

## Chapter 9

### 1922 – DISASTER

Dr. Shelton prepared the audit of the treasury to present to the Annual Meeting in January, 1922. A ruling was made that when patients were cured they were to vacate their beds immediately at the hospital.

A report was done surveying tentatively “several matters...brought to my attention”: First re: extension of the work (opening Chambdo?) referring to a plan made several years ago that had failed financially, but still cannot be fully discussed until the condition of the country can be determined; Second: the question of scholarships for further education of Mission students; a policy of education for teachers, evangelists and doctors should be established; Third: a policy must be made for caring for the sick of Mission employees and for old age and disability pensions; Fourth: the question of a closer observation of the laws of America, as well as the Manual of the Society, particularly re: not protecting native goods in their homes so as to reduce the temptation for rival armies to loot their property, the owning of land, which is forbidden for private citizens; the engaging in any outside work of a private nature, such as translation for private income; all activity must be approved by the Mission- it must be remembered that the will of the majority is superior to our own desires.

They postponed further talk of expansion until Dr. Shelton returned from his imminent trip to Gartok. Shelton outlined that trip. It was arranged pending further word from the Dalai Lama to the official in Gartok when Shelton would need to get the instructions. Mrs. Shelton’s trip to India was reviewed.

Feb. Monthly Meeting of the TCM was held on the 13th with the announcement that the teachers for the Duncans and MacLeods had been found; language instruction could begin. The curriculum had been revised by Jim Ogden before he left.

Dr. Shelton started his trip 2-15-22 with his teacher, Gezong Ondue, a Prince of Batang and other companions. One day out they received a note from the Governor of Mar Kham, asking them to turn back temporarily as the times were unfavorable for foreign travel to Inner Tibet. Mrs. Dorothy Shelton Thomas supplied an eye witness account by Demnbajangtsen, a companion to the Doctor and the deposed Prince of Batang, written in 1960 from India:

*Generally I used to be with Dr. very closely and always rode*

*side by side but that day Dr. wanted to start out first and I was only about 10 minutes behind him. We were climbing up towards the Kue Yula mountain. There was a valley with a stream located between them like the shape of a horse shoe. When I came to this end he was already at the other end. When I reached the stream he had already turned the corner. Suddenly I heard the explosion of three bullets echoing in the valley.*

*I speed down; a distant of about 40 yards away I saw the Dr. was laying on the side of the road. There were blood stains on his face. I could see a large wound on his forehead. And the sight alarmed me greatly but I thought maybe the mule slipped. I ran toward him but he commanded me to go back. I couldn't understand what was the matter. I thought he was angry with that day because I was late. I felt very sad for Dr. had never at any time manifested such an indifferent spirit. There again a chain of bullets fired out speedily behind my ears. Then I began to sense the danger- we met robbers. I realize how ignorant I had been of Doctor's good intention toward me. He wanted to save my life. I rolled back down the road side- hid there breathless. My friend, Si Goo Shoo, older son of the 2nd higher official of Ba Ton, came running. I pulled him down, gasped to him we met robbers and Dr. Shelton wounded - again continuously bullets flew. I was taken by surprise all these unexpected horrible events; forgotten that we must fight and try to kill every robber or be killed. We heard Dr. groaning and he cried, 'Ming Shang, bring water? Suddenly we heard the robbers yell again, 'A large band of mules with goods is coming. Go and stop them!' We glided down the hill with great difficulty. There was the Young Zi River thousands of feet rolling angrily below us. Thank the Lord we finally found a path. A village lent us two mules. Off we galloped to Ba Ton.*

*The whole town was moved. A few missionaries, soldiers and many people went to rescue Dr. I was asked to guide the way to the place where Dr. was. At the very first sight he burst into tears, 'That is good, Ming Shan. You have finally come!' It was found necessary to amputate Doctor's arm, which had been badly wounded. They stuffed in the guts which came out. I was extremely sad, a man who loved me as his own son, now I had to carry his amputated arm on the back of my horse. When we reached home the operation was done. I had the privilege to nurse Dr. by his bedside. Dr. opened his eyes several times and talked to me, 'Ming Shan, I will be gone in a few days, no hope to live, I love you, be a good boy.' I saw he was praying earnestly which impressed me so much and I too prayed that Dr. should rest at that time..."*

Dorris Shelton Still wrote a story of her father's life many

years later.<sup>43</sup> She adds some interesting facts about that trip, firstly, describing the area they traveled as to its strategic value for any hidden robbers. She also mentions that the robbers had been waiting for another party, thinking that the good Dr. and his party had gone on to Inner Tibet. When they fired and wounded Dr. Shelton the doctor had not returned theft fire. He had treated many of that band for injuries, etc. in the past. The robbers were remorseful, according to her understanding. Nevertheless he was severely wounded.

When the Prince of Batang rode back to call for help to bring Dr. Shelton in, Dr. Hardy and the men of the Mission had immediately gone. The women of the Mission gathered to prepare a room and lay out medical supplies. Their wait was agonizing, not knowing, but hoping. Dr. Hardy reported the next day:

*“Dr. Shelton left Batang for Gartok on the 15th inst.; planning to see the Governor of Eastern Tibet and then return to Batang and make plans for the trip to Lhasa. A letter came from the Governor to delay his visit; as permission to make the visit must be obtained from the Galon Lama at Chambdo. Dr. Shelton started back. At 3 PM about 6 miles from Batang the party was fired upon by robbers. Dr. Shelton was riding in front, the robbers fired and the first shot hit the Doctor. - Others of the party, the cook, the deposed Batang Prince and the Doctor’s Tibetan teacher thought the Doctor had fired at a rabbit, but as they came around the corner, they saw the Doctor in the road. The robbers drove off the pack animals. (I have seen only one mule not taken.)*

*The Batang Prince came on to Batang and reported the matter to Mr. MacLeod. His report was that Shelton had been wounded and was unable to travel. He said we must take a stretcher, and he wanted a tourniquet for Shelton’s arm, which was bleeding badly.*

*This report came in about 4PM and I put a few things in my pocket, borrowed the Prince’s horse and started at 4:13 for the place. MacLeod looked after getting the stretcher bearers and followed - Morse and Duncan followed also. After hard riding for an hour, I reached the Doctor who was unconscious with no pulse and showing signs of hemorrhage. The bullet had entered the outer condyle of the right elbow, had torn off the inner condyle, and entered the side about the level of the elbow. Before the loss of consciousness the Doctor took a hypo of morphine and strychnine and improvised a tourniquet with his handkerchief and riding whip. The men who remained with him had*

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<sup>43</sup> Beyond the Devils in the Wind. Dorris Shelton Still, USA: Synergy Books, 1989.

*done all they could to make him comfortable, using saddle blankets for a bed and were preparing the doctor's cot to take him to Batang.*

*I put on the tourniquet, gave him more strychnine, re-dressed the wounds, and got under way for Batang at 6 o'clock. We met the party from Batang in about a mile. The poles on the cot gave him some trouble at the top of the pass, and after a couple of miles more, Dr. Shelton complained of the poles hurting his hips. So we changed him to the hospital bed rigged up on stout bamboo poles. Daring the last mile he was in pain again and wanted to change his position. Before we reached Ba, more than fifty (probably a hundred) people met us, to help carry the stretcher or to light the way with pine torches.*

*We reached our home at 10:10PM and the Doctor was conscious and in pain. I gave him morphine and made a more careful examination. Once or twice after that he wanted water and asked to sit up. His condition was such that anything more than applying temporary dressings was out of the question. (I omitted telling you that Dr. Shelton after he was shot had swabbed the wounds with iodine.) The turn for the worse came about midnight, and at 12:48AM Dr. Shelton answered the summons to a higher life."<sup>44</sup>*

"I have stated these facts at length. None of us can express our feelings at this time. The cause of the whole matter is the inability of the Chinese to govern this part of the country. I believe I am safe in saying that I have treated an average of a case every two months, and more than that number have been killed at this place within six or seven miles of Batang, but the officials and soldiers roll another opium pill every time a fight takes place on the pass, and say it is too bad."!!!

"But enough. We are starting a cable for America at daylight, and this is to add to the sad news you should receive before this letter arrives.

Please try to express to Dorris and Dorothy, the Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters, our deepest sympathy in their loss, which, though to a less extent, is our own, also. Sincerely yours, W.M. Hardy."

After Dr. Shelton's death (2-25-22) let it be noted that only two unarmed soldiers had been assigned the Dr.'s caravan by the

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<sup>44</sup> Report- W.M. Hardy, M.D. to the UCMS and others, Feb. 17, 1922. Unpublished. Note: The discrepancies between the descriptions of the two reports of Dr. Shelton's injuries must be weighted in favor of the accuracy of Dr. Hardy's Report. The Prince of Batang was highly emotional about this incident, but gives a good description of a Tibetan's viewpoint.

military official.

Louise Duncan described the events of Dr. Shelton's death. She expresses the devastating sorrow they experienced as the last hope was disappointed when he was brought in to the room that the women of the Mission had prepared for him, He was wounded too badly for the medical and surgical skills of that day and had lost a lot of blood. The path he was brought home over was dark as only an unlighted country road can be and in Tibet was narrow and precipitous so the party was slowed down as no misstep could be allowed.

Her sorrow and loneliness for this man who had become her friend and counselor could not be expressed. She said it is not the lack of things that is so hard there, but "it's the loneliness and the fear of one knows not what that wears on a person and turns your hair gray - it makes people lose out in work like this. It does not take long to understand such." She describes the funeral which consisted of a prayer service for the foreigners only, then a service for the Chinese and Tibetans which Lee Gway Gwang preached. Then there was a Masonic service at the gravesite and Dr. Shelton was laid with his face towards Lhasa.

### **How Very LONESOME!**

The resultant shock on this little band of missionaries was beyond description. The shock wave that hit the American and Canadian churches and other supporters of this valiant band resounded for years to come. For Dr. Hardy, as the leadership fell, upon him as the senior missionary on the field, had first of all to deal with the incident for the official Chinese community. He was asked to take charge by the UCMS for Mrs. Shelton and her family for the settling of the estate and for the investigation. He had to press for the official civil investigation upon the local Chinese government and through the American Consulate. The American Consulate also asked him to act as administrator for the estate which meant that Dr. Hardy had to be bonded by the US Supreme Court representative in China; such administrative duties took time, effort and numerous reports.

The plans of the little Mission so far away, were damaged, so damaged that after years of heart-breaking effort no one went to Lhasa until 60 years later. In the 1980s Robert Morse, Sr., Russell and Gertrude's second son, the one born in Batang, got to Lhasa, as an English professor in The University of Lhasa. Several younger missionaries, as they came out, claimed to be the successors of Dr. Shelton. Probably the one with most right to that claim was Dr. Bare

who went independently after the mission had closed to Gartok at the invitation of the Tibetan officials. He and his family were there for several years ministering to those whom Dr. Shelton so loved. But without Dr. Shelton's vision the leadership stumbled. Without his charity, compassion and wisdom the difficulties among his colleagues were not easily resolved nor smoothed over.

*The very spirit which takes a person through the great difficulties of pioneering often makes it difficult for them to bind their wills to working under or with others. But Dr. Shelton had that ability. Someone has to help them to harmony now that the guiding star is gone.*

The most natural leaders were the Ogdens, but they were on furlough not to return until 1924. Hardys were next and they really tried, but Dr. Hardy eventually became impatient with the situation and with the opposition he faced. He tried with the next set of new missionaries who came out with the Ogdens, tried very hard, but the situation deteriorated. The MacLeods would be next in line, but they were on their first term and before these new missionaries arrived they were on their way home for their first furlough.

No one could or did replace Dr. Shelton. Several times Nina had to persuade Dr. Hardy not to send letters he had written. The Morses tried to fit in but without Dr. Shelton they later said they had been unhappy their whole time in Batang. Marion Duncan was an irascible personality too ready to argue. Dr. Hardy's views may have been difficult for the independently minded to accept, like both Morse and Duncan; different as these two men were from each other. Dr. Hardy found it hard to accept their stance nor could he find a way to moderate the situation. They were too new to realize that the older missionary could be right.

Hardy was a sturdy, upright individual who believed that matters should be settled with Christian logic. Young, untried missionaries were not always logical. Also, Hardy believed that sensibly directed discussion should arrive at decisions that everyone should accept, even if it often meant compromise. Morse was not able to compromise easily but probably tried to do so and otherwise kept silent. Hardy disliked turmoil; abhorred injustice. As his son, Bill, much later quoted a friend "I would much rather have the Devil after me than Dr. Hardy if I had done wrong!" Marion Duncan had to learn to curb his temper.

The telegram had not reached Flora Shelton in India until March 6. She wrote, "not yet can it seem real. It didn't seem like a square deal to take him away before he had his try. So full of hope and

courage he was for the climax to his life's work. Without him I do not know how to go on." This was true - for months even her daughters could not help her out of her depression. Finally Bro. Corey asked Jim Ogden to talk to her, which helped. "I can only think of him worn by the bullets & not able to go on with what his heart desired."

3-14-22 Jim and Minnie Ogden had received the sad news thru Bro. Leonard. Writing Bro Plopper, "We have felt grief-stricken and dazed. Tibet has been bought with a price; Tibet must be evangelized!! A noble man has fallen, but his soul is marching on. The spirit of Shelton will never die. I wish we could start back right now. Could we start back not later than September?" This man who loves Tibet so much would sacrifice all for it, without hesitation, He said they would be in St. Louis as soon as their Ford could make it on the muddy roads. *If he had gone back then history in Ba might have been written differently. He did not make it until 1924, though.*

*Jim Ogden, having lost one of his best friends, can still write thinking of their grief,* "How our hearts have gone out to you all there in this sad death of our beloved Dr. Shelton, and so much to his family..." To Dr. Hardy from Jim, 3-26-22.

A few days after Dr. Shelton's death Esther MacLeod writes: "Doctor had stopped by the house on his way on the trip to say goodbye. He has been our best friend out here. He and Roderick were together just as much as possible & he was just like one of the family almost in our home, so we all miss him so much." She tells of being down because of false labor pains. Their son, Shelton, was born 3-18-22.

### **"God's Acre Beside the Long, Long Trail to Lhasa"**

*The Tibetan mission cemetery is one of the sacred spots in the border town of Batang, which has the tough element typical of border towns everywhere. Two of the graves in this "God's Acre" on the long, long trail to Lhasa have epitaphs written in English, Tibetan and Chinese. One is the tomb of Dr. A.L. Shelton, the martyr to the cause of Christ in Tibet who was shot down by robbers. As in life he had always set his face toward Lhasa, the stronghold of Lamaistic Buddhism, so in death he lies facing the road toward Lhasa. The other tomb is that of the medical missionary, Dr. Z.S. Loftis, the victim of fever. Both in death, as in life, proved that "greater love hath no man" and that he came "not to be ministered unto but to minister."*

*To the left of these is a row of God's rosebuds, the missionaries' children. One is that of Herbert Franklin Duncan. Two*

*others are those of Harold and Josephine Baker's children. Beyond these lies Jim and Minnie Ogden's son, James.*

“When Livingstone died the natives carried his body to the coast and he was taken to England and now reposes in Westminster Abbey.”

“Shelton is buried somewhere out yonder on the highlands, of the world with a great mountain peak as his tombstone, that reaches his hoary head toward the sky some eight or ten thousand feet higher than Pike's Peak. Shelton was a pioneer. The same spirit that drove Columbus from the old world to the new; Livingstone in to the heart of Africa; drove Shelton to Tibet, the highlands of the world.”

He was a man of faith. He was a man of supreme courage. He was a man of prayer. He was a man with a keen sense of humor. He was a man of industry. He worked early and late. He was a man of great vision. In his mind he could see the church established in the city of Lhasa and the Kingdom of God throughout the land of Tibet. He was a dreamer and lived, and loved, and died, that his dream might come true.<sup>45</sup>

The sorrowing family, friends and the multitudes from the Christian Churches from all walks of life and all ages, who had met and been charmed by his friendly concern for each and everyone he met and impressed by his wide-spread interests in all the aspects of Tibetan life- all responded to the news of his death. The tragedy of circumstances brought an interest that spread over time and distance. Eventually it began to focus on trying in some way to continue his dream and to implement the work he had started. So was born the Shelton Memorial Fund.<sup>46</sup>

A Shelton Memorial Fund Certificate was issued to everyone who gave to this fund. The fund was to pay for the building of the School, Chapel and Orphanage in Batang; to train other missionaries for Tibet and later, elsewhere; for money for the opening of a new station; and for \$50,000 to set up a chair at the College of Missions. A new high was reached for Dr. Shelton's dreams and the church felt that nothing could stop his emissaries now. Asking for \$100,000 they topped that goal to \$109,631.05.

Exchange of letters- (Dr. Hardy & Mrs. Shelton 5-13-22, 5-

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<sup>45</sup> From FACTS ABOUT THE LIFE OF Dr. A.L. Shelton. Newark Museum, Newark, N.J. Undated.

<sup>46</sup> Pamphlet- from the Shelton Memorial Fund, dated 1924.

25-22, 8-12-22) Flora Shelton wrote re: the settlement of Dr. Shelton's estate in Ba, assuring him that she feels he will do all things right there. She is so depressed that she cannot write so since her arrival from India 5-17-22, she has been trying to rest, but it all seems too much of a burden to manage. A list of Dr. Shelton's goods have been sent and the details of what must be done: everyone will try to carry out her desires. They will sell what the family does not want and send home with MacLeods what they want. Four mule loads were lost to the robbers which included Shelton's accounts and made a problem to figure out what belonged to the Mission and what had been sent especially for his trip to Lhasa.

8-14-22 Dorris Shelton wrote asking the MacLeods when they came on furlough to bring two pearl necklaces for them, one white and one pink. She also said that her Papa was having rings made for them and assuming the order for them had been put in before his death, asked that 20 in all be done, all small. "I cannot write anything I would wish to say as my heart is sad and heavy. Every time I think of Batang it seems as a land of my sweetest and saddest memories. I love everyone that lives there." She asks that she be remembered to all the school boys and girls and all the "dear babies I would love to 'Ba' (care for). I can never thank you enough for what you meant to all of us and especially to Papa dear who was all alone over there. I know he loved you. Papa was all the world to me and he understood me and I loved him so. But I know that he was always the happiest when he was doing something for others and must have even been the happiest when he saw he was giving his life for Him who gave all for us." (Undated) Years later, 1996, after the death of her husband, Dorris said there were two men who meant so much in her life, her father and her husband; *she was a very lucky woman.*

Newspapers of that day picked up the story when the UCMS released it. They contained the fact that the Dalai Lama had given an invitation to Dr. Shelton to come to Lhasa. The previous story of his capture and release from bandits was revived. It was also mentioned that Dr. Hardy's cablegram took 15 days to reach the nearest telegraph station.<sup>47</sup>

The Chinese government charged that Dr. Shelton's killing "followed his refusal 'to follow the advice of local authorities' against proceeding into a disturbed area." All were outraged that the local

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<sup>47</sup> Newspapers- New York Times, New York Tribune, New York World and a Newark, NJ paper- all dated 3-5-22, upon release of news by the UCMS.

officials were trying to save 'face' by placing the blame on the good Doctor who was scrupulous about getting and following permission. It was wrongly stated also that a military detachment brought him in, although a few soldiers had been said to accompany the rescue party.<sup>48</sup>

So the little Mission on the far Western Border, just devastated by their loss, was headed by the Hardys with ten years experience and the MacLeods with four years. It must be noted that Dr. Hardy had also made a friend in Inner Tibet at the time he and Mac went to Gartok with Magruder and Buckner of the American Consulate, 6-13-20. It might have been possible for him to develop this friendship with the Governor at that time. But with the Chinese winning the local battles in 1920 and 1921 the Tibetans were wary of encouraging a friendship with the missionaries. This was probably partly the reason the official of Gartok had advised Shelton to turn back.

Between 1913 and 1918 the Tibetans had the intention of re-taking all the Tibetan lands up to Tachienlu but the Treaty of 1918 which Shelton and Ogden had a hand in, stopped that final goal. Also it became known that Ogden had been corresponding with the Consulate about the situation in the area and the Tibetans were not happy about that. There was some threat that had they not been on furlough in 1921, Ogdens might have been in some danger.

"What interests me (Dr. Hardy) is what will happen if Ba is captured (by the Tibetans). We will then be in Tibet which will be opened for other workers in other places. What is the Church going to do when the prayers of decades are answered by the opening of the country?" Unfortunately this was never tested.

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<sup>48</sup> Newspaper Article- New York Times, 3-30-22.

## GOD'S ACRE BESIDE THE LONG, LONG TRAIL TO LHASA



The Tibetan mission cemetery is one of the sacred spots in the border town of Batang, which has the tough element typical of border towns everywhere. Two of the graves in this "God's Acre" on the long, long trail to Lhasa are shown in the above picture with epitaphs written in English, Tibetan and Chinese. One is the tomb of Dr. A.L. Shelton, the martyr to the cause of Christ in Tibet who was shot down by robbers. As in life he had always set his face toward Lhasa, the stronghold of Lamaistic Buddhism, so in death he lies facing the road toward Lhasa. The other tomb is that of the medical missionary, Dr. Z.S. Loftis, the victim of fever. Both in death as in life proved that "greater love hath no man" and that he came "not to be ministered unto but to minister"

To the left of these is a row of God's rosebuds, the missionaries' children, awaiting the call of the trumpet. First are two of Mr. and Mrs. H.A. Baker's children. Beyond these lies Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Ogden's son. And still farther on is the son of Mr. and Mrs. M.H. Duncan.