteen years we had lived in Nautanwa, four miles from the Nepal border, but the last eight months were the most trying of all, and taxed our patience to the utmost.

Our first visit to the land in March, 1952, had been an apparent failure; we had not been granted permission to return. In the following month, however, we received a letter from the ex-Gurkha Captain, the Minister of Health, saying the Nepali Government had reconsidered our request to open a Hospital in Pokhra, and they were willing for this under the following conditions. We were to take no part in politics, we were not to proselytize, and should the Government ask us to close the work we would leave the country within a month.

We spread the letter before our Heavenly Father, and then we sent in our answer. We promised to comply with the first and last conditions, but we asked for permission to worship and serve God on our own Compounds as the staff would be entirely Christian. This was followed by a further waiting period of two months. It was now the hottest time of the year. June 24th dawned apparently just another day of exhausting heat, but God had planned it otherwise. By the English mail came the promise of £50 for the opening of work in Nepal, and later by registered post there was a letter from Katmandu. Trembling with excitement it was opened and read, and there at long last was permission for the Hospital in Pokhra. How our hearts went up in praise to the God "Who only doeth

wondrous things." At once we began to make plans to go in, only to be stopped once again by yet another letter from the Capital. This said that because of Monsoon conditions then prevailing there was no permission to begin work. Our hearts sank. Was this the end of it all before we had even started? What was in the mind of the Nepali Government when they sent this letter we do not know, but this we know now that had we tried to go to Pokhra in the rainy season we might well have lost lives. The smoothly gliding rivers we had seen in March by June are angry torrents where year after year men and women are drowned. Day after day we might have had to walk in the rain, and have found only wet accommodation at night. Tracks are often washed completely away, and rivers can delay travellers until the waters have subsided sufficiently to make fording them possible. We had not realised on our five days' journey south how very different are the conditions in Nepal to those of the Indian Himalayan hill districts where Dak Bungalows and proper bridges make trekking a possibility even during the rains. In His loving care of us our Lord Himself stopped us from going in June.

In the meantime God was gathering together those who were to make up that first party to go into the land. Miss Jean Raddon, another fully trained nurse, had come to join us in April of that year, to be followed in October by Dr. Ruth Watson. So with Miss Joan Short, and Miss Ellen Meincke, a Danish nursing sister in her second term of service, there were now six Missionaries preparing to walk up to Pokhra. Mr. and Mrs. Wall were at that time working amongst Nepalies in Shillong. As well as the Europeans there were to be five Nepali Christians. Priscilla, well on in life, and only converted two years

before but truly called of God to return to her own land; Yacub, recently demobbed from a Gurkha regiment, and his wife Rebecca who had also heard the Gospel in Nautanwa, and had come to the Saviour; Prem Masih, the "Aitey" of "Except the Lord Build," who now wanted to leave school and serve the Master in Nepal, and Maila, the younger son of Noah and Hannah, a family who had heard of the Lord up in Shillong.

In October we started packing, and soon every suitable box, crate, kit bag and basket began to be filled with drugs, dispensary equipment, household goods, some camp furniture, personal clothes, a few precious books and bedding. We got up to six coolie loads, with only medicines and instruments. Then about two loads of household things, and eight of personal things. On October 24th we heard quite by accident that it had been broadcast over the Nepali wireless that a party of Missionaries were going up from Nautanwa to Pokhra, and must be given all necessary help. Pastor David, therefore, went into the Police Post in Bhairwa to find out if we might proceed across the border.

"No," was the uncompromising reply, "we have had no instructions from Katmandu."

Then followed days rich in the promises which our friends sent us. The first came from Calcutta, they wired us Psalm 72. 18, "Blessed be the Lord God . . . who only doeth wondrous things," to be followed the next day, Sunday, by one from Rev. Alan Redpath* and the Duke Street congregation, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua 1. 9.

* Rev. A. Redpath is now in U.S.A.

The blessing of those days led us on October 29th to retire to our flat roof for an unhurried time of communion with the Lord. That roof had been the place of much prayer, but the session that evening stands out as more blessed than the rest. With a marvellous view of the Nepali "snows" in front of us we were led out in believing prayer that the time for going up had arrived, and one after another we began to praise. The "going in" was an accomplished fact.

On that day, as we were praying, a letter had been posted to us from home telling us that £70 was on its way out. By the time the letter arrived we had the necessary permission from the first police post in Bhairwa to say we might cross the border. How wonderfully God's clocks keep time. The necessary money and the essential permit came together.

Thus ended sixteen years of waiting. On November 29th, 1936, we had arrived in Nautanwa, and on November 10th, 1952, with a party of nine others we were to set out to go into the land. It seemed like a dream, yet the luggage was substantial enough ; so was the Army truck lent us by the Gurkha Recruiting Depot to take us over the first twenty miles of our journey. Early in the morning we started to pack in our many boxes, watched by at least two sorrowful people. Our cook, who had been with us since 1936, and had never yielded herself to the Lord, and Pastor David's small six year old son, who told us he could walk because he had a good pair of shoes! "Prem Masih hasn't any shoes, but I have. Can't I come too?"

"Not now," we said, "you can come later."

The luggage was stacked higher and higher, but eventu-

ally every last box, bag or basket was in and it only remained for us to climb up and put ourselves somewhere.

With a jerk we were off, lurching this way and that as we struck the ruts in the road, which is not famous for its good surface so that we were bruised and sore before we had covered six of its twenty miles. We reached Bhairwa, the first police post, and here we had to stop. In those days this place was little more than a straggly village though in importance it ranked as a town.*

Two of us could look back and remember our first visit there. We had been working on the border for two or three months when a call came from a woman needing medical attention. When the patient had been seen we sat facing those ever-beckoning hills, and prayed that God would open the way for us to go in, and stay, and now we were at that police post on our way into the interior. After some very considerable delay, the necessary documents were prepared for us, the sealing of our baggage completed, and once again we were on our way.

The country through which we passed was rich rice country where the harvests never fail because many small streams and rivers can be used for irrigation if there is shortage of rain, unlike the south where the farmers are entirely dependent on a good monsoon. For the last six or seven miles our road lay through a belt of forest which extends along the entire 500 miles of southern border. We saw nothing more interesting than long-tailed grey monkeys, but that part of the country harbours tigers, panthers, leopards, to say nothing of robbers and dacoits.

* This was as we saw the place in 1952. By 1954 Bhairwa was unrecognisable. Large shops had been built, the population must have nearly doubled by a great increase of Indian traders. The gate posts and the gate have been re-installed and there is the business and activity of a growing, money-making town.

Finally, our Army lorry bumped its way through the outskirts of Butwal and drew up at the extreme limits of motorable road. From now on, we would have to walk. As one after another jumped down on to the road a group of coolies collected and eyed us solemnly. We had come in an Army lorry, therefore we were rich they decided; there were six Europeans and five Nepalies and we had much luggage. As the baggage began to be stacked at the side of the road some of them would come up and test the weight of one or two pieces and then there would be mumbled comments and they would go back to their companions. The Captain in charge of the truck talked to this group and that, telling them the amount we could give them if they carried our luggage to Pokhra, but they showed no enthusiasm.

The next question was where were we to spend the night. The Captain and his Army truck had by this time turned round and were lurching their way back to Nautanwa. We were alone in an unhelpful town with miles and miles of hill path ahead of us and luggage that we could not carry ourselves. There was no time or privacy for corporate prayer, but each one of us lifted our hearts to our "tremendous God."

"If my shed would be sufficient for you, you are welcome to sleep there the night," said a little woman. "It's on the land at the back of my house and would be quite private."

"Thank you," we said, "can we see it?"

"Certainly, please come this way."

The shed was not what one would call luxurious. It had a roof and that was about all, but it was a place where we could spend the night even if we could not sleep soundly. We arranged our boxes around the edge which left just enough room for the eleven of us to lie down.

The outline of the hills had disappeared in the darkness; the town had settled down to sleep; all was quiet about us as we looked up at the stars. How often they had spoken to us of the God who fulfils His promises. We were here because of the promise given over twenty years before, "The land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys," and now He Who had sent us had promised to be One of us "travelling the road."

Sleep came slowly that night. It seemed like a dream that we were there at all after the long, long years of waiting.

"Listen to Daily Light," called someone, the next morning, "He led them on safely." "Behold I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared." "They got not the land in possession by their own sword neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand . . . because Thou hadst a favour unto them." "So didst Thou lead Thy people."

It certainly was wonderfully appropriate, and with grateful hearts we committed our way to Him Who had led us thus far.

After a meal, the main party started up the gorge while two of us tackled the coolie problem once again.

"Unless everything is weighed, no one will come," they said.

"How much will they want?" we asked.

"The usual rate is 1/- per lb." That seemed a great deal to us, but we had no means of finding out if this was right or not. The luggage was then carried to the centre of the town and there, surrounded by an interested group of onlookers, piece after piece was put on the scales and weighed. We know missionaries should be above such

things but we felt physically sick with fear as the price mounted higher and higher. £10 . . . £15 . . . £20, £25 . . . £40. Surely we had weighed everything—no there were two or three boxes left and the total was £48. Would there be sufficient for the coolies, let along our needs on the way up and our early days in Pokhra? Had we taken sufficient with us? It was impossible to go back. "Verily thou shalt be fed," came to us with sweet assurance, and on that promise we started off for Pokhra with nineteen coolies trailing along behind.

The gorge through which we walked for the first two miles was a fitting start for the road to the interior. The river with its green glacier water came tumbling down over grey boulders, sometimes widening out into pools, sometimes passing through narrow defiles; trees and shrubs grew where there was any foothold for them and above it all, was the blue, blue sky and brilliant sunshine. The path for the most part was cut out of the rock which formed one of the sides of this gorge, and in places there was a sheer drop to the river below. At one juncture a young waterfall somewhat delayed our progress. With a prayer for help, we passed over safely. At the end of two miles the gorge widened out and there before us, where two rivers met, was a Heath Robinsonish bridge. It went over the river, one could say that, but was quite unlike any we had ever seen before.

A man passed us as we were thinking what to do.

"Is that bridge safe?" we asked.

"I think so," he replied, but his tone was not very reassuring.

"Look, he continued, "that man is going across." A second man was coming along the path.

"What's the bridge like?" he asked him.

"Oh, all right so far as I know," was the laconic reply. With that he started to climb it, and beyond a few creaks and a tendency to bounce, nothing untoward happened.

The rest of the party were having a meal in a thatched, mud-walled wayside "Café." The owner was a friend of ours, who had come to Nautanwa for treatment on more than one occasion.

"We've ordered your rice and curry and a goat has just been slaughtered so there is meat, too," we were told. A mat had been put down on the earthen floor and gratefully we sat down and had our meal. From there until we had topped the 4,000 ft. Massiang Ridge at noon next day the path continued to lead us up, and much of it was so steep it had been made into steps. The vegetation in this second valley was very luxuriant and another river, cheerful and noisy, kept us company throughout the rest of the day.

The people in our resting-place that night were not friendly and we were glad to move on the next morning. We continued our journey, climbing steadily till from the ridge we had our first view of the "snows" since leaving Nautanwa. Patients were waiting for us here and we treated as many as we could, and the end of that day found us in another unfriendly village. By this time we were all feeling rather dirty and when bathing facilities presented themselves we made what use we could of them; accommodation was distinctly meagre and we were all beginning to suffer from the "wear and tear" of the trek.

Rebecca's shoes had given out and she was by this time walking bare-foot; Priscilla's sack of cooking utensils was a continual source of worry to her and to us. She needed them as soon as she stopped at our various "camping sites" and that particular coolie often seemed to come in last; he, on the other hand, was always hustling her to put her pots

and pans in and tie the bag up and let him get off in the morning. Our Priscilla did wonderfully well, however, for she was by no means young. We would see her starting off with Prem Masih, a cloth bag slung from her forehead and hanging down her back, three lanterns in her hand, and determination to get there in every line of her body. By her side Prem Masih with a heavy rucksack trudged along day after day. He was coming up to Pokhra to be our male dresser. Yacob, Rebecca's husband, stayed behind to keep the last coolies on the move. We would hear him speaking to them as a shepherd talks to straggling sheep.

"Very good, that's it, just a little more and we'll be at the top. No, don't stop now, there's a good place round the corner. Splendid, splendid, you're all doing very well."

Maila, the fifth Nepali, was the youngest of the party by several years. He was to help with the cooking, and although he had said he was willing to come, we wondered how he would stand it.

On the fifth day we reached the great Kali (Krishna gandaki) river and found the people here were as friendly as in the last village they had been unfriendly. They came running out of their houses and flocked around us.

"Have you any medicine, my baby has two tongues?"

"Two tongues," we gasped. "Let's see."

This description was not quite accurate, but sure enough there was a small flap under the tongue which should not have been there.

"You'll have to come to Pokhra," we told the father.

"No, I can't do that, just give a little medicine," he begged.

"But it may need to be cut away."

"Oh! won't it hurt? . . . no, no," he went on, "just a

little medicine and it will be all right. I have heard much about your medicine and how good it is."

In desperation a little "something" was given him and, believe or not, later that flap disappeared, so no doubt he is convinced that he was right and we did not know what we were talking about when we asked him to walk all those many miles into Pokhra carrying a heavy baby.

We crossed the river by a long suspension bridge high above the water and proceeded up the hill on the other side. On our way we passed the Government Leper Asylum and were afresh concerned with the need of the lepers of that country. The time had not yet come, but one day we would have a home where these poor afflicted people could be cared for and where they could hear of the One Who loves them.

We talked over possible plans as we climbed to the top of the hill far above them. Here, again, were friendly folk of the fighting castes—Gurungs and Magars. They begged us to stay there that night but the village was at a high altitude and the coolies had only very little bedding with them so we regretfully declined their kind hospitality. However, that ever welcome beverage, tea, was quickly produced and we laughed and talked as we drank many cups.

Our stop that night introduced us to "Pip-Squeak." As usual we were in a shed facing the main street and the crowd that evening were particularly curious.

"Will you please all move off," said Yacob for the third time, somewhat exasperated. "The Miss Sahibs want to settle for the night and they can't with all of you looking on." The crowd moved off slowly all except Pip-Squeak who stood and stared in an impudent way.

"Go," cried Yacob, really cross by now, "get off with you. What are you doing there?"

"What are you doing here," was the angry rejoinder. "We don't want you people in our country." Eventually, he went off, and we thought no more about it. What was our surprise and consternation the next day to find Pip-Squeak and a group of his companions out on the road to waylay Yacob. He was beside himself with wrath. We realised that a serious situation had arisen, and that Yacob was in imminent danger of losing his life. In the midst of all the confusion and turmoil hearts were lifted in urgent prayer. God answered, and gradually the man's fury subsided, his attitude changed, and we were allowed to proceed on our way, realising afresh the power of the evil one against us.

There was one more hill to climb that night before eleven very tired and exhausted people lay down to sleep. The next day would see us in Pokhra, but where were we to go? It had not been possible to make any arrangements.

Very early next morning two of us were on the road again, to go ahead of the main party and try to find some suitable accommodation.

Annapurna and the Fish-tail were dazzlingly white in their morning splendour. There below us lay the valley—our valley. There was the long straggly main street with its many trees, the rice fields, the villages, the wooded hill-sides, the gorge of the Shetey River.

There was no time to admire the view that morning, however; we fled down that steep and stony path and by 8 a.m. were at the bottom. A quick walk of another hour took us to Buddhi's house and, after a short rest, on we went to the Guest House. This had been built by a public-spirited local man for the convenience of strangers.

It was a three-storeyed white-washed brick building which we had seen on our first visit to Pokhra, but at that time we had chosen the accommodation Buddhi Sagar could give. We would still have preferred his room, for this was an isolated house with an evil atmosphere, but obviously we needed a bigger place than the village people could give us.

We called for the caretaker, who was living nearby, and asked him if we might stay there that night.

"I can't give permission," he said, "only the local Governor can do that and he's away in Katmandu."

"He's coming over to fish," volunteered one of the onlookers. "He's to come in the plane."

"Is it in?" we asked. Being fully occupied that morning we had been unaware of its arrival.

"Yes, it's in," a voice called out. This meant another four miles walk to the Governor's house and—another four miles back again. One of us went while the other returned to Buddhi Sagar's house to contact the remainder of the party.

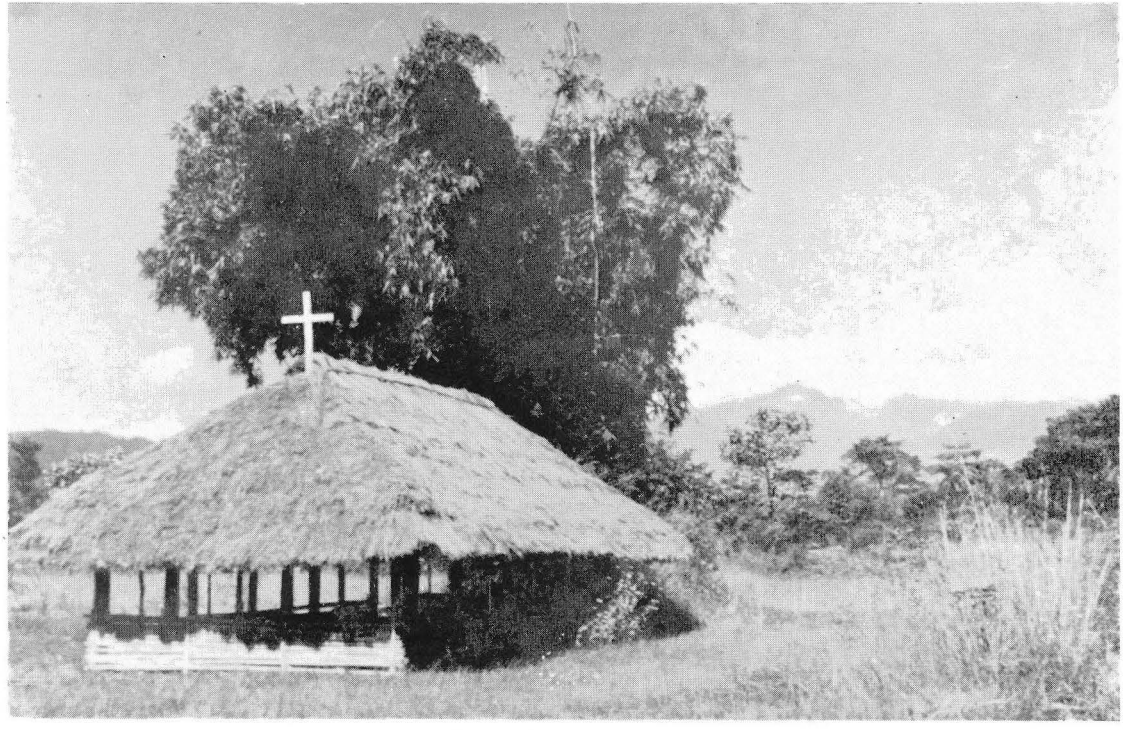
That night as we sat on the bare uneven boards of our new domain and ate our supper, we reviewed the happenings of the last twenty-four hours.

Why on that day, of all days, should the Governor have elected to come over for two hours' fishing from Katmandu? He had been away for three weeks, and after those few hours he went away again for another nineteen days.

Surely the Lord's hand was in it and He was showing us that we had arrived in Pokhra on His own appointed day. We and all our luggage had arrived safely, the coolies had been paid off, we now had a roof over our heads and a place for the night—and fifteen shillings in our pockets.

"He led them on safely." Yes, indeed He had.

Some of the Staff of the Shining Hospital—Joan Short, Lily O'Hanlon, Ruth Watson, Jean Raddon, Eileen Lodge, Betty Bailey



THE FIRST CHURCH IN POKHRA

"Who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders."

With full hearts that night we sang :—

"How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend.
We'll praise Him for all that is passed
And trust Him for all that is to come."

CHAPTER THREE

Proving His Faithfulness

RAT-A-TAT! Rat-a-tat!

Whoever was visiting us so early on the first morning? We hurried down the creaking wooden staircase and opened the door.

"I'm part of the American Four-Point Plan," drawled our visitor. "I was given this packet to bring over to you from Katmandu. We're leaving to-day to fly back, so it's as well you arrived yesterday or you wouldn't have gotten it to-day as I was told to hand it over in person."

With that he produced a fat envelope and we duly thanked him for his kindness in bringing it to us.

"You staying here long?" he queried.

"Oh, yes, for the rest of our lives, we hope," and then, as he looked a bit incredulous, we added, "Oh! we know we'll have to start from scratch."

"Indeed you will," he said, "and believe me, it's some scratch. Well, good luck to you. I must be off as I wouldn't like to miss that plane!" And with a firm handshake and a cheery good-bye he was gone.

We climbed the stair again and opened the envelope. Inside was a fat bundle of Nepali notes with a letter from a friend. With beating hearts we counted them—one hundred, two hundred, three, four hundred rupees. (About £25). Could anything have been more directly from His hand to ours? "Your Heavenly Father knoweth." "Verily ye shall be fed." How gracious were His dealings with us. That burly American little knew he had been God's postman to us that day.

At morning prayers, Nepalies and Missionaries alike lifted grateful thanks to their faithful "tremendous God."

"All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me."

Then the work of the day started. There was the necessity of finding a permanent house ; there was food to be bought, clothes to be washed, luggage to be re-sorted and stowed away, and patients had already started coming.

Two of us with Buddhi Sagar went to the bazaar to house-hunt while the others coped with the chores, and patients were told that the dispensary would not open for a couple of days. We looked at house after house. In most, the ceilings were too low, the windows too small, the rooms quite inadequate and we began to realise that the continual noise of the bazaar, the lack of privacy, perpetual crowds in a restricted space, would make life well nigh impossible.

"Why not build huts on my field?" suggested Buddhi Sagar as we were returning on the third day from a fruitless search.

We looked at each other—that was certainly an idea. We turned aside and went to the field. It had possibilities. Here we would have quietness, space ; we could build with the work in view and we would be near Buddhi Sagar and his family. There and then we sat down on the ground and prayed for Divine guidance before we returned to the Guest House to report to the others.

"That's what we should do."

"That will be much better."

"Let's go and look at it."

Out spirits began to rise. We were all longing to see the last of our present abode although we knew it had been a

wonderful provision for us: we have called it a "Guest House," but we wonder what that conjures up in your mind? Nicely carpeted passages and rooms with chairs, tables, sofas; beds, wardrobes, dressing tables; a well-equipped kitchen; a bathroom with hot and cold water and everywhere electric light? In the Pokhra "Guest House" there were none of these things—not one.

The three rooms which we were allowed to occupy were completely bare. Our dining-room table was made up of a row of picnic boxes, somewhat uneven in height, and our beds were mattress covers stuffed with straw.

Plans went ahead quickly for the building of our huts, and for the next eight days everyone worked like navvies. Deep holes had to be made in the rockiest ground we have ever seen and nails suffered badly. Then after the roof was thatched, bamboo matting had to be secured to the outer supports to make the walls. The local people use thin strips of bamboo in place of string or wire, and we attempted to do likewise. One "builder" would go inside the hut, while a second remained outside.

"I've got a bit of bamboo tie and I'm putting it through here," indicated by a violent prod. "Can't you see it yet?"

"Where did you say?"

"Here, here." Further prods.

"But the whole thing moves, where do you mean?"

"Oh! you are silly. By this post, of course."

"Which post?"

The inside builder, now thoroughly exasperated, emerges red in the face to show the exact spot through which the little bamboo strip is coming, and thus slowly, but surely, the walls "went up."

On December 2nd my diary tells me, we moved over, and

took up residence in our three new huts. There was the dispensary nearest the gap in the stone wall which was the main entrance ; a middle hut, the centre portion of which was a dining-sitting room, and the two ends bedrooms. The third hut was a kitchen at one end and bedrooms for the Nepalies at the other end. We had begun to "possess" in Pokhra.

Patients had been coming for treatment since November 24th and the crowds increased as the days went by. Many were ill, and all were curious. There were badly burnt babies brought to us and terrible contractures due to burns, extraordinary skin conditions, some of which responded to tubercular treatment ; malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonias and bronchitis, dysenteries, and what we called for want of a better name, "Pokhra tummy," caused presumably by the rough food they had to eat.

This is how the prayer letter of January, 1953, describes those early days.

"We are having 150-200 every out-patient day and it takes us all to cope with that crowd. We started off with everything on the ground—patients, medicines, treatment and staff. But by the end of a busy morning we all had aching muscles, uniforms were dirty in an hour and the dust kept us anxious. So now we have managed to erect various bamboo benches, beds, etc., and a local carpenter has made us some tables, so we are beginning to feel quite proud of the Dispensary. Some of the cases are often very tragic. Dr. O'Hanlon, with Yacob to control the crowd, sees the male patients and Miss Short deals with their treatments and dressings. She is teaching Prem Masih to be a male dresser and he is very keen on the work and has real aptitude for it. Dr. Watson, with Miss Meincke to

help her and to interpret, sees the women and Miss Raddon attends to their treatments. Miss Steele has charge of the dispensing. Let us introduce some of the patients.

"Early most mornings into the Dispensary comes a young woman* from a village a day's journey away. She was reaping with some companions when a dispute arose and the fight, as described to us, resulted in one girl losing her hand, another woman half her nose and this patient had her face terribly slashed. The eye was only just missed but the lower lid was torn away at the corner. Dr. Watson did a plastic operation and the Lord blessed her work. So the patient and her relatives are very grateful indeed. Miss Raddon is busy with the dressing of a child's face which is badly burnt. She comes from three days away. In one corner is a little lass who has had small-pox and a pock on each eye has left her faced with blindness. Miss Short has a patient whose chest is a mass of sores. He has been in this condition for eight years. Beside him sits a Tibetan gentleman waiting patiently for a dressing on an abscess of six month's standing. From Dr. O'Hanlon's corner a man remarks—"Twenty years have I been deaf and after your medicine I can now hear the crowing of the cock." Great sensation amongst the patients, and some mirth on the part of the staff. Miss Meincke has a group of women round her—"No, you can't carry away drinking medicine in this dirty bamboo, you need a bottle." "You must bring your grandmother, we can't treat her without seeing her." "If you have only come to see this place, you must sit over there—only people who need medicine can sit here." "We don't usually treat horses, but perhaps the Doctor will tell you presently whether she can help your pony or not."

* This was the girl we saw in Windy River Valley on our way up.

It is often late before the last patient has gone and the weary staff can begin to clear up. Sometimes there are private patients to be seen later or very sick people to be visited in their homes and it is not very easy for everyone to be finished by 5 o'clock, the hour for united prayer each evening."

One day we were asked to amputate a man's leg.

"He was hurt and you will need to cut it off just below the knee," a sawing movement of the companion's hand indicated the method. As much information as possible was procured and then the huts became a hive of activity. There was no operating table, no steriliser; there were no drums, gowns, caps or masks, no trolleys, so all had to be improvised. Masks were sewn, biscuit tins were then packed with dressings, "theatre towels," etc., and baked in our kitchen fire, an operating table was made out of two small packing cases put end to end. All the tables we had brought with us were requisitioned; the largest free space in our dispensary hut, a full 9 ft. by 5 ft., was cleared for action and the "theatre" began to take shape. When the patient arrived all was ready for him. He was carried on a light bed, the "charpoy" of India, which is not often found in Nepal, and was put down outside the hut. One glance showed us he was an exceedingly ill man. The "accident" had happened four days before. They must have lifted him on the bed that day and nothing further had been done for him. We gave him intravenous glucose and penicillin and then with a final committal of ourselves and our patient into the Hands of Him Who, "perfect in knowledge," was with us, we grouped ourselves around him and the leg was amputated.

"We must have the leg," the friends had told us, "to take to the Shetey." They burn their dead on the banks

of this river and the ashes and remains are thrown into the water. The leg was duly given them. The man made an excellent recovery and now walks about Pokhra on a wooden leg.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fulfilling the Commission

LIFE in Pokhra had been full of the providential care of God. We had storms, in one of which our site was soon a lake, and the water rose rapidly in the dispensary. We had a busy two hours in torrential rain pulling down a wall, and opening a channel to let off the flood. We were wet through and chilled before the situation was under control, but no one took any harm. Another evening a young cyclone swept down at a time when only two of us were in camp. Away went the roof of Yacob's hut, a tent broke loose and sailed over a wall, and the entrance to our living room was forced in so that the roof dropped a couple of inches. These storms decided us that we must make a move to a better site.

We approached the local Governor about the possibility of procuring any land temporarily on which we might put our huts and he told us he had three suggestions to make, two plots were Government land and the third was owned by twenty Brahmins. We chose two out of the three. For the medical work we asked for a small strip of the parade ground and for our dwelling huts we found the field owned by the Brahmins most suitable. It was close by and yet its stone wall gave us the privacy we needed. How we prayed and how the devil attempted to keep us out of that field. One day all seemed to be going well and the next day the obstacles were insuperable. Finally, however, a lease was signed by the twenty Brahmins for a year's occupation and we started to build again. Out first huts were carefully dismantled, carried the intervening three

miles and rebuilt on the Brahmins' land and by the end of March, 1953, we had three bedroom huts housing two inmates in each and a dining-room hut. The old stone house which was on the field when we leased it, was cleaned up and made into a kitchen and upstairs there was a bedroom for Priscilla. From time to time on this site more huts have been added until by 1957, there are no less than eleven, one of which is our prayer hut. With each addition to the staff whether European or Nepali, a new hut is built and each one shows an improvement on the last.

Early on we were faced with the problem of what to do with patients who needed nursing. If there was any likelihood of death, no house would give them shelter. Our present site was only temporary, we had been told so repeatedly. After the monsoon was over, we would have to go elsewhere, so we had not built more than was essential. As the months passed by, however, we realised increasingly how ideal our two present sites were and although alternatives were suggested to us, we were in no hurry to move. Finally, in March 1954, we asked if we might remain on the parade ground for a further period of two years and this was granted. We then put up two small huts for in-patients. These had to be made entirely of bamboo matting as thatch was by then unprocurable, the season being over. We hoped they would be serviceable until the rains broke, but we had not bargained for the hurricane-like storms which sweep down on the northern extremity of the Pokhra valley. Wind and rain did their worst on one poor little hut and rendered it roofless. In the middle of the downpour, two of the staff went to see how the patients were faring. One T.B. patient was found taking shelter in the less exposed hut.

"Isn't it funny?" she said with a burst of laughter, "the

roof has flown away, and I'm all wet. Ha ! ha ! ha ! how funny." We were glad she could see the amusing side—but we did not !

How could we safely house these poor folk ? We were not allowed to build with stone or brick, or to erect anything which had foundations on rented land. Those were the terms of the lease, though sanction had been given for a Hospital. The need was urgent ; we had to do something within the next month or so before the monsoon came. We began to think of prefabricated units, but the first estimates seemed too expensive.

"Why don't you try something cheaper ?" said a friend one day.

Addresses were given us and our spirits rose as we found there were smaller buildings of various sizes. Here, surely, was the solution of our present need. An order was sent to Calcutta for the first "Twin Block" and a "Long Tom" to be sent up by air as soon as possible. The firm wrote back telling us how to make the necessary plinths. "All you have to do is to make a platform," we were told. It sounded simple, but it proved most difficult.

We ordered a thousand bricks, and after much delay the first instalment came. What was our consternation when we found many of them so soft that we could break them with our hands. We therefore cancelled the bricks, and decided to use stone. This had to be pick-axed out of the hill-side, but the men who owned the so-called quarry were not on good terms with each other, so frequently the work stopped while they quarrelled. Eventually there was enough stone with which to start, but when it came to cementing, it was quite obvious that no one there had used it before, and we were left to do the work ourselves. It was finished by the light of storm lanterns, and then we had to

wait for the men from Calcutta. The foundation was covered with a layer of hay to keep it from cracking in the mid-day sun, but this attracted cows and buffaloes, so there was constant warfare between us and the animals. Our relief was great when the erecting crew arrived, and our first foundation was "passed" so far as their requirements went."

The "Long Tom" type is 30 ft. by 20 ft., and has no partition, and the "Twin Block," 20 ft. by 23ft is divided into four rooms. This was a beginning, but we were sorely cramped for space. The "Long Tom" made an excellent hut for out-patients, the "Twin-Block" had to provide accommodation for in-patients, women out-patients, and any maternity or surgical cases! By October, 1955, we were able to order three Units, two more "Long Toms" for wards, and another "Twin Block" for the theatre. These Units are made of aluminium bolted onto steel mesh, and make good mirrors! When they were first erected the dogs growled and barked when they caught sight of themselves, and the buffaloes grazing nearby lowered their heads and looked belligerent. We had to take precautions in case they charged, and damaged the offending structure. Friendly villagers were invited in and in a few moments there would be shouts of laughter as they caught sight of their own reflections.

One day a group of women from a hill village were in Pokhra and they came sauntering along to see the new hospital, laughing and chatting as they looked in from a safe distance. We asked them where they live and they told us that their village lay high up on the south-eastern rim of the valley. It was a village we had not visited, though we had had patients from it.

"Can you see the hospital from your village," we asked.

"Oh, yes, we often sit outside and look down on the house that shines," was the reply, "that was why we decided to come down and see it for ourselves." Thus started the "Shining Hospital."

Early in the next year we heard that the King of Nepal was to visit Pokhra. No King, not even from Katmandu, had ever come before; one had certainly tried at the beginning of the century, but had been repulsed at the eastern end of the valley. The local rajahs—and there seems to have been many of them in the olden days—had objected to any domination. But now it was different; the country had become democratic; the King was one with his people; he was sympathetic and kindly and was trying to improve conditions in his kingdom, so they, his loyal subjects, would welcome him with all the honour and ceremony of which they were capable. Excitedly they started to plan for the memorable occasion. Extensive road repairs would have to be undertaken as the cobbled streets of Pokhra were rough and uneven, not having been made for wheeled traffic; arches had to be made under which His Majesty would drive in an Army jeep from the Airfield through the town to the Governor's house; a programme must be drawn up which would please each section of the public taking part in the festivities.

The Colonel and the Major of the local Militia called upon us to enquire if we wished to be presented to the King. We would be delighted we said and asked if he would be willing to open our new theatre block, and perhaps we could give him tea.

"We will find out and let you know," said the Major, then he added, "You must treat him as if he were your own Royalty; the ladies must wear hats, gloves and long

socks." Here he showed by a movement of his hands that stockings were to be worn.

This was no problem, but suitable gloves were another matter. Living in the heart of Nepal with four or five mountain ranges between us and the outside world such articles of dress were not needed and a visit had to be paid to friends in India to borrow what was required.

The days that followed were busy indeed, as the necessary preparations were added to the usual medical work.

There was a speech of welcome to be written in court Nepali ; an arch of red bunting with "Long Live the King" in gold lettering to be erected on front of the theatre and the Hospital to be made ready to receive the royal visitor.

In the town more and more arches appeared, each man vying with his neighbour in originality of design and colour scheme. Everywhere people were sweeping and tidying and making "crooked places straight," and gradually the town began to fill up with visitors from far off places.

At last, the long-looked for day arrived. Before it was light, those from nearer villages had been making their way down to the airfield. They made a continuous stream of colour, bright reds and yellows, greens and blues interspersed with more sombre hues. Everyone was in holiday mood and one could sense the thrill of expectation. To the people of Nepal the King is a god and the mere sight of him ensues a safe entrance into heaven ; no wonder all were eagerly looking forward to the great moment.

The Royal party were to come by plane from Bhairwa, an airfield in South Nepal, twenty-five minutes away by air, and were expected in the early afternoon.

The Hospital staff had been working hard for the past few days, but now all seemed to be ready and there was nothing more for us to do except to change into our best

clothes and follow the crowd. Due to the roughness of the road suitable shoes would have to be carried and put on later.

At this juncture, a man arrived to say his wife needed help in a village four miles away. Could someone come to help her? Miss Steele and Dr. Watson hurried away with him; twins were born in record time and then they proceeded to run back to Pokhra. Others on the road seeing them feared the plane must have arrived and began to run with them, but were greatly relieved when they heard it was still possible to reach the ground in time.

Let us quote from a letter written at the time—

"On February 20th the King of Nepal, with the second Prince, his brother, and their retinue visited Pokhra. The airfield was packed with thousands of Nepalies to greet him. Here was a group of leading Thakalis, rich prosperous cloth merchants with shops in Pokhra as well as Thakola; there a great company of important Tibetans representing big villages near the border. The Brahmins were in a section by themselves, and under the trees where His Majesty was to be received were the leading men of the town and surrounding district. And beyond these was a great multitude of the ordinary men, women and children, eager and excited. Lined up where the plane was to land was the Pokhra Battalion ready to be inspected and nearby were the Boy Scouts forming a guard of honour. General Kirin, the Commander-in-Chief had arrived early from Bhairwa to make sure all was in order. The appointed time came and there was no plane, then, over an hour late, there it was like a silver bird against the blue hills, coming towards us. As it came nearer the cheers broke out."

The cheers continued long after the King, a slight man dressed in Nepali clothes, had alighted from the aircraft.

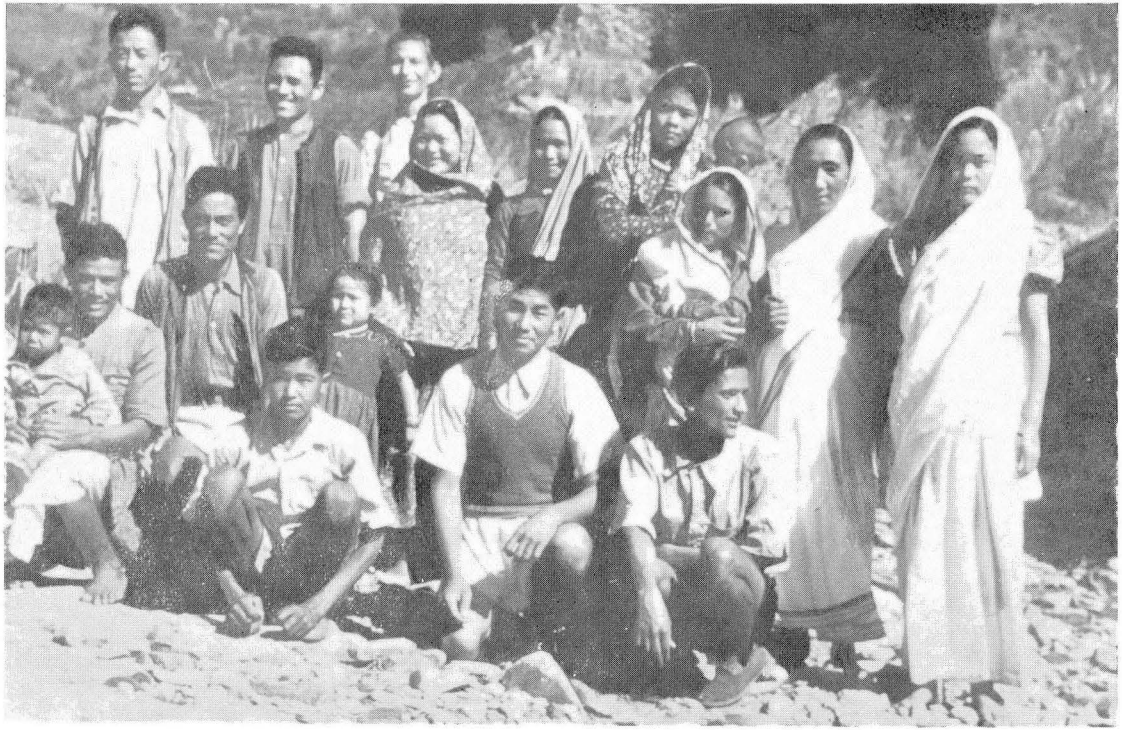
The Battalion had been inspected and the Police Force were standing at attention as the National Anthem was being played, when the people began to surge forward to gain a better view of His Majesty. It looked for a moment as if he would be mobbed, but with the help of the Governor and General Kirin, order was restored and he reached the platform under the trees in safety. After a few speeches, the Royal Party left for the town in two Army jeeps. It had been planned that the Hospital staff should be introduced on the ground, but owing to the difficulty of controlling the people, this had to be postponed until the next day when there was to be the formal opening of the theatre followed by the tea-party. General Kirin had asked us to be ready to entertain twenty guests.

Back we trudged up the long three miles with the jostling laughing crowd to find on our return that one of the patients in the male ward had developed chicken-pox.

What was to be done? There was nowhere else to put him and the King's physician would be one of the party. At all costs he must not be discovered or we would be accused of exposing His Majesty to unnecessary risk of infection.

"We'll put him in the corner and someone must conveniently stand in front of him," someone suggested. "Yes, and Pat can take the King past him quickly."

The time given had been 4 p.m., but long before this the man with chicken-pox was lying down, only the top of his head visible. The rest of the patients had been warned not to stir in their beds; the multi-coloured knitted blankets had had their final tuck-in and the sisters made sure that nothing had been overlooked. A few finishing touches had been given to the arch outside the theatre and chairs had been provided so that some of the dis-



The Twelve Baptised on November 8th, 1956, with Pastor David and Premi

tinguished guests might sit down while the speech was being read. On the adjacent land where the staff lived, preparations for tea were nearly completed. It was to be outside under the big shady tree. Small tables had been carried out and covered with embroidered cloths to match the pale mauve and old gold of the best china ; there were rugs on the ground, and for the King and his brother a settee had been placed facing the mountains where they could enjoy the view. For the other guests all available chairs had been brought out but most of these were not needed as no one sits in His Majesty's presence unless invited.

Since mid-day, men, women and children had been gathering in groups near the Hospital and these increasing hour by hour. Now distant cheering would be heard as the party approached. There were no walls round the huts and the missionaries wondered how the crowds could be controlled with only a handful of helpers. As the jeep reached the football ground and began to cross it, the people ran forward on both sides. They were stopped at a short distance from the Hospital, however, the front lines obediently sitting down on the ground, the others standing but all remaining still. One was reminded of the flannel-graph pictures of the feeding of the five thousand.

Miss Steele and I were formally introduced, then the King with his retinue passed under the arch and sat down while the address was being read. After this, Martyn, the small son of Mr. and Mrs. Wall, came forward with a pair of scissors on a tray. Taking them the King walked to the theatre and cut the red ribbon across the entrance. The whole party went inside and were shown the instruments, sterilisers, bowls and tray. From there they went to the two wards, the maternity block and the out-patients

department, meeting different members of the staff at each place. When the inspection was over they walked down to the lower compound for tea.

Another twenty minutes and the ordeal was all over, everything had apparently gone to plan. As the jeep drove away, everyone began to talk at once and no one bothered to listen. Tongues wagged in Pokhra, too. The King, their King, had eaten with the westerners; whoever were they that he should so honour them?

CHAPTER FIVE

Helping the Leper

"PLEASE give me medicine to make me die."

The speaker was a woman who had been attending out-patients for several weeks.

Dr. Watson looked at her wonderingly.

"But why," she asked, "You are getting better. Why do you want to die?"

"I went back to my village and they . . . they . . ." here she tried to control her voice, "they stoned me out of it and told me I must never return."

She was never to return to her own village because she was suffering from leprosy, the disease that is so dreaded in Nepal. Quite apart from the government asylums, there are places where villagers herd lepers together making them entirely dependent on the kindness of their friends. Food is left for them and after the donors have gone, these poor folk may come and take it. Even in some of the colonies under government control no treatment is given. Beyond an attempt at protecting the populace, the patients are not benefited.

One such institution was visited and nearly all the inmates, men, women, and children were found to be suffering from malaria with its attendant ills of enlarged spleens and anaemia, as well as leprosy. There were uncared for sores, painful eyes, terrible coughs and awful mental distress. Such misery was overwhelming and to try with a small emergency medical kit to alleviate the suffering seemed utterly hopeless. For over an hour, with hearts torn with pity, we sought to cheer and encourage

as well as to heal and to relieve some of the pain and discomfort. There was no sanitation, no water supply, no one to clean or attempt to keep clean—dirt, squalor and disease abounded everywhere.

From a room a voice called: "Religion, religion, oh! daughters of the gods, shew kindness and mercy." The speaker was a woman, an advanced case of leprosy, blind and terribly disfigured by the disease. Her sister, also suffering from the same complaint, had run in to say that we were coming. The call for help was like a knife in our hearts. With feelings too deep for words we tried to say a word of cheer and comfort.

On the other side of the square, we halted by a woman sitting grinding corn. As she sought to turn the heavy stone, the blood dripped from her poor maimed hands.

"Sister, could you not get rice for your ration, and so save yourself this painful labour?" we asked her.

"We must take what we are given and it is often corn," was the patient answer.

"But is there no one to help you?"

"In a place like this! Why, in the hot weather I often go all day without water to drink because I have not the strength to fetch it from the well."

Soon after we reached Pokhra we had tried to obtain land for a Leper Home. Finding a site that seemed suitable, the owner had been approached. We knew he had bought it from the government for £2 10s 0d and that one time it had actually been one of their asylums; the stone walls of many of the buildings were still there. It was in an isolated place and seemed a possibility.

Buddhi Sagar and Yacob asked the owner if he was willing to sell and what his price would be. Yes, he was willing, he said, but he was asking £1,750 for it! We were

all staggered at this very excessive profit, but he was adamant and there the matter rested.

Although we could offer them no place of refuge, the lepers continued to come to us. There were the homeless and destitute ones; the infectious cases who for the good of their country should have been segregated, as well as the non-infectious patients who could safely stay in their homes and do a little work.

Away in her village, a child of thirteen sat one day and considered what she should do. They would not allow her to stay. She looked down at her feet with their trophic sores. They were very painful, but if she walked slowly maybe she could get there in a week. Men, she heard, took four days. She counted her money; it would not last long, when it was finished she would have to beg. The people down there in the Shining Hospital were kind she had been told; they gave medicine to those with her disease, maybe they could give her a corner of a verandah where she might stay. It would be best to go soon before her feet became worse. Her eyes travelled from one familiar object to another—the neatly stacked wood pile, the flagged courtyard with its low stone wall, a goat tied in the corner, hens scratching in the earth. Would it be very different down there, she wondered. It was no good thinking about it however as she had to go. She tied some old cloth round her feet, put her few worldly possessions into a threadbare blanket and slung it on her back, then picking up her stick she started off. Her Aunt with whom she lived was out working in the fields, the village was deserted except for the very old or very young. She slipped away and no one saw her go. That night she found lodging and bought a plate of rice. It took most of her money and soon she was having to beg for her food.

Day after day she hobbled on—it took longer than she had anticipated and not until the tenth day did she reach Pokhra.

"Where is the Shining Hospital?" she asked.

"Go straight through the town, it's on the parade ground," she was told.

There it was at last. What strange looking buildings, she'd not seen anything like it before, so rounded in shape and how they shone in the sun. She followed some women who seemed to be going there and watched them as they entered one of the huts. Should she go inside, she felt shy now. Suppose they could do nothing for her. Then where should she go? Tears came into her eyes. She was so tired and hungry.

An old Nepali woman came to the door.

"If you want medicine, come inside—you can sit here," she said. The child sat down gratefully and waited her turn. What a crowd of women and children. They certainly expected to get help, but of course they were not afflicted with her disease. At last she was sent in to the doctor.

"Come and sit here. Now, what is your name?"

"My name is . . ." but she could get no further—great sobs shook her as the horror of the past weeks came over her.

The doctor caught sight of the bound-up feet and put a sympathetic hand on her knee.

"Go and get Martha," she told the old Nepali woman, "she will be able to help her."

The woman who had once asked for medicine that she might die was now brought in to comfort the child and to give her hope for the future.

"Oh, if only we had a place where we could have such needy ones," she said, "then I could look after them."

What a transformation had taken place in this woman's life. She not only desired to live, but to live for the One who had died for her.

The years had gone by and still no land had been bought. Two other plots had been offered and prayerfully considered. Both had advantages and disadvantages, but neither became ours. The day the negotiations for the the third piece of land came to an unsuccessful termination, the man of the first site came to Yacob again.

"Are the Miss Sahibs still interested in buying my land?" he asked.

"They are," said Yacob, "but you are asking more than we can give."

Then it transpired that he was willing to sell for less and, finally, after days of talking and bargaining, the price was fixed at £250. We found out, however, that there were two owners each owning half the plot, but that even if the second man was unwilling to sell, we could take the land beyond the original man's boundary.

God worked mightily for us, and we were able to purchase the entire site. After all the transactions had been successfully completed, we found we had paid less than we had expected and the land we eventually owned was nearly double that which we had hoped to possess.

Our troubles were not at an end, however. The government would give us no permission for a leper colony in Pokhra valley as they were hoping to develop it as a tourist centre. We had understood from the former minister that they would welcome such medical help if we could procure land.

Again God answered our prayer, and a few months later

sanction was given for the opening of such work if the site chosen was two miles from the town.

Hearing this, building started at once, and soon there will be a place of refuge for these sorely afflicted people.

CHAPTER SIX

Building His Church

BUDDHI SAGAR'S home was near Pokhra. In 1951 when Nepali Christians were permitted to return to their own country, he went back to his village with his wife and seven-year-old daughter and settled down to farm his fields once more. He had been away seven or eight years and whereas before he had been an active Brahmin, now he was a follower of the Lord Jesus. For him to throw away the advantages of a good caste seemed quite extraordinary to his relations and friends and yet, they agreed, he appeared to have found peace. Gradually everyone referred to him as "The Christian farmer."

After our arrival in Pokhra in 1952, we were joined by more and more of our Nepali Christian colleagues who had worked with us in India. As our members increased, the Christians realised the time had come to build a church. A simple bamboo hut was erected with a thatch roof and a white wooden cross to mark it out as the place of Christian worship.

Early on the Lord had led us to pray for whole villages to turn to Him and in 1955 we began to see the answer. In a hamlet, not far from the Church, lived a man in whom the Holy Spirit was mightily at work. One day in the rice fields, he found himself talking to the woman weeding next to him, of the things which were burdening his heart.

"How can one find God?" he blurted out; "I so long to know the truth."

"The way to God," answered the woman; "Buddhi Sagar,

the Christian, knows the way to God, you should go to him; he has the truth."

They resumed their work once more, the man was busy with his thoughts. Perhaps this Buddhi Sagar could help him and the weeks of mental turmoil and search for salvation might be at an end. What a dark time it had been for him, he had been unable to sleep or eat and had no inclination to work. Next morning, before it was light, he was on his way to the house of the Christian farmer. He tapped on the door and called out: "Oh, Buddhi Sagar, grandfather." This is a term of respect in Nepal. There was no response; but after repeated tappings a sleepy voice asked, "Who is there?" and then "I am coming." The wooden bolt was drawn back and the door opened. The seeker after truth saw a small, thin-faced man with a rough Nepali rug wrapped around him.

"Are you the Christian farmer?" the man asked.

"Yes," replied Buddhi Sagar, "I am."

"Then I have been told to come to you. I was working in the rice fields yesterday and a woman told me you knew the way to God and how one may find salvation."

"That is so," said Buddhi Sagar with a smile, "but let's go to the Pastor. He can explain everything better than I. It was he who showed me how to receive Eternal Life."

Shutting the door behind them, the two men made their way to the Pastor's house. David Mukhia, a Nepali from the Darjeeling Church, had been working with us for many years and was now the spiritual leader of the group in Pokhra. He listened with growing interest while the man poured out his story. Here was one whom God had prepared and as the wonderful message of redemption was carefully explained, he never took his eyes from David's

face. At last this was the truth, he knew it, because peace began to fill his heart.

"I'll come every day and hear more," he said, when at last the Pastor stopped.

"Can you read?" he asked. "If you can, here is a leaflet which will tell you a little."

With the tract in his hand, he returned to his house with a joy in his heart he had never known before.

Pastor David came to see us that day to ask us to pray for his early morning visitor.

On the following Sunday we were introduced to him and from then onwards there were new faces each week at the service and they were all from the same village!

Less than three months later, the leader of this new group with two others gave their testimonies in church telling how they had given up all the old ways and were determined to follow Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

"I have such peace and such joy, I have no room to contain it," declared the one-time seeker, now known as Lucius. One of the others who openly declared their faith that day was a young man who was given the name of John. Five others followed their example a few weeks later.

Prayer went up for these babes in Christ as the evil one with his many servants and cunning wiles set himself to overthrow them. They were told their land would be taken from them if they continued to hold these foolish beliefs. It was suggested that if they held Sunday services in the village or refrained from meeting with the Christians all might be well. One day three Brahmins set upon John, but upon being told that they could only kill his

body, his spirit would go to God, they desisted, amazed at the look of quiet confidence on his face.

As the months went by, there was a growing desire amongst the young believers to be baptised, until in early November they told Pastor David they could wait no longer. It was at this time that we heard of a proposed law by which those who had become Christians and those who proclaimed the Christian doctrine were to be fined, sent to prison for a year and then the converts were to be received back once again into the Hindu fold. If passed, it was to come into force in mid-November. The law was explained to them, but they were by no means deterred. They would go to prison if need be, they said, but at all costs they must follow the Lord.

November 8th was the day chosen. What was our joy when we were all assembled on the bank of the river to see John's wife amongst those who were ready to take the step of baptism. Under a blue sky in brilliant sunshine, Pastor David led the service. The young Christians were exhorted and questioned concerning their newly found faith, they were prayed for and finally they were baptised.

Immediately the onslaught of the devil increased. Barely three weeks later, Mr. and Mrs. Barnabas who, with the other parents, had promised publicly to bring up their children to know and love the Lord Jesus, married their eldest daughter to a heathen man. Lucius and Pastor David were in a distant village at the time and it was John, with a heavy heart, who came hurrying to tell the older Christians of this terrible blow to the church. He wept as he told them. There and then they brought the matter to the Lord and on the following Sunday the whole Christian community met for prayer. Mr. Barnabas was convicted of his sin, but his wife remained hard and un-

repentant. Later, they both confessed in front of the church members how wrong they had been, but this couple are still weak in the faith.

How strong is the enemy of souls, but there is One who is stronger. The law which would have abolished all freedom of conscience was not passed and the church which He promised to build has been begun in Pokhra.

From its ranks one has already gone to be with the Lord. The trumpets sounded for John and he is now with the Master he had known for so short a time and yet had learnt to love and serve.

What a task awaits the Nepali Christians when full religious liberty is granted. There are 8½ million people scattered over 5,000 sq. miles of mountainous country, speaking various languages. "I will build My Church" is the Lord's promise to us as it was to His disciples long ago. In answer to prayer the Lord has opened the land to Christians and in answer to prayer His Church will be built "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

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Sketch Map
of
NEPAL
Statute Miles
10 5 0 10 20 30 40
Heights in feet
TIBET
TIBET
GREAT HIMALAYA RANGE
INDIA
NEPAL
Calcutta
Bombay
Madras
SIKKIM
DARJEELING
KATHMANDU
Patan
Bhatgaon
Pokhra
Nawakot
Gurkha
Jumla
Dailekh
Silgarhi Doti
Baitadi
Dandeldhura
Piuthan
Sallyana
Bijauri
Tansing
Butwal
Birganj
Bhojpur
Dhankuta
Ilam
Okhaldhunga
Ramechhap
Sindhuli Garhi
Chisapani Garhi
Udaipur Garhi
Biratnagar
Purnea
Bettiah
Nepalganj
Pilibhit
Dhangarhi
Malangwa
Jaleswar
Annapurna Himal
Dhaulagiri 26795
Manaslu 26658
Himal Chuli 25801
Ganesh Himal 23299
Gosainthan 26391
Gauri Sankar 23440
Mt EVEREST 29002
Makalu 27790
Kangchenjunga 28146
Mahabharat Lekh
Churia Range (Siwalik Hills)
Churia Range
Somesar Range
Karnali R.
Bheri R.
Rapti R.
Narayani R.
Kali or Krishna Gandaki R.
Great Gandak R.
Sun Kosi
Arun R.
Tamur R.
Mechi R.
Gogra R.
Sarda R.
Sapt Kosi
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