

Early in January 1926, our family returned from a camp in the jungles of India to our home in Damoh, Central Provinces, where my husband and I were in charge of a boys' boarding school carried on by the Disciples of Christ. It was our custom to take our family of two hundred Indian boys out for a ten day camp during the Christmas holidays. The weather was usually sunny and crisp, and the outdoor life close to nature, including the wild fruit, the wild animals, sometimes shot to provide meat for the camp, and the evening campfires, provided a happy interlude in the institutionalized life of all of us.

As we were unpacking, our second son Thomas, just two weeks short of his fifth birthday, asked permission to go to the home of his only white playmates, two sons of the English Deputy Commissioner. Having given his promise to return before dark, he went off happily, in search of his friends.

As it grew dusk we saw coming across the open plain in front of our house the English mother, her two sons and Thomas. After we had welcomed and seated our guest she said "Thomas had a very severe coughing and choking spell and I thought I should bring him home. There was no apparent reason for it and he seems all right now, but I wanted to tell you about it. One of my sons recently had the croup and perhaps Thomas has suffered such an attack."

After our guests had departed, Thomas said "Daddy, I know what made me choke. I have a brass ball in my neck". He led us to the playroom, picked up a bead from the floor and said it was one like this. The bead was of glass, gilded, about the thickness of a lead pencil and three quarters of an inch long. The string of beads had been given to twenty-one months old baby ~~sister~~ sister for Christmas by an Indian child.

The string had broken and the beads were lying about. Thomas had clapped one of them into his mouth and later as he was pushing his playmate in a toy car which had been a Christmas gift, he inhaled deeply, carrying the bead into the trachea.

At that time we had no mission doctor in our station, so by nine o'clock that evening we were starting in our T model Ford on the sixty six mile trip to Jabalpur, where doctors and X-rays would be available. We arrived about midnight, but as Thomas had slept most of the way and seemed comfortable, we decided to wait until morning before seeking help. He had a very heavy wheeze which could be heard in the next room. The next morning that noise disappeared and he appeared normal in every way. We took him to the government hospital, where the doctor examined him and then sent him for X-ray. The machine was of very old vintage and temperamental, and the technician found it necessary to pick up a stick and strike the dial frequently in order to make it register. As expected, it showed nothing, and the doctor suggested that the child had probably coughed up the bead, or would soon do so, if by chance it were still there. So with no help and less comfort, we drove back home that evening.

~~THAT NIGHT~~ That night was much the same as the former, with varying degrees of wheezing all night. The next morning Thomas ate and played as usual, and seemed to enjoy making queer noises with his breathing. As he was taking off his shoes for his afternoon nap he was seized with severe pain in his chest and great difficulty in getting his breath. He became very excited and it was hard to comfort him. The spell passed after a couple of minutes, but he was so exhausted he fell asleep immediately, to be awakened after an hour with another such attack, longer and more severe than the first.

We know then that something must be done and that very quickly.

Dr. Hope Nicholson
 Dr. Vic Rando

We consulted our Anglo-Indian Civil Surgeon, who got things in readiness for a tracheotomy, should that be necessary. We also wired our mission doctor in Bilaspur to call in a neighboring doctor for a consultation when we should arrive the next afternoon. That night about ten we were prepared to lie down for a couple of hours rest, before taking a train at two in the morning, when an attack came, which proved to be the worst one yet. We rushed Thomas to the home of the Civil Surgeon, and remained there during several successive attacks, fearing that each one might choke him to death. The pain he suffered and the terror he felt were almost more than we could bear. But we knew we must press on to get help, so in spite of the great fear in our own hearts at taking Thomas away from medical help in case of emergency, we took the train, as planned for the fourteen hour trip to Bilaspur. We kept the child sitting up for the rest of the night and he suffered no more of the attacks until three o'clock the next afternoon. By that time our mission doctor was with us and we were relieved to have expert help at hand. He had taken the morning train from Bilaspur, which met our train about noon, and returned with us. As we left the train at Bilaspur, Thomas was in the midst of another choking spell. During that night another slight spell occurred and that was the last of those nightmare experiences, although of course, we never felt easy in our minds. During these spells by putting the hand on the child's chest or back, one could feel the bead moving up and down with the intake and outlet of air, and there was a distinct sound, too, of its chugging back and forth.

Our doctors had learned by wire that the Medical College Hospital nose and throat doctor, an Englishman, had at his disposal in Calcutta a bronchoscope. They assured us that the operation would be a comparatively simple one in the hands of such a specialist. Leaving big brother and baby sister with friends in Bilaspur, we parents and Thomas,

*Rambo**missie
in Calcutta
new hospital*

accompanied by a mission doctor and nurse made the twelve hour train journey, where we entered Thomas in the government Medical College Hospital. An X-ray showed the bead in the right bronchus, just below the branch-off from the trachea, as far down as the size of the bead would allow it to go. Fortunately, it was lengthwise of the bronchus, so the rather large opening in the middle of the bead allowed the passage of air.

The doctors put Thomas to bed with his feet elevated, hoping that gravity and coughing would remove the bead. After five days with no result they decided to use the bronchoscope. A heavy dose of chloroform was administered and they were beginning work, when a spasm of the diaphragm took place, making it necessary to stop immediately, with nothing accomplished. The surgeons felt they should have another chance. We were very reluctant to give it, since the first attempt had been unsuccessful and had almost cost the child's life, and yet we knew there was no where else to turn in India and that we must give them another chance. They did not want to give another anaesthetic immediately, so for another five days we waited. Then they made another attempt, while we parents agonized and prayed, in the cold halls of the hospital for an hour and a half, only to be told in the end that the operation had been utterly unsuccessful.

All that work on his throat had been very hard on Thomas and for three days he was so hoarse that he could not speak above a whisper. That night he developed a very high temperature and our mission doctor knew that he was in for pneumonia. We all felt that he would get better care in our mission hospital, so with our very sick child and nothing else to show for our ten futile days in Calcutta, we returned to Bilaspur. There he received every attention and the best of care, but several days elapsed before we felt sure he would recover from the pneumonia. As soon as he was able to travel, we returned to our own home.

Early in February, our annual mission meeting convened. By that time

although still thin and weak from the pneumonia, Thomas^M seemed well and the bead seemed to be making no trouble at all. We asked the advice of our medical committee as to our next move. They cabled the world renowned broncho-bronchoscopist, Dr. Chevalier Jackson of Philadelphia as to whether he would recommend a specialist in Europe, informing him that there had been two unsuccessful attempts at removing the bead, in India. The next day we read his reply, "Bring child to Philadelphia". The mission gave its approval for us to follow that advice.

Several hours of conflict followed. Only fifteen months had elapsed since our return from furlough in the United States, for our second seven year term of service. We had been so happy to get settled in our own home and work again. The prospect of turning over our work to someone else, packing away our possessions so that our successors might live in our bungalow, preparing for the trip for five of us, and then making the long journey with three small children, seemed almost more than we could face. We could not bear the idea of a family separation when the outcome of the whole affair was so uncertain, even though the suggestion had been made that one parent take Thomas to America, while the other should remain in India with the other two children.

Inevitably the decision had to be made for all of us to get off to the United States at the earliest possible moment. Anticipating this necessity, we had written to Bombay earlier to inquire about the possibility of passage home. In those days a great many of the wives and small children of British officials went home for the summer, and ships were booked up far in advance. As a consequence our reply was that the earliest booking any company could give us was the middle of April. When the decision was definite that we should go, my husband took the twenty-four hour train trip to Bombay to see what could be done by a personal appearance. He was able to secure accomodation for the five of us and for one of our mission lady doc-

By Frank Wagner
 tors who was due to go on furlough and graciously gave up a planned tour of Europe in order to go with us all the way home. We were to leave Bombay on March 6, trans^ship at Aden, leaving that ship at Marseille, crossing France by train and sailing from Cherbourg to New York, reaching there March 30th. That twentyfour day trip was considered a record, in the days before air planes were available.

While we were in Jabalpur at convention, Thomas developed pneumonia for a second time, and as he was too ill to be moved, we left him there with a mission doctor and nurse, and went home to Damoh, to pack for our trip and to turn over our work. On March first, we returned, took our sick child out of bed and began our train journey to Bombay, the first lap of the long trip to America. The sea air helped build Thomas up and he was well the whole trip, until he developed a cough the last few days on the Atlantic.

The morning after our arrival in Philadelphia, we took Thomas to the Jefferson hospital, where X-rays were taken and examinations were given. My first meeting with Dr. Chevallier Jackson, when about one o'clock he came to the room where I was waiting, was for me a deeply moving spiritual experience.

The sincere humility and kindness of the truly great, was evident in his every movement and word. He made me feel that my child was his greatest concern, and although his words were not as reassuring as I could have wished, I felt every confidence that we had been guided to the one person who could help us. He said "I want to make an exploratory examination now. The X-ray shows some collection of pus and fluid around and back of the bead and it has been lodged there so long, I may not be able to get it on the first try." Imagine my surprise when one of his assistants came in fifteen minutes later and said the bead was out. As it was drawn out of Thomas' mouth, the bead fell to the floor and was shattered. Later the doctor told us that in a

short time a lung abscess would have been likely to develop and then it would have been too late to do anything. As it was, Thomas made an uneventful recovery, has been able to lead normal life, and now lives with his wife and four children, within a few miles of the spot where the genius who invented the bronchoscope, saved his life.

When Thomas returned to his room after the operation, he described his experience as follows: "When they put that thing in my throat, I wanted to cough, but I couldn't cough, then I wanted to cry, but I couldn't cry, so all I could do was just wheeze."

As soon as I could leave Thomas, I rushed to the hotel, where my husband had remained with the other two children, to give him the word of the successful operation. As tears streamed down our faces, in gratitude, we tried to realize the great relief in our hearts, though that realization could not come all at once. In fact for some weeks afterward, when we heard the slightest noise at night, we would be out of bed running towards Thomas' bed, before we were awake enough to know what was going on.

Our first errand was to send the one word cable "Out", to our friends in India. We had arranged this code message, before leaving India, to indicate that the bead was out and all was well.

We have never ceased to give thanks to God for the love and prayers of friends in India and the United States during those trying days, for the skill and devotion of the many doctors and nurses who helped us, and for our faith in a loving God, whose strength and presence sustained us throughout the whole ordeal. -- a total of eleven weeks.

Merle T. Rice