

The Journey of Trials  
By J. S.

*It was becoming more frustrating every day/week. I didn't want help, but otherwise I couldn't get places fast. I didn't want to tell my parents, because I didn't want to seem incapable.* This was the situation: in the first half of May, 2008, I started repeating my steps, walking somewhere, then stopping and touching a place a few times. It didn't really bother me a lot, but it was frustrating that it was something I knew was wrong, but I didn't want to tell my parents about it, because it seemed so small and unexplainable. It was something I did consciously, but I just felt I should go back and retrace my steps and touch things a few times. The one thing I remember of that one time was when I was in the kitchen in our house, and because the floor is cement, there are a few little holes in it and other such things. I remember walking toward the hallway that the kitchen opened up into, and stopping to touch a hole in the ground a few times, then thinking, “*why did I just do that?*”

By the 23 of May, 2008, I was touching things multiple times now, and my walking had deteriorated, so that I repeated a lot while I was going places. I also picked things up, then put them down again, and repeated the action. This I noticed a lot in homeschooling, picking up things like pencils and pens.

After that I just went downhill even faster. May 26, I could do schoolwork with a little bit of prompting, then I needed someone to talk me through each assignment (maybe this was because I had too much trouble doing many things, so I had to be reminded of each step so I could concentrate on that one step). Then on the 30<sup>th</sup>, I could not concentrate physically enough to do my math final test (my eyes shifting, and my hands not cooperating), although I knew how to do the test in my head, I just couldn't get it communicated to my body. By that time I couldn't even walk a block by myself. I have a memory that I think was somewhere around that time, because it was when I was walking back from our teammates' house (they live in the same village as us, not very far away, and help my parents with their translation), and their daughter was helping me walk back. I remember it took me a long time to get back to our house, she encouraging me, me trying to fight my body. From the way I remember it, it might have even taken about a half hour, or something in that realm. Their house was only a block away from ours. When I think about it now, I don't know how she could get up the courage to help me. I had changed so much, and I couldn't even do a whole lot with her anymore. I didn't even seem the same physically than before.

June 1<sup>st</sup>, my two favorite activities, reading and crocheting, became hard for me to do. It was discouraging. I also had to be helped to eat for the first time, since I was not able to feed myself anymore without help. I remember I was in the living room, and for some reason I wanted to go to the back door, maybe to watch my mom take down the wash from the clothes line. Then my mom picked me up on her back and piggy-backed me to the back steps, where she set me down and took down the wash.

June 2, 2008, we traveled 6 hours to Bamenda, where we met this missionary doctor who did an exam on me. We got there late at night (for me it seemed late), so I was really tired. We went down to his little office, and he examined me. Somewhere in his examination he had me get up and walk down the hallway. I was so tired, I was almost half-asleep, so I didn't really think about what I was doing. I walked down the hallway and back up fine then. Later on it turned out as a trend- if I wasn't thinking about it, I could do it just fine, but if I was thinking about what I was doing, I repeated it so much that I eventually gave up after a while. At this time I was being carried everywhere, since they did not have wheelchairs there. Then the doctor said that we should go back to Canada to get medical

help, after starting me on a pill called Prozac. After that I got a little bit better with walking, but still needed help.

June 9-10, we were flying to Canada, utilizing the wheelchairs at the different airports. I used an airplane wheelchair, which was a really skinny wheel-chair that could fit in between the aisles, to get me to my seat. One thing that I noticed was how considerate the British Airways staff was in making sure I was taking care of. After we came to Canada, we stayed in our grandparents' house, in ... Alberta, until we could get furniture to put into our rented house. Then we moved a block away from them into our own house. Throughout the next while it continued on basically the same, and I visited a child psychiatrist, and had another physical exam, and lab tests.

June 11, 12, and 13, I visited a child psychiatrist, and I had a physical exam from a doctor here

June 19, I had an appointment with someone in neurology at the Children's Hospital. The exam took a long time, and it was very frustrating. The female doctor asked me to do many things that were very hard for me at the time, walking across the room, and I think writing my name too. I remember during the exam I was asked to walk across the room, and since I had already been in the exam for a while, and was frustrated with not being able to do things well, I didn't want to do it, but the doctor asked if I would, and I decided just to try. Then I actually made it across the room and back, jerkily, since I had to force myself not to go back, and it took a while, but I eventually got there. I think it was also my frustration that got me across, since I was so frustrated that I couldn't do it, I was almost crying, but I was determined to do it. That day too we went to the lab at the hospital and had 5 vials of blood taken from me for a whole bunch of tests (that is a lot of blood).

Later on I visited a homeopathic doctor and another psychiatrist. Then I had an MRI. It was a very interesting experience. I lay down on this table that was sticking out of a bright white tube with white machines attached to each side (not sure). Then I think they slid the table into the tube with me on it. They had a system where you could listen to stuff on a music player and it would play it in the machine, so my dad put a story on his player for me to listen to. However, as soon as the machine started I realized that I would not be able to understand any of the story, although I could still tell that it was going on, because the machine was extremely loud. Before they started it, they gave me this white thing to hold in my hand that had a little indent in it. I was to hold this throughout the MRI, and if for any reason, I couldn't take it anymore or something, I could press the button, and they would stop the machine. However, this would mean they would have to do it again, so it was just in case of emergency. My head was in this rest, and I wasn't supposed to move it at all. I was also supposed to keep my eyes closed, as they would affect the picture (I'm not sure in what way, though). I did take a little peek once I was inside, I think, and it was weird, because I was in this long tube, that was nothing but white. It wasn't a very small tube, so I didn't feel claustrophobic (although I don't think I ever have, so maybe someone else would have in the same situation), although it wasn't really large either. My parents waited outside while this was all going on inside a different room, so I didn't see them after I went into the MRI room.

The female neurologist later sent word that the lab tests and the MRI had all turned out normal. I visited other areas of the medical profession, such as metabolics and ophthalmology. Then I was admitted to the Children's Hospital, into the general ward. This was the one time that I enjoyed being in the hospital (I would have enjoyed being in it more, if it weren't that I was sick, but this time I actually had a pretty good time there). It was an interesting ward. In the middle of the ward was the nurse's station, which was basically a circular structure of enclosed desks (with glass to see outside). Then branching off in four directions were the different hallways. Each hallway had a block of a

different color on the floor at the beginning of the hallway. Then, at the exit into the rest of the hospital, all of the four colors were in smaller blocks, made to look like one block (the same size as the rest in the other hallways). I used a wheel-chair most of the time in this ward. I had a small room, with a small couch/bed in one corner (for the parent to sleep on), and a larger hospital bed in the center of the room. Right across from the bed was a television mounted on the wall, so I could watch T.V. while lying in bed. The bed could contort into many different shapes (that was the fun part of the bed). The different parts of the bed that you could bend using a remote attached to the side of the bed were the head/back (you could bend it up so you were sitting up), the legs (tilting them down), underneath your knees (it just humped up underneath there, so you were bending your legs), and the whole entire bed you could tilt backwards or forwards. If I used all these contortions together, I figured out once, I could make the bed into an easy chair. You could do this by first putting a hump under your legs, then bending the legs down, then putting the back up, then tilting the whole bed whichever way you wanted, it could make a nice easy chair. At the hospital, I was visited by a team of doctors, and a female psychiatrist, then I was discharged. At the hospital, however, there were events every night that any patients were allowed to go to (those that could), so I went to some of those.

I remember one night, my dad and I went to this one event where they had a whole bunch of board games there, except that they were all huge board games, so we played snakes and ladders with people instead of game pieces, and the dice was probably just small enough I could put my arms around it. My uncle and aunt came and played this with us that night, and it was a lot of fun. However, after anything like that, I came back mentally exhausted.

