Baptists in Assam

A Century of Missionary Service

1836-1936

By

VICTOR HUGO SWORD, M.A., Th.D.

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DEDICATION

TO

the little girl who would tug
at my sleeve when I was deep in thought
over a complicated sentence and say:
"Don't frown like that, Daddy"

LINNEA — My Daughter

AND

to that larger girl of mine
who was tempted to become impatient
when the dinner was growing cold
and I lingered at my desk

CORA — My Wife

FOREWORD

Assam, the far northeastern Province of the Indian Empire, with its tea-gardens, mighty Brahmaputra River, and snow-capped Himalayas, with its many tribes of people of differing religions, languages, and customs — Hindus, Mohammedans, Animists; Nagas, Assamese, Garos — is one of the most picturesque and interesting of all the provinces of India.

The story of Baptist Missions in Assam is one of adventure and heroism, of suffering and steadfast faith. The devoted service of the missionaries has borne abundant fruit, and today there are 54,000 Christians and 900 Baptist churches in Assam.

Dr. Sword, with his wide experience as a missionary in Assam, and his first-hand acquaintance with the peoples of the Province, is admirably fitted to tell the story of these hundred years. As the Mission celebrates its Centenary, we are most fortunate to have his vivid and comprehensive account of the triumphs of the Cross in this interesting corner of Asia.

Joseph C. Robbins
Foreign Secretary, American Baptist
Foriegn Mission Society

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PREFACE

Assam is seldom thought of as an important missionary field. In fact, few Christian workers know anything about Assam, although the martyr missionary, Winfrid of Germany, is said to have prayed in the eighth century:

"O merciful God, who willest all men to be saved,
And to come to the knowledge of the truth,
Have mercy upon the Assamese,
Hindus and Mohammedans,
And all the inhabitants of Assam."

The American Baptist Foreign Mission Board at home which was directly in contact with the beginnings of Christianity in Assam did not look upon it very hopefully. Indeed, several times they considered seriously the giving up of the work which had been started, because of the slow progress during the first few decades of Christian activity. It was thought that the wild head-hunting tribes of Assam never would submit to the Prince of Peace! In the last few years this conception has been changed considerably, due to the fact that a great revival has taken place. Thousands of people have accepted Christianity as their religion. Whole tribes have exchanged their weird head-hunting chants for the harmony of Christian hymns. The mountains that formerly echoed with blood-curdling war cries are now re-echoing the hymns of fraternal love.

BAPTISTS IN ASSAM

Christianity in Assam today is commanding the attention of the churches in the west; and often the thought has been expressed by missionaries and church historians that there is need for a history of the Baptists in Assam.

From the beginning of the mission in the nineteenth century and on through the first two decades of the present century, the progress of Christian work was slow, since it consisted mainly in the laying of foundations. Since 1920, or thereabouts, the growth has been phenomenal. Twenty years ago there were less than three thousand Christians among the Lushai, a hill tribe among whom the Welsh Presbyterians have done acceptable work; but today there are about sixty thousand, or nearly one-half of the total population. In Manipur State twenty years ago, Christianity was forbidden, and there were only a few who dared to own the name of Christ, while today there are over ten thousand Christians.

In other words, during the last ten years the Christian community in Assam has increased from 132,106 to 249,246, or by 88.7 per cent. There are today eleven Protestant denominations at work in Assam, namely:

BRITISH SOCIETIES

The Baptist Missionary Society.
The Church of Scotland Foreign Mission Committee.
The Lakher Pioneer Mission.
North East India General Mission.
The Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Wales.
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

CONTINENTAL SOCIETIES

Gossnersche Missionsgesellschaft.
The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches.

UNITED STATES SOCIETIES

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and Woman's American Baptist Foreign Mission Society.
Church of God Mission Board.
Seventh-Day Adventist General Conference.

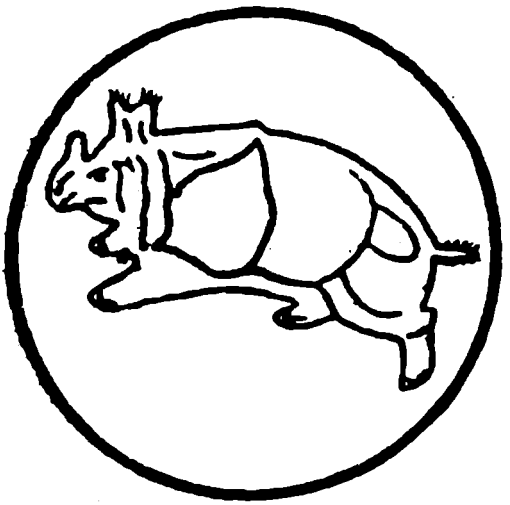
The Welsh Presbyterians are the strongest, with a constituency of about 110,000. The Baptists come second, with about 80,000, and the balance is divided among the others. The Roman Catholic Mission, which is conducted by the Salesian Fathers, has expanded considerably in the last ten years, and a Seminary for the training of young men for the priesthood has been founded in Shillong. Over one-third of the Catholics are in the Khasia and Jaintia Hills. The total number of Catholics is approximately 15,000 and is included in the figure given above.

As no previous attempt to furnish a critical account of the Baptist mission in Assam has been made, the writer has had to rely almost entirely upon reports and correspondences from the field. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society has published from time to time a number of pamphlets dealing with certain periods. In 1911, Mrs. Nettie P. Mason, an American Baptist missionary, wrote an article entitled "These Seventy-five years", which was published in connection with the eleventh biennial report of 1911. Government reports have been consulted as a check upon missionary reports. "Journals" and "Letters" which appeared in the *Missionary Magazine*, published in America by the Baptist denomination, during the years 1828-1934, have also been read. The originals of some of these letters have been examined, they being on file in the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society's office at 152 Madison Avenue, New York City.

Special mention needs to be made of *The Whole World Kin*, a work which is now out of print, but which gives a very valuable and detailed account of the early years in Assam, of Nathan Brown and his colleagues. Another book, *In A Far Country*, dealing with the life of Miles Bronson and his experiences in the hills, as well as in the plains, has been of great aid. A number of other books, too numerous to mention here, but listed in the Bibliography, dealing with Assam, have been utilized. The majority of these books are written from an individual point of view without any pretention to historical criticism, and deal, for the most part, with the district in which the author was interested personally. The purpose of these books was to stimulate missionary giving rather than to give a critical account of past events.

Twelve years' experience of the writer on the field and frequent consultation with other missionaries have been of inestimable aid in preparing this book. Beyond this the writer is indebted to his professors, Dr. W. L. Ferguson and Dr. Peder Stiansen, for criticism and valuable suggestions, and much credit is due Miss May Halstenrud for her patience during long weary hours of typing the manuscript several times.

It is hoped that the perusal of the following pages will lead the reader to a greater appreciation of the difficulties that had to be encountered in the development of the Baptist mission work in a country such as Assam, with its multitude of tribes and languages. There is indeed no need for disappointment regarding that work. On the contrary, there is encouragement, especially to those who have carried the burden in the heat of the day, and to those who have given liberally in support of the task.



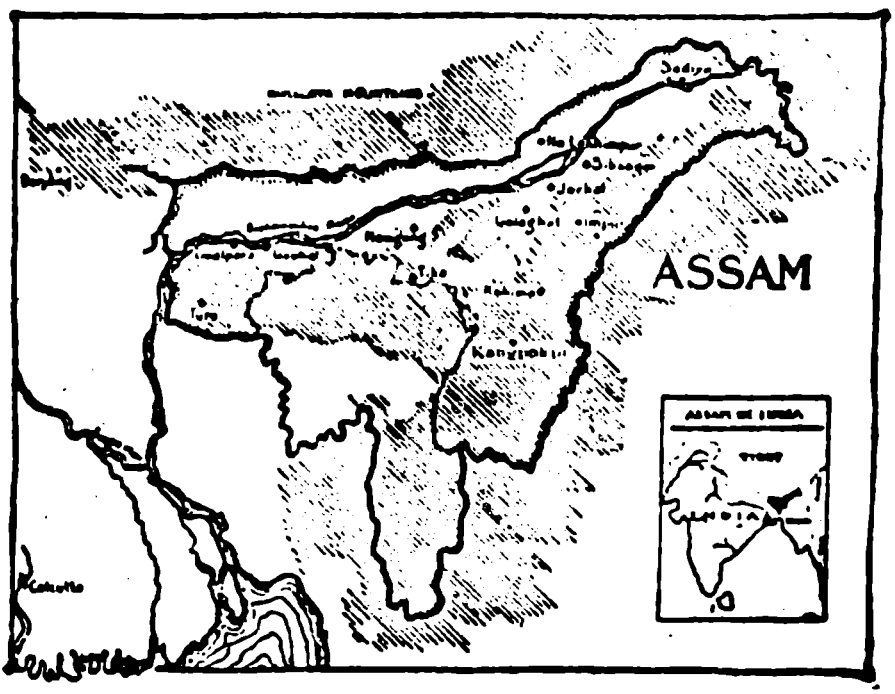
CHAPTER I

ARVA, FLUMINA, MONTES

The ordinary tourist traveling north from Calcutta is usually attracted by the snow-capped mountains of the Himalayas, and the great summer resort of Bengal, Darjeeling. He forgets to look to his right as he travels, not realizing that he is passing one of the most favored portions of this earth and, in many respects, one of the most important regions of the Indian Empire. Assam has been considered one of the backward provinces; but since, from a political point of view, it has not caused the British government much trouble, its economic importance has largely been overlooked. This is very interesting; but, it may be asked, what has it to do with a history of the development of Christianity in Assam? Just this: It serves as an introduction to one of the most fascinating stories of Christian history to be found in the East.

Assam is located in the northeast corner of India proper, lying between the twenty-third and twenty-

eighth degrees of latitude, and between the ninetieth and ninety-sixth degrees of longitude. It covers an area of 67,334 square miles,[1] which is about the size of England, Wales, and one-third of Scotland. The province falls naturally into three well defined divisions: (1) the Brahmaputra Valley to the north; (2) the Surma Valley to the south of the Assam range of



mountains; and (3) the hills on either side of the Brahmaputra Valley. From an atlas point of view, this division is correct, but persons living in the Surma Valley, or in Sylhet, often refer to the Brahmaputra Valley as Assam.

The rhinoceros which is placed at the beginning of this chapter represents the Coat of Arms of Assam, although it is not very well known even to those who call themselves inhabitants of the Province. It is a pity that there is no motto attached, as a very good one was suggested, namely, *Arva, Flumina, Montes,*[2] — culti

vated plains, rivers, and mountains. This is a most appropriate description of Assam, as there is scarcely a valley to be found that is more fertile than Assam. The majestic Brahmaputra River, or "Son of Brahma", bisects the entire valley from Sadiya to the Ganges. It carries the melting snows of the Himalayas two thousand miles to the ocean, making a channel from one to three miles in width. A legend among the inhabitants is that the circular basin, called Brahmakund, or "Brahma's well", in the extreme northeast of Assam, is its sacred source. It is fed on the north by six tributaries* getting most of their water from the melting snows of the Himalayas; on the south it is fed by eight rivers** that carry the torrential summer rains from the hills lying between Burma and Assam. These tributary rivers, as well as the Brahmaputra itself, occasionally overflow their banks and deposit in the valley a silt which makes the soil extremely rich and fruitful. Some one has called this portion of the Province a "pocket of gold". According to records, Assam never has known a famine. The current of the Brahmaputra is rapid. The descent for the four hundred and fifty miles from Sadiya to Dhubri is over three hundred feet. Its banks are unreliable, and people dwelling along-side the river often are forced to move back as much as a mile in order to avoid being carried away with the falling banks.

Beside the great agricultural wealth in Assam, there are also mineral resources of no mean proportions. Oil has been discovered and wells producing petroleum are continually being drilled. Large coal mines are also being opened up; and Assam produces practically

* Dibong, Dihong, Subansiri, Boroli, Bornadi, and the Manas.
** Dibong, Disang, Disoi, Dhansinri, Kallang, Kulsi, Krishni, and the Jinjiram.

enough coal to cover its own usage. The tea industry* has become world renowned. It was this industry that led the British government to penetrate the jungles, to explore the mountain sides of the Himalayas, and to enter the head-hunters' territory of the Singphos, Mishmies, Abors, and other places. The East India Company, in the early part of the nineteenth century, saw in the fertile valley of the Brahmaputra great possibilities, but did not fully appreciate its resources which are by no means as yet exhausted.

The Surma Valley is about one-third the size of the Brahmaputra Valley, and the elevation is only from forty-one to eighty-seven feet.

The hill tracts, or the Assam range of mountains which divides the two valleys, attains a height of nearly ten thousand feet in the Japva peak which overhangs Kohima. These mountain ranges are inhabited by various Mongolian tribes which were formerly barbarous head hunters, but who, since the occupancy of the British government, eke out a livelihood through tilling the soil on the fertile hillsides.

The principal characteristics of the climate of Assam are a comparatively low and equable temperature, and a great humidity. The average temperature found at three extreme points on the plains were: Sibsagar, yearly average, 72.3: Dubri, yearly average, 74.2; Silchar, yearly average, 75.5.

* *Thea Assamica*, the indigenous tea plant of Assam is thought by bontanists to be the original parent species, from which the varieties cultivated elsewhere are derived. The English government commenced its cultivation at Jaipur in 1835, and in 1836, the year of the founding of the mission, the first pound of Assam tea was sent to London. Later the Assam Tea Company was organized, and it reported in 1886, an annual export of tea amounting to thirty million rupees. Assam tea is valued for its superior aromatic and medicinal qualities. (*The Whole World Kin*, p. 124.)

The story goes that the climate of Assam is so enervating that when a dog chases a rabbit they both walk!

The humidity of the atmosphere, which is closely related to temperature, is a marked feature and the following gives the average mean relative humidity of the three above mentioned stations: Sibsagar, yearly average, 84.0; Dubri, yearly average, 78.0; Silchar, yearly average, 79.0.

The rainfall recorded in Assam is the second highest in the world. The average for the Province during the ten years from 1881 to 1891 was one hundred and thirteen inches. The heaviest rainfall registered at Cherra Punji in the Khasia Hills is over four hundred and seventy-five inches.

The density of population for the entire Province is one hundred thirty-seven per square mile. One hundred seventy-nine for the Assam Valley division, sixteen for the frontier tracts, fifty-two for the Manipur State, and one hundred forty for the Surma Valley, including the Khasia Hills. This will be referred to again in a later chapter.

Due to improvements in sanitation and to prevention of various diseases and scourges, such as kala azar, malaria, dysentery, cholera, etc., the mortality ratio has been reduced considerably during the last decade or two. The population is increasing constantly, both by birth and by immigration. The forty years from 1891 to 1931 mark an increase of nearly 4,000,000, showing that there were 9,247,857 in the province in the year 1931.[3]

For the major part, the people of Assam are agriculturists. The Census Report says that 97 per cent of the people in Assam reside in villages and tea gardens, and it may be said that in the entire province there is not a

city worthy of the name. The only places that can be called cities are Gauhati, Imphal, and Dibrugarh, and these places are really nothing more than large villages inhabited mostly by tillers of the soil.

The people on the plains, for the most part, are Aryans. There is no distinct Assamese nationality. The Ahoms, or Ahams, who established a strong kingdom, and from whom the province received its name, can no longer be called the predominating class of people. In fact, there are very few of these people left, and it is said that only one or two in the entire province is able to speak the original Ahom.

The tea gardens have brought to Assam, within the last few decades, peoples from all parts of the country to such an extent that within the next thirty or forty years it is by no means improbable that the Sibsagar district will be the only part of Assam where an Assamese will find himself at home.[4] While some sections of Assam are densely populated, yet for India, Assam is sparsely inhabited and could easily support a much larger number of people. Those living in the hill districts are of pure Mongolian stock, each tribe having its own particular language. In the Brahmaputra Valley, a large portion of the people can still be traced to a non-Aryan origin, but most of them speak Assamese.

In the Census Report for 1931, it is stated[5] that there are over sixty languages indigenous to the province. Beside these sixty separate tribes, the immigrants bring the number of languages up to well over a hundred. This indicates somewhat the variety of peoples and tribes located there. There is an Aryan substratum mingled with a Mongolian element from the north. With this mixture is a Dravidian element from the west, another strain from the Shan race, and a sprink-

ling of Burmese. Many centuries doubtless were needed for this process of commingling. Beside these, there are also the numerous immigrants, many of whom are Aryans, who have in the last few centuries become domiciled. Among the non-Aryans, are the numerous tribes of the mountains who, as mentioned above, are entirely Mongolian. The chief tribes are the Bhutanese, Akas, Daphlas, Miris, Abors (several tribes), Kamptis, Singphos, Mishmis (several tribes), Nagas (several tribes), Mikirs, Kukis, Kacharis, Khasis, Jaintias, and Garos, and farther to the south, the Manipuris and Lushais.

Each one of these tribes represents a religion: thus there is here a greater sprinkling of creeds and cults than in any other province in India. About 56 per cent of the people of the province are Hindus, and 30 per cent are Mohammedans, which is a rather large proportion, due to much propaganda and immigration from Bengal, and of these 30 per cent, 83 per cent are in the Surma Valley. About 70 per cent of the hill population are Animists, but this number is continuously decreasing owing to the influence of Christianity. Buddhism has a very small place in Assam; and Jainism has only a nominal number of devotees in the province. The Sikhs are on the increase because of the industrial demand for Punjabi artisans. It is not possible, however, in brief compass to discuss the religions of Assam. Moreover, it does not properly come within the range of this history.

A former missionary has put the religious problems in the following dramatic words:

"Come walk down the street with me; the first man we meet is a Hindu. Will you tell me now what his religious tenets are? You know in a general way what Hinduism is; but I venture the assertion that there is just about one chance

in 333,000,000 that you will be right. . . . That next man we meet is a Mussulman. You know what the Koran teaches, so can tell pretty accurately what he believes, or rather ought to believe. For even the Mussulmans of Assam have not escaped the influence of their environment. . . . Passing on we find a man whose sturdy limbs give proof of mountain climbing. His prominent cheek-bones and slightly Mongolian cast of features at once mark him as different from the Assamese. I tell you, he is a Hill man. But can you tell me what demon he worships?"[6]

All these Hill people are demon worshippers, but each tribe has its own demons. They are not so much concerned about the future, but are mostly concerned with the present moment. Their motto might be said to be "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." The Kachari is tainted with the doctrine of the Sadducees. He believes in neither resurrection nor spiritual life. The Mikir, however, who is also a Hill man, looks forward to a great beautiful city into which he hopes to gain admittance. Dr. Moore goes on:

"Here now we meet a native Christian, the chances are that he is from a hill tribe people, or if formerly a Hindu, that he is from the lower rather than the higher classes. Here at least, you think, is a man who believes and thinks as you do. But do not be too sure of this. . . . The ideas and associations of his childhood may not yet have been fully outgrown, though he is a true believer in the Christ of God."

The enumeration of various religions does in no sense adequately explain them, but it gives us some idea of the ground in which Christianity in Assam had its inception and where it was to be developed in subsequent years.

CHAPTER II

PRE-BRITISH RULE

The ancient history of Assam, for the greater part, is shrouded in darkness. Prior to the advent of the Mohammedans in the fourteenth century, the inhabitants of the province had no idea of history;* therefore, our knowledge of the people is limited to what can laboriously be pieced together from old inscriptions,** the accounts of foreign invaders and travelers,† and from incidental references in religious writings.†† The Ahoms, however, who were the ruling people of Assam from the seventeenth century until near the end of the eighteenth century, appear to have possessed the historical faculty. They were good historians, and they left several valuable manuscripts, which may be published some day. One of the outstanding early manuscripts, was burned during the reign of Rajeswar Singh in 1751-1768. During his reign an act of literary iconoclasm occurred when many of the old family chronicles were destroyed, because of some remarks, adverse to the prince, made in a history by Numali Bar Phukon.[1]

* It is said, however, that fragments as early as from the 12th Century are in existence.

** Several copper plates have recently been discovered at Benares, date 1105, on which was inscribed a deed or gift of some land in the neighborhood of Gauhati.

† Hiouen Thoang, the celebrated Chinese traveler who passed through India during the years 629 to 645 A. D., has left a few scattered remarks.

†† In 1894, Sir Charles Lyal, K. C. S. I., instituted a historical research, in the process of which several items of interest were discovered, such as an inscription on a rock at Tezpur.

Among the legendary accounts of Assam, in Hindu mythological writings, there seems to be mention of several places and individuals in connection with their gods. It is evident from these writings that Hinduism existed in Assam at a very early date. Hiouen Thoang, in 640, described the people; and he commented on the fact that a prince was on the throne in Assam at that time and that Hinduism was the state religion; and that the Buddhists were very few. Many hill tops in Assam are crowned with temples that stand on foundations infinitely older than the Ahom rule.

It was not until the reign of Rudra Sing (1696-1714), the greatest of all Ahom kings, that Hinduism became the predominating religion of the Assam Valley. Rudra Sing, himself, never completely embraced the Hindu religion but his Hindu proclivities increased as he grew older. He found it difficult to reconcile his regal dignity with the humble act of taking the *smaran*.* He could not bear the thought of prostrating himself before one of his subjects, be he ever so saintly. A Bengali pundit, Krishnaram Bhattacharjya was summoned to be the king's guru, but the king was disappointed to find him an ordinary human being and dismissed him soon after his arrival. The pundit departed in high dudgeon; but just as he left, a great earthquake took place, which the king interpreted to mean displeasure on the part of the gods, and so he recalled the priest. The king, however, died from consumption in Gauhati before he had made an open confession of the Hindu faith, but promised the pundit that his son Sib would become a Hindu.

When Rudra Sing died, Sib ascended the throne and became a disciple of Krishnaram Bhattacharjya, whom

* Which consists of the neophyte prostrating himself before a "guru" who teaches him the "mantra".

he made lord of the temple Kamaikhya. Sib Sing, with the prodigality of a new convert, erected a number of temples and excavated many tanks,* the greatest of which was "Siva's Sea", or Sibsagar.** Through him Hinduism became the predominating religion in the province. The Ahoms resisted for a time; but they finally took Hindu priests and abandoned their old tribal customs and ceremonies. Gait ascribes the deterioration of the Ahoms to their adoption of Hindu customs which brought with them rules that were not conducive to physical growth and vigor.

"The process of deterioration has gone on steadily, and no one looking at an average Ahom of the present day would suspect him of being the descendant of a race of conquerors, who, though small in number, gradually extended their rule over the whole of the Moguls, even when the latter were at the zenith of their power."[2]

The great Mogul empire had subdued one province of India after another and so came to be considered well nigh unconquerable. Assam also became the object of its desire, and several invasions were attempted. It was the ambition of Mir Jumla in 1660-1662 to bring the province into subjection; and he wrote to the emperor "that the next campaign would carry him to the confines of China". Due to a combination of ignorance of the country, inability to withstand the climate, want of communications, and the impossibility of repairing

* The entire country around Sibsagar is dotted with artificial lakes which were dug by ancient kings in commemoration of one thing or another.

** The Sibsagar tank is a half mile square. The legend has it that it was dug in one single day. Its surface is considerably higher than the surrounding country. It is constructed by throwing up a large embankment taking earth from nearby fields and from the center of the lake. It is believed to be fed by springs which make the water clear and beautiful in comparison to other mud holes.

losses by re-enforcement, the Mussulmans were literally washed out of the country. Their invasion never brought them any farther than Gauhati, which place they held for a comparatively short time.

Thus, in 1695, when Rudra Sing, the greatest of the Ahom kings, ascended the throne, his dominion was over all of the Assam Valley so far as it was inhabited. He had even succeeded in bringing many of the hill tribes under his sway. During the reign of his descendant, Gaurinath Sing, a formidable uprising took place within the Ahom kingdom which threatened to wreck the country and which finally led to its downfall. The Moarmarias,* a religious sect, had made several uprisings during previous reigns. Gaurinath was a bitter enemy of the Moarmarias and lost no opportunity to oppress them. He had, however, not properly estimated their strength, and after a number of engagements with them, he was forced to apply to a Mr. Rausch, a salt farmer at Goalpara, for help. Mr. Rausch sent seven hundred sepoys to aid him, but they were cut to pieces.[3] The Rajah of Manipur also sent an armed force to Gaurinath's assistance, but they also were defeated. In the meantime, the King of Darang, Krishna Marayan, took advantage of Gaurinath's distress and marched on Gauhati where Gaurinath was located at the time.

Gaurinath again applied to Mr. Rausch and at the same time sent a deputation to Calcutta asking for help. At the close of 1792, the British government sent a detachment under the command of Captain Welsh to assist Gaurinath. Captain Welsh defeated Krishna Marayan, put down the Moarmarias insurrection, and reduced the whole valley to obedience. Cap-

* *Moor* is a kind of fish, and *mara* means to kill or catch; hence, moarmarias, a fisherman socio-religious sect or cult.

tain Welsh was recalled, however, in 1794, and a few months later Gaurinath died. He was succeeded by his son Komalswar Singh, who was a mere puppet in the hands of the minister and died in 1809.

Komalswar was in turn followed by his brother Chandra Kanto Singh. He quarrelled with his prime minister, the Bura Gohain.* The young king applied to the Burmese for help on the ground that Bura Gohain had usurped the king's authority. The Burmese utterly overwhelmed the Assamese troops led by Bura Gohain, and then retired. The quarrel was renewed, however, and the Bura Gohain was killed, or as some believe, committed suicide by swallowing diamonds. His son then became Bura Gohain who immediately dethroned Chandra Kanto, and in order to disqualify him for the throne split his ears and put Purandar Singh on the throne instead. Chandra Kanto, however, again applied to the Burmese for help, and Purandar Singh realizing his own inferior fighting power, applied to the British government for assistance: but as it was the policy of the British government to interfere with the ruling tribal kings as little as possible, he was refused aid and consequently was defeated. The Burmese then came into power and placed Chandra Kanto on the throne as a nominal ruler. He soon quarreled with the Burmese, however, and was expelled.

At this juncture matters had come to a crisis between Burma and the British government, and on March,[4] 1824, war was declared with Burma.[5] The British forces entered Assam via the Brahmaputra, with a gunboat flotilla, conquered the valley as far as Koliabar, and during the next cold season completed their subjection of the rest. On February 24, 1826, the Bur-

* He was the regent, as the king was merely a boy.

mese, by the treaty of Yandabo agreed among other things to abstain from all interference in the countries now constituting Assam.[5] Geographically, then, in 1833, the parts of Assam that could be said to be definitely under British control were the districts of Kamrup, Nowgong, and Darrang.*

In that same year, however, Rajah Purandar Singh signed a treaty that he would administer the country under British rule on principles of peace and justice and would pay a tribute of Rs. 50,000 yearly. Captain Jenkins, who was then the Governor-General's agent and commissioner in Assam, writes of this arrangement saying that the native territory "was subject to the control and interference of the British officers in political matters and in cases of complaint of any gross mismanagement or injustice".[6]

In 1838, the territory under Purandar Singh was taken over by the government because he had fallen hopelessly behind in his payment of the tribute and was forced to declare himself unable to carry on the administration. His portion of the Assam Valley was then annexed to Bengal and was to be administered as lower Assam had been before, that is, under complete British rule.

The story of the southern valley is extremely obscure: and the fragments of history available and relating to it are not reliable. The true history has been lost in the fugitive memory of a barbarous people unacquainted with letters. In the nineteenth century, the Burmese had taken possession of Manipur and threatened to annex Cachar as well. The English, seeing the danger of the Burmese coming in from the south, decided to prevent it and took up the cause of the Cachar-

* Darrang extended to Bishnot. Above that was North Lakhimpur which came under the rule of Purandar Singh.

is. The Burmese were driven out and Gobind Chandra was placed on the Cachari throne. He paid a specified tribute to the British government from 1824; but in 1830 he was assassinated, and since he did not leave any male heir, his kingdom was annexed by the British.

Thus it occurred that before the inception of Christianity in Assam, most of the present area was under British rule. The borders along the two mountain ranges were, however, not very well defined as these tracts were inhabited by wild head hunting tribes. Since these tribes were not important enough to cause any significant disruption in the administration of the plains, they were for the most part left to their own devices and peculiar methods of social development.

CHAPTER III

BRITISH RULE

At the time of the inception of Christianity, the British government, as mentioned, was for all practical purposes in control of the province. In 1836, when the Brahmaputra Valley came under British control, it was in the most deporable condition. Not less than 30,000 Assamese had been carried away as slaves. The invaders by their inhuman and barbarous conduct had destroyed more than one-half of the entire population which had already been thinned considerably by "intestine commotions and civil wars".[1] The sufferings which the Burmese inflicted upon the Assamese were typical of the most atrocious deeds of conquering pagans.

Sylhet, which was later made a part of Assam, was then under the government of Bengal. It was, according to a treaty dated August 12, 1765, with the Mogul emperor, ceded to the East India Company. Cachar came under British protection by treaty of March 6, 1824; and the prince Gobind Chandra acknowledged his allegiance to the East India Company and agreed to pay a yearly tribute of Rs. 10,000.

In 1835, the whole valley, including Goalpara, was placed under the control and superintendence of British authority, and two years later, rules for administration were issued under the sanction of government.

The administration of this multi-tribal and multi-linguistical province was not as easy as it may be thought. The people on the plains were constantly in

terror because of the raids made by the barbarous hill tribes on both sides of the valley. The Goalpara district was encircled by the Garo Hills, which were inhabited by wild head-hunting Garos, who, like most of the northeast frontier tribes, lived in constant inter-tribal warfare and made frequent murderous raids on the people of the plains, sometimes taking captive whole villages of men, women, and children. The Naga tribes who lived farther east were equally barbarous and would occasionally sweep down upon the bordering villages and carry away captives and heads with which to decorate their door lintels in the Hills.* In order to keep marauders from doing too much damage, the chiefs of the border countries were made responsible for restraining incursions and in return for their services were allowed to hold their estates at a very light revenue.**

The Khasis were like unto the rest, troublesome marauders on the plains of Sylhet. For years, they had plundered the vicinity without much interference and it was not until 1826, after the conquest of Assam, that they came in contact with the British government.

* Ten military expeditions were led into the Naga Hills between 1835 and 1861, the greater number to punish raids. The burning of villages and the killing of several hundred tribesmen in these "punishing expeditions" led the governor-general Dalhousie to suggest a withdrawal of interference in internal affairs of the tribes. He wrote in his minutes, according to Dr. Mason, who evidently got his quotation from Government Reports dated February 20, 1851, "Hereafter we should confine ourselves to our own grounds; protect it as it can and must be protected; not meddle in the feuds or fights of these savages; encourage trade with them as long as they are peaceful toward us; and rightly exclude them from all communication, either to sell what they have got or to buy what they want, if they should become turbulent or troublesome".

** Account given by Dr. Mason who for fifty years was a missionary among the Garos.

The Khasia Hills separated two plains and Mr. Scott, the commissioner of Assam, deemed it desirable to unite them by building a road across the hills. The Khasis were suspicious of the white rulers and feared their intervention, which, they thought, would lead to subjection. While the party was surveying the land for the purpose of building the road, a Bengali servant of Mr. Scott, made an indiscreet threat in a quarrel with the Khasis that Mr. Scott would take possession of the Khasia Hills and make all the people servants. This caused a rumor to spread among the chiefs that the English had come to subdue the land. A surprise attack was made upon the surveying party and Lieutenants Burlton and Bedingfield, with fifty or sixty others, were massacred. A long war ensued, and it was not until 1833 that a treaty was signed in which the Khasia Hills became a feudatory state.

Space and time forbid dealing with the numerous other hill tribes along the frontier. Suffice it to say that some of the most interesting and primitive people inhabit these mountains. With each one of these tribes, the British government is more or less concerned, and in spite of colossal blunders on the part of individual officials, has maintained a high degree of order, and has respected, in so far as it was possible, the prejudices and peculiarities of the people. It was but natural, when a Christian nation became the conqueror, that its subjects were influenced by its professed religion: but other foreign religions, such as Mohammedanism and Hinduism were also there and in the ultimate development of Christianity among the primitive people of the hills, the opposition of the Mohammedan and Hindu has been greater than that of the animistic religions.

There are also certain government officials who

sincerely object to the propagation of the Christian faith on the ground that Christianity brings with it a westernization that is detrimental to the health and welfare of the unsophisticated village folk, and to the life of the primitive tribes among the hills in Assam.[2] The objectors forget, however, that the evil which is brought is not from Christianity, but from paganism in Christianity. The reverberations of the underworld in London, Paris, New York, and Chicago, can hardly be charged to Christianity, but rather to the pagan elements in the West.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

When William Carey went to India, in 1793, he set in motion a Christian influence that spread much farther than he or his associates ever dared to dream. He was, indirectly at least, responsible for the introduction of Christianity into a number of provinces in India. Through Carey's mission, work was started in Burma; and it was through Serampore, the headquarters of the Carey mission, that Assam received its first Christian impetus. Through his efforts of translating the Scriptures into several languages, Carey sent the teachings of Christ to a number of tribes that were not to have any European missionaries for several decades to come. Missionary work was carried on among these various peoples through Indian preachers. It thus happened that in his stupendous scheme of translating the Bible into all the languages of India, Dr. Carey included the Assamese. The New Testament was completed in 1819, and the whole Bible was translated in 1833.[1] Unfortunately this was not a good translation, since it was practically unintelligible to the ordinary Assamese. In making this translation, Dr. Carey had to rely entirely on an Assamese pundit who had no knowledge of Christian theology or terms with which to express it. The result was that so much Sanskrit was incorporated as to render the book useless for the purpose for which it was originally intended. It was only a very

small learned group who could comprehend it, and then, all theological terms were misinterpreted as they were based entirely upon the Hindu religion.

The English Baptist Mission in Calcutta was located on the very threshold of Assam; and it was but natural, therefore, that these early converts to Christianity, who received their training at Serampore, should desire to go beyond the borders of Bengal and penetrate the fascinating hills at the north as well as to traverse the fertile valley of the Brahmaputra. In this connection, it is interesting to note that Carey's first convert, Krishna Chandra Pal, was the first missionary to the Khasia Hills. It was through his efforts that the first Khasis were baptized. As far as Assam proper is concerned, there is no record of any Christian converts coming alone from Bengal or any other part of India to make an important contribution to the spiritual life of Assam.

Rev. John Mack wrote to his Society,[2] on January 4, 1835, presenting the commercial possibilities of Assam, particularly mentioning the cultivation of tea. He saw how Assam could become a highway of commerce between China and the East India Company's realm. He also saw alongside this commercial opening, opportunities of tremendous importance regarding the development of Christianity in this part of the world. He wrote: "The barrier against intercourse between our subjects and Chinese . . . would be broken down . . . and an open door afforded into the celestial empire." It is evident from this citation that the early thought was to possess Assam for Christ and then to use it as a means to greater ends, — namely, as a highway into China. After having thoughtfully and carefully considered what sacrifices such an opening would demand

of any individual daring to attempt the task, he continued, "yet can we dare to send out a brother to take advantage of these favorable circumstances?"[3]

In 1829, however, the first definite step for missionary work in Assam was taken. Fortunately for all concerned in the Christian enterprise the government officials of the province at that time were persons intensely interested in the education of their newly acquired subjects. Mr. Scott, the chief commissioner of the valley, encouraged the establishment of a mission at Gauhati and in particular did he urge that a school should be started. Miss Mack, the daughter of one of the missionaries at Serampore, wrote of Mr. Scott that he was "a good friend to the mission, and a supporter of all our institutions and is anxious for the instruction and enlightenment of the people under his care".[4] Gauhati was then the capital of the province, if a province it could be called. It was considered a center, both from an administrative and a political point of view.

At this time, there was in the government employ a young Englishman named James Rae, who served for several years as Superintendent of Public Works. There is very little record of Mr. Rae, except a few notations from a journal written by Miss Mack at Serampore College, where she writes of him that "he is a native of Dumfries, born I think of pious parents, at any rate having access to the means of grace but never having felt its power. He came out here as a soldier".[5] He was stationed at Dacca, and while there he evidently had a very real Christian experience, which led him in subsequent years to devote his time to missionary service. In his political career, he had an opportunity to study the spiritual needs of the people. He evidently felt, however, that he was not properly qualified as a mis-

sionary, and in 1827 and 1828, he entered Serampore College to prepare himself for the service.[6] After a period of preparation at Serampore, he was ordained to the Gospel ministry. In July, 1829, he and his wife and little child were on their way to Gauhati.

Krishna Pal, Carey's first convert, had spent some time in the Khasia Hills; and his report regarding his success, and the seeming readiness of these people to receive the gospel led the missionaries at Serampore to hope that if Rae settled at Gauhati, he would also be able to reach the Khasis from there. This hope was partially realized, for Rae reported in 1830 that he had under his charge "twelve interesting youths, three Khasis and nine Garos, committed to his care by Mr. David Scott, commissioner of Assam."[7] It was therefore hoped that Mr. Rae would be able to continue and enlarge upon the work which Krishna Pal had started in 1813. In order to be able to do more effective work, he was associated with a native helper named Ramchundra Nath; but evidently this fellowship was not of a long duration, as in one of his letters to the home office he wrote that his helper soon returned to Serampore because "he was not prepared to suffer hardships and to labor effectively".[8] In a letter from another missionary (Lisk), the trials and difficulties of this pioneer Rae are enumerated, showing that after illnesses of various kinds, the climax was reached when he was "bereaved of his exemplary wife".[9] Thus, it seems that this young missionary met with obstacles from the very inception of his work in Assam, and it is possible that these impediments were the reason for his withdrawal from the field in a comparatively short time.

There were, however, other sides to the situation; and letters record encouragement, as far as the progress

of the work was concerned. A place was opened for preaching where every one could hear: and many were willing to accept Christianity: but they made no definite profession of it as they feared religious persecution and social ruin. Rae, however, was visited by many inquirers who were interested in the new religion, and he distributed many New Testaments, poor though they were, in the Assamese language; and a number of Bengali tracts were scattered abroad. It was Mr. Rae's great ambition to place a New Testament in every heathen temple. He reported from Gauhati that the people were friendly; that schools had been opened by certain Europeans; and that the work was quite successful.[10] From the sale of literature and from donations received, he was able to send to the Press at Serampore the goodly sum of Rs. 713.[11]

In 1836, Rae was encouraged by the baptism of six individuals and by the formation of the first Christian church in the Assam Valley. In connection with this progress, Lish wrote: "A chapel has been prepared and an additional missionary is greatly needed".[12] The church was formed of twelve individuals, including the misionaries; and he wrote that for some time much prosperity was enjoyed by it.

This church had not been in existence for more than a year when its progress was partly checked and the outlook dimmed. Two of the small number constituting the membership were suspended from communion because of immoral living.[13] The people who formerly had listened attentively to the preaching had become accustomed to the white preacher; and Rae was discouraged and disgusted because, as he said, "they make sport of the whole and declare they care not for hell or God's wrath".

In response to various pleas, a second missionary, Mr. Robinson, was sent to Gauhati; and after his arrival several schools were opened. Rae now had time to make a number of extended missionary tours in the province at which time he distributed many tracts and gospels. Mr. Robinson also made a tour of Nowgong, the main village of a great district in the province, about seventy-five miles from Gauhati, where he urgently solicited funds to establish an English school and to open up a new mission station.[14] This undertaking however, was of comparatively short duration; and evidently, due to the discouragement at Gauhati or lack of re-enforcement, the work there also came practically to a standstill.

When in 1837, Mr. Thomas and Mr. Bronson, newly appointed missionaries of the American Baptist Missionary Union, came by Gauhati on their way to Sadiya, where work had been started by Nathan Brown. Mr. Thomas wrote that the work in Gauhati was not in a flourishing condition, and he said among other things that the English service held for the Europeans was very poorly attended. He commented on the word "for", because, he said, there was nobody in the church to preach to. That Sunday when Bronson and Thomas attended, there were only six present. Thomas further bewailed the fact that Rae had accepted the position of teacher in a government school where he would not be allowed to teach anything but the sciences, and non-religious subjects.

Soon after the advent of the American Baptist Mission, Rae retired from missionary service and went into educational work. Later Robinson also left the province for work in Bhutan. On March 7, 1838, intelligence was received from Captain Jenkins and the Rev

Mr. Robinson that the Serampore mission stations were to be given up by the parent society; and that it was agreed that the Assam and Arracan regions were to be relinquished to the American Baptists.[15] This left Assam entirely in the charge of the American Baptists; and strenuous efforts were made to persuade them to man the entire Brahmaputra Valley, which was under British control; and where missionaries could work without fear of molestation. The student of missionary movements is impressed with the fact that had the American Baptists sent a missionary as suggested in 1838[16] to continue the work, which Krishna Pal had begun in the Khasia Hills, and at a time when the London Missionary Society was unable to supply men for that field, the story of Christianity in Assam might have been altogether different and Assam might have ranked as the outstanding Baptist mission in the world today.

CHAPTER V

UP THE BRAHMAPUTRA

Paradoxical as it may seem, Christianity has often invaded new territory hand-in-hand with military forces. This was the case in Assam. The English Baptists occupied Gauhati from 1829 and for seven succeeding years, but it was left for the American Baptists to accompany the British military forces to the threshold of the "Celestial Empire" in 1836.

It had long been the desire of the missionaries in Burma to "introduce the gospel among the Shans — an interesting family of tribes inhabiting unexplored regions to the north and east — and through them it was expected by inland route to reach to China", whose seaports were at the time sealed against foreigners.[1] Dr. Judson had dreamed of the posibility of establishing several mission stations in the territory north of Burma and south of China, and when the plans for opening the work in Sadiya were proposed, he expressed his great delight in a letter home:

"My heart leaps for joy and glows with gratitude and praise to God, when I think of brother Jones at Bangkok, in the southern extremity of the continent, and brother Brown at Sadiya in Assam, on the frontiers of China — immensely distant points, — and of all the intervening stations, Ava, Rangoon, Kyouk-Phyoo, Maulmein, and Tavoy, and the churches and schools that are springing up in every station and throughout the Karen wilderness. Happy lot, to live in these days!"[2]

The invitation came from the British government through the English Baptists at Calcutta. Captain Jen-

kins, Governor-General's agent and commissioner in Assam, wrote to Mr. Trevelyan, a civil service man in Bengal, inviting the Baptists to do Christian work "in the northeast district of Assam occupied by two tribes of the great Shan family, the Khamtis and the Singhpos".[3] He further points out that the Missions would be under "the protection of our government and would not be liable to those checks which the Rangoon mission has constantly suffered from the jealousy and barbarity of the Ava government".[4] Mr. Pearce, the Secretary of the English Baptists, wrote to the missionaries in Rangoon saying, "It appears evident that an effectual door is opened for the establishment of a branch of your mission to the northeast of Assam. I must confess I shall feel truly happy if you feel inclined to enter it. Its geographical situation with relation to your mission seems to render it particularly desirable."[5]

The Board seems to have been moved by the enthusiasm on the part of the Burma missionaries and also by the invitation of Captain Jenkins, who is represented as a "man of activity, intelligence and benevolent feeling, whose character and exertions stand very high in the estimation of the government";[6] and further by the very generous offer of Captain Jenkins made in connection with the opening of a station at Sadiya.

"No attention of mine," he wrote, "should of course be wanting to make the place comfortable to any missionaries and I will be willing to contribute my mite to their establishment. You may mention that I will subscribe 1,000 rupees, if a family is settled as a mission at Sadiya; and whenever they have had a press at work for six months I will be happy to double that sum, if I remain in charge of the province."[7]

Nathan Brown, one of the missionaries in Burma, when approached as to his willingness to make the

attempt "embraced the proposal with instant enthusiasm".[6] On December 16, 1835, the Board wrote to Captain Jenkins over the signature of Lucius Bolles, corresponding secretary, accepting the invitation and informed him of their action regarding the appointment of Brown for the task. "It is probable you will have been appraised before this letter shall have reached you of the measures we have adopted for the immediate location of a mission at Sadiya, the place recommended in your letter to Mr. Trevelyan."[7] The Board further commends Mr. Brown to Captain Jenkins as being a man of "strict integrity, enlarged views and truly Christian kindness, and will prove himself deserving of your favorable regard".

Thus the venture was launched. Sadiya was to be the frontier station and the doorway into the celestial empire. It was hoped that Jones, at Bangkok, and the other Siam missions would thus be of easy access. Mr. Brown wrote, "You will easily see, by inspecting the map, that brother Jones can ascend the Siam river about two-thirds of the distance to Sadiya." Alas! The map did not reveal the impassable mountain track, nor did it mark in modern fashion, with red and blue pins, the location of the wild and barbarous tribes in those hills. That was knowledge which Brown was later to acquire through some of the most painful missionary experiences recorded in human history.

People everywhere were keenly interested in the project; and friends, both in India and America, sent in funds to launch it.* From a commercial, as well as from a religious point of view, Sadiya gave promise of be-

* Major White 200|-; Mr. Bruce, a tea planter, and Lt. Charlton 100|- each; Mr. Bird from Alahabad 250|-; Captain Jenkins 3000|-. *Missionary Magazine*, 1835, Vol. 16, p. 195.

coming a great center through which international intercourse between China and India would take place.

Captain Jenkins had promised to double his pledge in the event a printing press would be set up. All concerned realized the necessity of schools: and the need for reading material was only too obvious. The nearest printing press was several months' journey away, and the hope of producing any literature outside of Sadiya seemed futile; hence, the necessity of a printing press and a man to run it. Mr. O. B. Cutter was appointed to be Mr. Brown's associate and to head up this department.

In order to visualize the remoteness of the station, a brief recital of the long and tedious journey up the Brahmaputra River may be helpful. To travel overland was inconceivable, as there were no roads connecting Calcutta with Assam; and the roads in Assam itself were impassable and dangerous. To be sure, the Brahmaputra was no speedway. In the "cold season", then as now, its channels were narrow and difficult to find, often causing the craft to ground on some unsuspected sandbar. In the "rains" its stream was extremely swift and turbulent with shifting beds and full of snags torn from the banks, making any sort of navigation extremely dangerous. Its course was through dense and terrible jungles where roamed wild elephants, tigers, rhinoceres, and buffaloes. The danger of falling trees while journeying by day, and of jungle fevers and beasts while mooring by night, was the lot of those early pioneers.

On the twentieth of November, 1835, the little company consisting of the two missionary families, the Cutters and the Browns, started their long and tedious journey up the Brahmaputra. Just when they would be "due" at Sadiya was a subject concerning which the

boatmen were ignorant, not to say indifferent. They had procured three Bengali boats, one for each family and one as a floating kitchen and storehouse, each vessel being "some five or six feet in width, and twenty or thirty feet in length".[10] A canopy of split bamboos and palm leaves, built over the center afforded the travelers shelter at night and during the day protection from the burning tropical sun. "These boats were manned by a manji or captain, with six or eight men under him, who walked in a foot-path along the bank of the river, pulling the boat after them by means of ropes."[11] Where there was no path, these men would push the boats by means of poles.* Sometimes their craft would be whirled about by the current and headed down stream: again it would be dashed and torn by wind and rain. Sometimes the travelers were forced to halt, due to shallow water, and were compelled to transfer all their goods into small dugouts. On January 18, 1836, or nearly two months later, Brown wrote from below Gauhati, "We should have been up much farther, had it not been for shallow water in passing from the Hoogly to the Ganges . . ."[12]

For seventeen long weeks they were pushed and pulled through dense jungles and unknown country, isolated entirely from all civilization and European contact. At the beginning of the journey they were occasionally visited by British officials,[13] but as they proceeded up the valley these visits ceased. The hardships of such a journey must be left to the imagination of the reader. Suffice it to say, that had the missionaries turned from the prospects before them and sought some less exposed and more promising field, the act might

* The boatman securing the lower end of his pole in the river bottom propelled the boat forward by holding the pole and walking toward the rear of the boat.

have been considered the natural dictate of prudence. "But there is a martyr spirit which transcends mere self-seeking prudence; its laws and allegiance being those of another kingdom."

On March 23, 1836, the Browns arrived in Sadiya. The station was more or less in turmoil. The Khamtis had made several raids; but the missionaries were welcomed by the officials in the station; and the bungalow of Captain Charlton, who had gone to Calcutta for treatment of wounds he had received in one of the encounters with the Khamtis, was put at the disposal of the missionaries.[14]

CHAPTER VI

UNFOLDING REALITIES

The purpose in occupying Sadiya was, as has already been stated, to connect the Chinese frontier with Burma in the hope that the tribes between Sadiya and Ava would be evangelized and that an entrance into China might also be effected. The undertaking was supposed to be comparatively simple[1] both by Mr. Pearce and Mr. Brown. It was also thought that the Shan language was so much like the Burmese that there might be a possibilty of merging these two and thus producing literature on a large scale. It did not take long, however, to realize that this was more or less of a delusion. Mr. Brown, having procured a Shan teacher, wrote from somewhere below Gauhati saying, "We find it [the Shan Language] entirely different from the Burmese."[2]

They were also to experience another disappointment in that the Shan tribe among whom they expected to work at Sadiya was not there! The people among whom they expected to labor lived beyond the mountains! The high hope that had been placed in the Shan language as a means of communication was rudely shaken. The encouraging words of Mr. Trevelyan, "The Shan language furnishes a ready means of intercourse with perhaps a greater number of people than any other language in the world, except Chinese itself."[3] lost their power. Mr. Brown, however, settling down to cold facts writes, "This region providentially

opens before us; and after long and tedious journeys, we have at length arrived upon the ground where we shall no doubt spend the remainder of our days."[4] His faith in the missions in Assam remained unshaken, and he spoke of them as "the most important and encouraging fields in all the east."[5]

The people roundabout Sadiya were Assamese, and they spoke "a dialect of the Bengali language."[6] They used Bengali characters; and within a short time the missionaries were feverishly studying the Assamese.

The creation of a mission compound and the erection of the necessary buildings, both for the housing of the missionaries and the schools, was a long and tedious task. Building material was all in the raw. Boards, nails, and ordinary building material were unknown; but on January 6, a school was opened, which, within a week, had twenty boys, with five learning English, as they said, with "eagerness truly astonishing." Immediately after June 12, a site for the Mission Compound was procured on the north bank of the Kuril River, one mile from the cantonment, about two miles from the old village of Sadiya. On December 16, they entered their own home and the routine work of preaching and teaching was begun. While Mr. Brown saw the opportunity for work among the Assamese, he was, nevertheless, keenly interested in the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Abors, a warlike tribe near Sadiya, appealed to him tremendously.[7] He wrote to the Board putting before it the need for more missionaries.

Mr. Brown gave himself over to the production of books. He soon found that the translation of the Bible produced by Carey, through interpreters, was so full of Bengali and Sanskrit words that it was practically use-

less. The ordinary Indian could not read it, and its revision was practically impossible; but Mr. Brown wrote, "We concluded not to make any alterations which could possibly be avoided, as we had not obtained that perfect acquaintance with the language, which would be necessary in order to enable us to make a thorough revision."[8] Hence, in January, 1838, he began to make a new translation, as the corrections were too numeraus. In the Sermon on the Mount, he had made no less than two hundred and thirty alterations.[9] About twenty-seven months after his arrivel, two hundred and thirty pages had been prepared and 4,850 copies, or a total of 135,850 pages printed, beside thirteen chapters of Matthew.[10]

These were in Assamese, Tai, and English, and a Khamti Catechism of one thousand copies soon followed. This is a formidable amount when one takes into account the medieval method of printing and the obstacles which were in the way. Mr. Cutter had been obliged to modify considerably the type by "paring," by the introduction of Burmese characters, and by providing about twenty matrices for new characters.

One of the problems confronting them was the type of character to be used. Practically none of the natives could read or write, and Brown wrote, "We are therefore obliged to give them an alphabet of some sort, and the only question is whether it shall be the expensive and difficult Bengali characters or the English."[11] He goes on and says, "We have been induced to choose the latter," the reason for which he bases on the fact that "from present appearances, it seems nearly certain that the Bengali character will, in a few years, be abandoned throughout India,"[12] and also because he felt that in the

use of the Roman characters, certain letters could be employed to express the same sounds whether it were in Assamese, Khamti, Abor, or Singpho. "So," he concludes, a "scholar who has learned to read one, can read the whole. Further, the natives themselves have made no objection to the English characters, but rather prefer them. No one has asked for the Bengali characters,"[13] and there were no prejudices against English characters as the people had no particular characters indigenous to themselves.

Beside the work of Mr. Brown and Mr. Cutter, the two missionary ladies were also busy. Several schools were started in the nearby villages two or three miles away, and were managed by Mr. Cutter. Zayats* were also built at different places where the people could come and hear the Gospel preached and inquire into the mysteries of the new faith. The boys of the community evidenced special interest and in an incredibly short time read English astonishingly well. Mr. Brown wrote, "They can now read in their own language with ease, and the class in English have made such advance as to be able to read simple sentences with general correctness."[14] A young priest asked for entrance. He laid aside his saffron robe, became a student of the school, and received the Christian name, Elijah Hutchinson.* This was the beginning, in Assam at least, of giving the converts new names. Mr. Brown's reasons for this policy were:

"The native children themselves are not only pleased with it, but it gives them a spur to greater exertion than their besotted opium smoking and bigotted companions can ever be induced to make. By adopting this course, we should not only do away with the vulgar associations connected with such names as cat, rat, dog, etc., and still more

* Little preaching booths.

exceptional names of their heathen gods, but should gradually be introducing the use of surnames."[15]

The girls also were taught in the art of handicraft and in letters. Mrs. Cutter gained their confidence and a large number of them attended her classes, with the result that Christian literature found entrance into many nearby homes.

The schools were to them their chief means of imparting knowledge and of gaining the confidence of the people, as well as the means of propagating the Gospel. Thus it is worthy of special attention to note that at the very inception of Christianity, education was emphasized. It was the conviction of these early pioneers that the schools were of the greatest importance in their effort to evangelize the savage tribes of the hills. Judson wrote to Brown the following words of encouragement soon after Brown's landing in Sadiya:

"I am glad to hear that you are beginning to print the language in the Roman letters. This is what I should do in such a country as yours, however injudicious I think it to attempt to do so in such a country as Burma. . . . I am glad to hear also that you are getting up schools. In your situation, schools and elementary works, ought, I think, to engross almost your whole attention. I hope that you will soon see schools flourishing around you in every direction."[16]

While getting settled, the missionaries had studied their surroundings and the vastness of the field. The possibilities of the development of industry were not overlooked. The tea plants that had been in the country for many years had attracted the attention of the government. Thousands of them were sent to Saikhowa.**

* As far as we know he never made an open confession of the Christian faith, but he did become a teacher in one of the Mission Schools according to the Treasurer's report to the Board.

** A place six miles from Sadiya, south of the Brahmaputra.

where they prospered and bid fair to bring great wealth to the province. Brown prophesied,

> "There is no doubt that in a few years the tea trade will be carried on here extensively. This will produce a great change in the country, will fill it with a dense population, and will convert these now almost impenetrable jungles into the happy abodes of industry. If the means of grace are employed, may we not also hope that it will become the garden of the Lord!"[17]

Brown also saw the possibility of the development of industrial training among the natives. This was particularly true regarding farming. On the suggestion of Captain Jenkins, Brown and Cutter wrote to the Board and suggested the possibility of opening an experimental farm which would serve a two-fold purpose, namely, to relieve the missionaries from embarrassment in providing the common necessities of life; and also improve the temporal condition of the natives, by teaching them the useful arts and introducing foreign plants.[18] The Board sanctioned the undertaking and desired to make it a component part of the organization by sending two or more pious and intelligent families of suitable qualifications whenever such families could be found. This undertaking, however, never materialized due to the insurrection of the Khamtis which will be noted in subsequent paragraphs.

CHAPTER VII

TRYING EXPERIENCES

The need for more missionaries was recognized, and letters setting forth the appalling situation were sent to the Board. Captain Jenkins wrote to them in September, 1838, in regard to the work done by the missionaries in Sadiya, speaking very hopefully of the schools established, and commenting on the missionaries in highest terms. He urged the Board to open a mission at North Lakhimpur: and suggested that not less than two families should be sent. "It is a promising land", he declared: and in pledging protection for the missionaries he pointed out that lower Assam was under a "native Prince, Rajah Purandar Singh, who paid tribute to the British Government and was subject to the control and interference of the British officers in political matters, and in cases of complaint of any gross mismanagement or injustice".[1]

In response to the various urgent requests, the Rev. and Mrs. Jakob Thomas and the Rev. and Mrs. Miles Bronson were sent out as associates to Brown and Cutter. These two families unfortunately began their long and tedious journey up the Brahmaputra Valley at the beginning of the "rains", at a time when the current of the river would come in turbulent whirlpools carrying with it trees and debris from falling banks, endangering any kind of native craft coming up the river. The first portion of their journey was, on the whole, successful and it brought them to Gauhati in

the best of humor and health. The latter portion of the journey was fraught with illness and untold hardships. Bronson, being too ill to navigate, was forced to moor in a low and unhealthful jungle a little below the mouth of the Dibruh River. Mr. Thomas was sent ahead in a small canoe to Sadiya to get help and to bring intelligence of their condition.

When Thomas was only three hours from Sadiya and within sight of the town, two large trees fell on his boat and killed him. He was pinned to the canoe so that the men could not extricate him. The sadness and discouragement which fell upon the hopeful missionaries when they received the news of the tragedy is easily understandable. Mr. Cutter wrote, "I am now in a small boat, on my way to Sadiya, with our dear brother Thomas, lying before me, *a cold and lifeless body . . .*" His feelings took expression in a poem:

> *"Death, like an overflowing stream,*
> *Sweeps us away; our life's dream,*
> *An empty tale, a morning flower,*
> *Cut down and withered in an hour."*[2]

The accident is further described in Mr. Cutter's account as he received it from the natives who were with Thomas at the time of his death.

"The men who were in the front and back of the boat, say they gained their footing on the ground, and sprang to the relief of brother Thomas, at the same time calling the other men, who were soon on the spot. They said they used every endeavor to get him out — two taking hold of each arm, two hold of each shoulder, and one hold of his head, but they could not move him, as he was pressed so closely against the boat, and the trunk of the largest tree lay across his bowels. They stated they had neither knife nor axe with which they could cut away the trees and with their united efforts they could move neither that nor the boat;

neither could they raise his head above the water. He raised one or both of his hands above the surface for a moment, but they never heard a groan or perceived any further struggle. Finding, they said, all efforts to rescue him, vain, one boat immediately proceeded to Sadiya, to bring us the distressing intelligence. O, what a shock it was to us all! What gloom instantly spread over our fond anticipations and bright prospects! Brother Brown was unable to go out today, having a slight fever; but as quickly as possible, I got a boat and men provided with spades, hoes, axes, blankets, etc., and went with all speed, to the fatal spot. Our friends, as well as myself, feared I should be unable to recover the body; but, before I arrived, the strong current had moved the position of both the tree and boat, and I was soon enabled to raise the body of my lifeless brother from its watery grave."[3]

Mr. Brown, sick though he was, proceeded down the river to the aid of Bronson and the comfort of Mrs. Thomas. He found them moored in an unhealthful jungle just below Dibru. The coming of Brown was an encouragement to the Bronsons, but it was a difficult task for Brown to bring the sad news of Thomas' death. He wrote: "Brother Bronson is in a very low state, and we fear the journey will be more than he is able to bear, especially since we can procure no food suitable for a sick person."[4]

On July 5, 1837, the party finally landed at Sadiya at the very height of the rains.

The following two years were full of incidents that proved to be of great importance to the development of the missionary enterprise in Assam. The struggle which these missionaries experienced in order to sustain life was not small, and sickness and death were their ever-near companions. They were in constant danger of hostile raids by the Khamtis and Singhpos. Their missionary activities were checked by continuous tribal

warfare; and their hopes to enter among the hill tribes were shattered. Sadness, occasioned by the death of their daughter, Sophia, had come to the Brown family. Mrs. Brown and their only remaining child were often ill with fever or dysentery: and to add to their sorrows an incident took place that cruelly jarred their peace of mind. After a long week of hard work of translating and preaching and care of the sick family, Mr. Brown, one Sunday evening, just in the shades of night, decided to walk over to see the grave of their daughter. Upon arrival, he found to his horror that the grave had been opened and the coffin exposed to full view. It was with great difficulty that he could persuade some of his coolies to help him cover the grave before nightfall.

The period of 1836 to 1840 was characterized by wars and rumors of wars. The Jorhat Raja was deposed by the English Government on account of his oppression and his failure in paying the government revenue. The hill tribes were warring between themselves and roaming the country, robbing and burning cities and villages. There were suspicion and defiance among the hill tribes: and panic among the plains people. In Sadiya the Khamtis resisted the English by attacks and massacres: and the missionaries were in constant peril.

In the early morning of January 28, 1839, the Khamtis made a surprise attack upon Sadiya, firing the houses and murdering indiscriminately all whom they met. Colonel White, the commanding officer, when first hearing the alarm, rushed out of his house making his way to the magazine; but he was met and surrounded by the enemy, who killed him on the spot.[5] It was a terrible night for the missionaries whose houses were about one mile away. This circumstance, however,

proved to be their safety. Why the mission houses were not plundered is not known unless, as Brown said: "It might have been through personal friendship on the part of the chiefs", but it is more probable that "they intended to reserve the houses of the missionaries for plunder afterwards."[6] Their retreat from Sadiya, however, was so sudden that the mission houses were forgotten.

There was no chance for the missionaries to rush over to the cantonments as these were too far away; hence, they slipped into a little canoe, taking a few biscuits along for food, and pushed out into the stream. Thus they spent the night "every moment expecting an atack from the savages who might be lying in wait to rush upon and massacre them, or take them as slaves." Mr. Brown wrote: "We therefore kept off upon the river till daybreak when the welcome sound of the bugle met our ears, and we immediately came in. The sight around us was truly horrible. The dead and dying were scattered in every direction. While I am writing," he observed, "the trees are clouded with flocks of vultures, which have collected from all quarters to feast upon the slain."[7] The mangled bodies of the dead, the groans of the dying who were weltering in pools of blood, were scenes and sounds which would make even the less squeamish soldiers turn away; and which haunted Mrs. Brown for months. Mr. Brown wrote. "I cannot think that when I lie down and take my two little ones by my side, that I am acting contrary to the Gospel, by putting my sword and double-barrelled gun under my pillow; nor could I in conscience hesitate to use them, if pushed to the last extremity."[8]

Mr. and Mrs. Bronson had already gone to Jaipur, another military outpost, to try out the possibility of

opening work there for the Nagas. Mr. and Mrs. Cutter were in Calcutta during the process, but returned on April 5, that same year (1839). The Browns were compelled to live within the cantonment. Sadiya became less and less desirable as a station from which to do missionary work. Sickness in the crowded cantonments, where the missionaries were now located, increased. A persistent, dreadful odor of the virulent small-pox made it a deadly place. In the meantime the population of Sadiya and vicinity was daily fleeing. Fields and villages were deserted. "Khamtis, Singphos, and Mishmis combined," wrote Mr. Brown, "have been plundering and carrying off the peaceable inhabitants." To the weary missionaries, it seemed that their work had been taken out of their hands; and the prospects for the time were quite blasted. Many of the Khamtis, among whom they were particularly desirous of laboring, were entirely dispersed.

The headquarters of the government had been removed to Sibsagar; and, wrote Mr. Brown, there "is no prospect that Sadiya will recover . . . for many years to come; and we have at last concluded to relinquish that port at present and to locate ourselves at the more central situation at Jaipur." Hence, after a little over three years at Sadiya, after all its experiences, having gathered no converts, they left homes, zayats, and school houses; and with all their goods, including printing presses, they pushed off from Sadiya on the twelfth of May, 1839, with Jaipur as the object and hope for further missionary activities.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CALL OF THE HILLS

Sadiya, with its sad experiences, was left behind. It turned out to be a barred door rather than an open gateway to China. It was not a central place from which to reach the influential Shan tribe, but rather an outpost for the British army. The wild Khamtis refused to submit to the government, and they were beyond the reach of the gospel. Instead of being a mission haven, Sadiya had turned the missionaries into fugitives, and they had barely escaped with their lives. Sadiya's importance melted away with the removal of the army. Its glory, like that of ancient Babylon, became shrouded in infamy. Its streets became overgrown with jungle and its inhabitants were scattered in all directions. The unoccupied huts of the natives became the abode of jackals and wild beasts who filled the air at night with piercing yelps and threatening roars as they fought for the bleaching bones of peasants, soldiers, and prospectors. All in all, Sadiya was a disappointment, and the hope the missionaries had placed in it was shattered. Brown went to Sadiya a couple of years later to view, as he says, "the desolations of the place and visit the graves of brother Thomas and our little Sophia."[1] He found the graves dug open and the bones of the dead scattered over the ground. These he gathered up and brought in a basket to Jaipur for interment. He spoke of Sadiya as a melancholy spot — a place which he had no desire or wish ever to visit again.

Prior to the evacuation of Sadiya, Jaipur had for some time been considered as a second station; and Bronson had moved there in 1838. But when the British army located a detachment in that place, it became more than ever a center from which to do missionary work. Everything seemed to be in its favor; and the missionaries embraced the hardships connected with the moving and re-locating as a God-sent opportunity. They looked upon the new place of service with greater enthusiasm than they had looked upon Sadiya. Its proximity to the Naga Hills and Burma re-emphasized the old plan of connecting Burma with Assam. The task of Christianizing the hill people seemed to be of paramount importance. It is true that in moving to Jaipur they moved away from the Abors and Mishmis; but that fact did not seem to have disturbed them greatly because they argued, "that when books in Abor and Mishmi were ready for the press the inconvenience of printing them at Jaipur would be no greater than it was to print Singpho and Naga books at Sadiya."[2] Hence, they had a strong conviction that "the cause would be advanced by the removal to Jaipur".

Economic reasons also led them to Jaipur as it was a district where tea operations had been started in a big way. It is interesting to note the alertness of these early missionaries to sense the importance of commerce. Brown comments on the possibilities of coal near Jaipur. He wrote,

"Saw several very fine beds of coal which will prove of great service in navigating the steamers which the tea company are intending to put on the Brahmaputra. Assam, from present appearances, is likely to prove the richest country in India. Besides tea, iron, and coal in immense quantities, the country abounds in *sum*, mulberry, and other trees, which feed three of four species of silkworm, —

caoutchouc trees, — several of the most important wood oils, — earth oil springs, and what is perhaps most important of all, salt springs, which are already worked by the Nagas to considerable extent and under European superintendence, would prove of great value."[3]

Bronson also wrote that "as a station Jaipur bids fair to become one of the first in importance."

Thus at the beginning of 1840, three missionary families — Bronson, Cutter and Brown, — were located at Jaipur. It is evident that they now looked upon Jaipur as a permanent abode and as a place where they would be able to accomplish things which they had not been able to accomplish before. They divided their work roughly as follows: Cutter continued with his printing and educational work: Brown gave most of his attention to preaching and literary activities: while Bronson gave his entire attention to the Nagas.

To establish a mission station among the Nagas had long been Bronson's desire. This undertaking he found more difficult than he had first expected. The inaccessibility of the hills soon became evident. There were no roads. The paths used by the natives were not made for foreigners, but led up and down the precipitous mountain sides, a thing which rendered it almost impossible for the missionary to make any extended tours among the villages. Further, the Nagas were suspicious of the white man and did not look with favor upon his intrusion. In the spring of 1840, however, Bronson succeeded in moving to Namsang, a little village in the hills, about two days journey from Jaipur. Here he had built a house for his family; but the loneliness of the mountains evidently affected them all, for he wrote, "We have never been quite so much alone as just now,

having always had some brother missionary or at least some English person with whom to associate."[4]

There were a number of obstacles to prevent the establishment of schools: among them the impression that only young men and relatives of the chief were capable of learning to read. The common people, it was thought, could not be benefited by books. Further, the laborers could not be spared from the work — the manufacture of salt. To have girls in school was unheard of. "You cannot teach our females," they said, "they are trained to bear burdens, to bring wood and water, and to make the salt by which we make our subsistence." Thus the missionary had to be grateful for the opportunity of teaching a favored few who were considered able to assimilate the mysteries of the alphabet. It was difficult indeed to maintain a school among such wild people because the pupils refused to gather at a given hour: and their untamed habits were not easily subjected to school rules and routine. For instance, while pupils were busily employed in reading, if the sound of a barking deer was heard, each one would seize his spear and *daw** and rush to the chase without ceremony. The progress of education was slow; but men, young and old, finally came to the missionary and were soon made acquainted with the rudiments of learning. Evening schools were held for those who worked and could not attend during the day: and before long the pupils looked forward in anticipation to the study period. Bronson wrote: "Not an individual is absent and they appear to have applied themselves to their books with zeal."[5]

Bronson seemed to have become keenly interested in the Nagas and he pleaded for a missionary to come and

* A large knife about 12 inches long fastened to a wooden handle.

live among them. He wanted one man for the Nagas and one for the Singphos. That there was no one to take over the work among those people distressed him. He exclaimed, after he had put before the Board the great need, "O God, pity these perishing tribes and dispose the Board of Missions to send them help." The need for more missionaries was emphasized, and it is important in view of present day criticism to note the calibre of the men desired. Bronson wrote:

"*We want the choicest the church has to consecrate;* men well disciplined in mind — well versed in the study of human nature — of unfailing patience — possessing a zeal that difficulties only will enkindle; men who can press onward to the accomplishment of an object for years amid every sacrifice, and not faint; not self-willed, not high-minded, but ready to take any place appointed to them in the providence of God; — above all, men of deep piety."[6]

Unfortunately, Bronson and his family were ill much of the time. Medical aid was not available; and it soon became evident that to remain among the hills would endanger not only his health, but his entire future usefulness as a missionary. It came, therefore, as a great blow to Bronson when, after a short sojourn of eight months among the hills, he had to pull up stakes and leave. He wrote: "We could not but weep as we turned from the spot — bereft of health — and leaving behind us no one to carry on the labors of love among this perishing people."

On the plains Cutter was found busily engaged in educational work. He complained, however, about the lack of progress in the school; and it is evident from his correspondence that the work did not flourish as well as he had hoped. Jaipur, while located in a strategic center, was not large in itself, nor were there large villages in the immediate vicinity. Most of the inhabitants

were transients, consisting of laborers sent for the purpose of sinking wells for petroleum, and digging for salt in the hills. Cutter, therefore, remarked that "Jaipur is . . . a good station for preaching, but not so favorable for schools as many other parts of the country."[7] The Rev. Joseph Paul wrote in 1899 that there was once a flourishing school at Jaipur which had as many as three hundred pupils.[8] That statement seems to be a bit optimistic, as letters from Cutter, Bronson, and Barker indicate that it was only with difficulty that they were able to maintain a school. Services were held evidently both in English and in the vernacular. All the Europeans in the station attended the English gatherings. The native assemblies must have been attended by a crowd of all kinds of people. A group of Chinese Catholics, who had been imported in connection with the tea industry, seemed to have taken great interest in the services. They had been taught in a Roman Catholic school before they arrived in Assam: and, seeing no other more appropriate image in the house to bow down to, they turned toward a picture hanging on the wall and bowed before it. These Chinese coolies intermarried with the Christians and became an important factor in later years in the church in Sibsagar.

Brown's time was taken up in preaching among the Assamese; and in doing literary work. The need of evangelizing the plains people pressed itself upon him: and it is evident from the correspondence that his mind was being drawn more and more toward the Assamese. He continually asked for missionaries to work among the plains people; and he seemed to be of the opinion that the work among the hills could well afford to wait. He wrote:

"I have long been in doubt whether, in the present circumstances of the mission, and while there are so many inviting fields among the Assamese, it is the duty of any brother to devote his life to the study of a language, and to the translation of the Scriptures into it, which is spoken only by a few thousand people. The Nagas, who speak the Namsang language, according to the nearest estimate brother Bronson can make, amount to no more than about 6,300 and of these, a large portion can already speak the Assamese language with ease. Whether we ought to make a separate language for so small a tribe, seems to be a serious question."[8]

In response to the misisonaries' pleadings the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Barker and Miss Rhoda Bronson were sent to labor among the Nagas; but upon arrival on the field a change evidently was suggested to Barker, for the work among the Nagas never materialized and his trip to the Hills was of a rather cursory nature. Miss Bronson died soon after her arrival on the field and she was buried at Jaipur beside the bones of Thomas. The bleached bones of little Sophia Brown were put in a box and when Mrs. Brown later returned to America she brought this along and they were deposited in the family burial plot at East Charlemont, Vermont. The isolation of the Namsang station among the hills, as well as the sparsity of the population, combined with the opportunities of the valley to make Mr. Barker decide in favor of the plains. He made several tours to Sibsagar and Jorhat. These places impressed him because of the dense population and the easy accessibility of the stations. After consultation with the brethren at Jaipur, Barker was designated to plains' work.

The little missionary group were more or less bewildered by the circumstances in which they found themselves. Bronson had to relinquish his hope of missionary work among the Naga Hills; and one day in May, 1840, when he was weak and shivering with

fever chills, he was seen tucked away in a little canoe floating down the Dihing River, on his way to Sibsagar for medical aid. Barker, filled with American enthusiasm and overwhelmed by the great crowds and densely populated territory which he had seen near Sibsagar and Jorhat, was eager to have a mission in either one of these two places. Brown also had suffered much because of illness in his family; and conditions at Jaipur had only added to his burden. His wife and sick child had to spend much time in Calcutta, and his own poor health impeded progress. Cutter had struggled, in a shifting population, to maintain a school. Jaipur, they discovered, was not the paradise they had hoped it would be. Brown wrote:

"We have been disappointed in our expectation regarding Jaipur — instead of increasing in population it has rather diminished . . . owing in great part to the unhealthiness of the place, and the sparseness of the population in the immediate neighborhood makes it a very discouraging situation for missionary labor."[10]

CHAPTER IX

THE DEMAND OF THE PLAINS

A new chapter in the life of the Assam mission is reached — a sort of reversal of plans. While no visible fruit had been seen as the result of the labor put forth in Jaipur, subsequent years proved that the effort had not been made in vain. Nidhiram Farwell, usually referred to as Nidhi, an Assamese youth employed in the printing press, became interested in Christianity through the reading of a short prayer in English which he found in one of his little books. On May 13, 1841, he was baptized by Bronson at Jaipur, amidst much rejoicing on the part of the Europeans, and real curiosity among the natives who had gathered to witness the baptismal act.

Thus, after nearly six years, amid most trying circumstances, the labors of the missionaries were rewarded. It is significant to note that this first convert to Christianity was an Assamese. This fact, perhaps, more than any other, led the missionaries to turn their attention to the Assamese rather than to the hill people, an attention which was to characterize the missionary effort for many decades to come.

Mr. Barker, as already stated, made a number of trips throughout the districts of Sibsagar and Jorhat; and during these trips he became more and more convinced that either Sibsagar or Jorhat was the most advantageous place from which to carry on missionary work. He thus brought before his fellow missionaries

the following reasons why he believed Sibsagar was the place in which to establish the future mission. First, Sibsagar had every advantage over Jaipur in reference to location, as it was only a few hours drive from the Brahmaputra River which served as the main thoroughfare and was a two days ride over a comparatively good road from Dibrugarh. The road to Jorhat was also open and brought it within one day's journey of Sibsagar. Jorhat was the most densely populated district of the province, and the capital of the Assamese Rajah. Second, the populous part of North Lakhimpur, a district on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra, could be visited from Sibsagar better than from any other place. Third, Sibsagar had a physician, — an item of importance, as past experiences had proved, and this physician was friendly to the missionaries and gave all needed medical attention free. Fourth, Barker felt that he could more safely leave his family in Sibsagar, while he was about distributing tracts in various communities, than he could in any other place. Fifth, the principal government of the district was lodged in the court of Sibsagar, which brought together the most active, learned, and intelligent people and afforded an important channel of communication with the whole district. Sixth, the headquarters of the army was there; and because of that a monthly expenditure of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 12,000 was being made. This gave a strong impulse to trade and contributed to the permanency of the population. There were also a hospital, a jail, and a number of brick edifices in process of construction. A government school was to be established, similar to the one at Gauhati, in which English and Bengali were to be taught. Further, Captain Jenkins was of the opinion that there was no likelihood of the headquar-

ters ever being changed from Sibsagar, at least not for many years to come.

On May 24, 1841, at about twelve o'clock noon, a little canoe, containing many strange boxes indicative of European ownership, moored on the muddy banks of Dikho River, in the village of Sibsagar. Mr. and Mrs. Barker, the new missionaries, had arrived to make this place their permanent residence. A few weeks later another canoe brought the Brown family thither for medical attention, and as it turned out, for residence, for in a consultation with the other brethren the Browns were advised to remain in Sibsagar. Bronson, although reluctant to leave the Naga Hills, also had been impressed by Sibsagar; and he was quick to see that his usefulness as a missionary could be enhanced if this station was made headquarters: and while he thus relinquished the work among the Nagas he did so with the hope that by winning the Assamese the Nagas would also come to the knowledge of Christ. The historical significance of Sibsagar is of interest: and much could be said in regard to its relation to the province. Suffice it to say that it had been the headquarters of native rule for several centuries: and in 1839, when the British took over the government from the Ahom rajah, they also moved headquarters to Sibsagar. It thus became the capital of upper and central Assam: and Brown wrote in 1841: "It is now probably the largest village this side of Gauhati."[1]

The mission bungalow was located on the banks of the beautiful artificial Siva's Sea — a sheet of water covering an area of one hundred twenty acres and from which the village got its name. Legend has it that it was dug in 1733 by Siva Singh, one of the Ahom rajahs, to commemorate his conversion to Hinduism.

(See footnote on page 25). Here the missionaries settled down in peace to accomplish some of the things they had longed to do ever since their arrival in Sadiya in 1836. At last their hope seemed to be fulfilled; and Barker wrote jubilantly:

"No thundering edicts are promulgated against our entering this interesting field; but the doors are thrown wide open. The people are in peace, and none molest or make afraid. A beginning had been made. Books are circulated, and the people are becoming interested to know what they contain. A great many who can read, and a great many by hearing them read, have become acquainted with the contents, and wish to know more about the religion of Christ."[2]

Visitors from the higher ranks of society called upon the missionaries daily for inquiry and discussion. Brown gave himself over to translations and preaching, and Barker to learning the language. A school for girls soon flourished under the direction of Mrs. Barker, by the aid of Ramsagar, a native assistant.

In the meantime, Mr. Cutter made arrangements for the "security of the mission property" left at Jaipur; and on November 30, he and Mrs. Cutter, with their two converts, Montan and Nidhi, left for Sibsagar, which place they reached on December 8, 1841. The following Sunday, December 11, was long to be remembered in Sibsagar, for on that day the sacred waters of Siva's Sea were for the first time consecrated to Christianity in that Mr. Brown baptized Montan,* while a number of Europeans and Indians stood on the banks and were interested on-lookers. Brown wrote of this occasion:

* Montan, the second convert, had come under missionary influence while he was a student at Sadiya. He did not prove to be of much comfort to the missionaries as according to old church records, he was suspended from the fellowship of the church a few months later because of immoral conduct.

"The scene was solemn and affecting. The sound of sacred music, rising above the calm and peaceful waters, brought vividly to mind the remembrance of similar scenes in our native land. May this beautiful expanse of water, long since dedicated to the heathen deity but now consecrated to the service of Christ be often thus honored by the footsteps of willing converts."[3]

In 1845, the waters of Siva's Sea were stirred three times; first, by the baptism of an Assamese convert named Batiram, on March 9; again, on July 13, when Calibor, a *dhobi*, or washerman, who had been considering Christianity for several years, was baptized; and third, on December 20, when Ramsing, a cousin of Batiram, who had showed much enmity toward Christianity, finally decided to follow his cousin's example.

The missionaries no longer thought of the work in terms of a tribe or of a particular district; but they viewed their task in terms of the whole province. *Assam for Christ!* became their slogan, and with that slogan in mind they pressed forward in all lines of missionary activity. On November 15, 1843, Mr. and Mrs. Cutter brought to Sibsagar the printing press establishment from Jaipur. Books and tracts were soon turned out by the thousands, while Mr. Brown labored feverishly to keep the press going with his translations, revisions and compositions of Assamese literature. In 1845, they reported that 3,740,100 pages had been printed. Much of the expense of the press was defrayed by the proceeds of "job" work and generous gifts from friends. It is significant to note that the government servants and the tea planters of that early day were keenly interested in the missionary activities and aided the mission both with financial and moral support. Captain S. F. Hannay gave the mission his valuable

premises containing a brick bungalow with a "godown" or store-house, while Major Jenkins presented the mission with a font of Bengali type for the printing press. Mr. Bruce had formerly helped at Jaipur and Sadiya and when the business house in Calcutta, where the mission had its funds banked, failed he lent the mission Rs. 1000 without interest.

The populous neighboring villages were fertile fields for the educational program launched by Mr. and Mrs. Cutter. Soon after their arrival in Sibsagar they reported the establishment of six schools; and the people were constantly asking for more. The number grew until in 1845, they reported fourteen, with an average attendance of 381.[4] Many of the villages supported their own teachers and built their own school houses.

While Brown and Barker were planning the work at Sibsagar, Bronson, by general consent of the missionaries, was contemplating work at Nowgong; hence, on September 22, 1841, he and his wife loaded all their little belongings on a raft made of small native canoes in preparation for their long journey of about two hundred miles down the Brahmaputra. On October 2, at three o'clock in the afternoon, they reached their destination and the raft was moored on the Kullung River at Nowgong. The teeming multitudes appealed to Bronson; and the heartaches connected with the leaving of the Nagas were soon forgotten in getting settled and making ready for preaching and touring among the numerous villages round and about Nowgong. On November 10, he purchased a bungalow and premises which he procured with funds obtained from the sale of the mission property at Jaipur.

The multitudes at Nowgong, he soon found, were not easily to be won to Christianity. Two years after

his arrival he wrote: "I am not yet permitted to report to you the conversion and baptism of multitudes."[3] On the contrary, he complained of the callousness of the hearts of the Hindus and of the power which the Hindu priests had over their subjects.

It was this seemingly impenetrable wall that led Bronson to change his mode of missionary work. Instead of preaching he turned his attention toward the education of the youth. He wrote in a letter, "if we do anything for this people we must rescue the youth and children"; hence, he proceeded to establish a school into which he invited the children of the community and in particular did he invite the poor and homeless children, hoping that by reaching them he would create a new society that would have as its basis Christianity rather than paganism. He wrote:

"My mind has been led to the establishment of the proposed orphanage institution where I may collect all the friendless and destitute, but promising orphan children . . . into one large boarding school where they may constantly be kept under the influence of Christianity for ten or twelve years. In general, I propose to confine myself to children between the ages of three and eight years. When they enter, caste is broken; for they live and eat in common. I propose receiving boys and girls, and thereby introduce the education of the female sex, which is wholly neglected in this country."[4]

He felt that the establishment of common schools had not the beneficial effects desired, owing to the inability of getting the children wholly under the influence of Christianity. This new method, he felt, would assure the mission the opportunity to give constant instruction and to permit the students to live on a Christian compound and in a Christian atmosphere; thus they would absorb the Christian philosophy of life and would soon forget the old training of non-

Christian fathers and mothers.

The work of the orphanage proved effective in more ways than one. The children became very proficient in the rudiments of learning and after five years it yielded a spiritual harvest that exceeded Bronson's expectation. A revival broke out among the pupils and it was reported that many of them confessed their sins with tears; while the interest became so great that the school was suspended; and morning, noon, and night the pupils assembled for conversation on religious topics. Mr. Bronson wrote concerning this time,

"Day and night, whichever way I turned, I could hear the voice of prayer or the song of praise. The wondrous love of God in dying for sinful men seemed to be the theme which filled every heart. Almost every member of the most advanced class has been received into the church, and a number express their desire to preach the Gospel to their countrymen."[7]

This revival marked another milestone in the progress of the faith in Assam in that the first women were baptized, one of them being betrothed to Nidhi Farwell, the first Christian convert.

Gauhati, the most important city of Assam, located at the entrance of the Brahmaputra Valley, had from the very beginning been looked upon as a strategic missionary center. It was hoped by Brown that the Board would take over Mr. Robinson who was stationed there in government educational service and who had for some time served under the English Baptists; but such a transfer never materialized. Mr. Bronson also expressed his conviction "of the importance of the Board's possessing themselves of Gauhati without delay". Gauhati appeared to him "to bear the same relations to other stations in Assam that Maulmein does to other stations in Burma".[8]

When Bronson left the hills for Nowgong and the Cutters moved to Sibsagar, the entire so-called upper Assam was evacuated and the policy of the mission was almost wholly reversed. Just before Cutter's arrival at Sibsagar, Barker relinquished his bungalow with the expectation of establishing a new station at Tezpur, a little town on the banks of the Brahmaputra located between Sibsagar and Gauhati. He remained there, however, for only two months. In the latter part of 1843 he was located at Gauhati alone, after having spent one year in Assam, his efforts scattered among Jaipur, Sibsagar, Tezpur, and Gauhati. Upon his removal from upper Assam Mr. Brown wrote:

"This movement will leave all of upper Assam, our original field, without a single *preaching* missionary and this, after the mission has been established seven years, so that brother Cutter and myself are now quite as solitary as when we first came to Burma. . . . Could we have foreseen when we left Burma, the mission would not have been more efficiently sustained, we should, undoubtedly, never have left that country for Assam. But since we are here, and in a field far more inviting, in itself considered, than we could have found among Burmans . . . we feel it our duty to stand by our post so long as life is spared us . . ."[9]

This scattering of the missionary forces over the whole valley, with the idea of attempting to reach all the plains people, may seem to have been a rather presumptuous program. It marked the beginning, nevertheless, of a missionary work which was to be continued for many decades to come. Sibsagar, Nowgong, and Gauhati became the three central stations and remained as such for the twenty subsequent years. The work accomplished was noteworthy. Thousands and thousands of tracts and Scripture portions were pre-

pared and scattered abroad, converts were gathered, and those received were of the stronger and more useful character. Most of them seemed to have been pupils who had been in mission schools or people who had long been connected with the missionaries. Many professed to believe but could not break family and caste ties, and it may well be supposed that not a few were secret disciples.

CHAPTER X

ORGANIZATIONS

A new day dawned, and the outlook seemed favorable save for the feebleness of the working force. Four men, at three widely separated stations, were struggling along while antagonistic elements among the pagans were increasing rather than decreasing.

The Christian community in Assam grew, nevertheless, and in 1845, the organization of the first three Baptist churches was reported. On January 25, Messrs. Brown, Bronson, and Barker, with a few native Christians, gathered at Gauhati for the purpose of organizing the first Baptist Church of Assam. This church was composed of three branches: Sibsagar, Nowgong, and Gauhati — Sadiya and Jaipur having been abandoned. The articles of formation were drawn up, and the Baptist covenant was adopted. Mr. Barker was appointed pastor. The Lord's Supper was celebrated in the evening, and all present rejoiced that the true light had at last indeed dawned upon dark Assam! Steadily it grew brighter. Before the end of that year twenty more baptisms of hopeful converts were reported.

On February 8, the same year, the branch church at Nowgong was recognized as a part of the new Baptist church. Regular services were established and Mr. Bronson was elected as the leader.

On March 9, the little group at Sibsagar also organized themselves into a church. Thus the first three indigenous Baptist churches were organized into branch

churches, and the missionaries no longer had to carry the burden of Christianization alone. A new dawn appeared. The failure and disappointments which had dogged them during the first nine years were changed into victory and encouragement.

The three branch churches continued to grow, "and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved". It soon became evident to the missionaries, as well as to the native workers, that if the work which they had commenced was to be made permanent, it needed to be organized on an indigenous basis. A committee was appointed to propose suggestions as to procedure. The first conference for the purpose of taking into consideration the expediency of recognizing the three branch churches as separate and independent churches, and also of organizing them into a regular Baptist association, was held at Sibsagar. The Association gathered on Friday evening, October 30, 1851, and was called to order by Mr. Brown. The members present at this first association were as follows:

Gauhati: Brethren Danforth, Ward and Apinta.
Nowgong: Brethren Bronson, Stoddard, James Tripp, Lucion D. Hayden, Monroe B. Wood, and Ebenezer Carrow.
Sibsagar: Brethren Brown, Whiting, Cutter, Batiram D. Peck, and Nidhi L. Farwell.

Mr. Brown was elected the moderator, O. T. Cutter, clerk in English, and Batiram D. Peck, clerk in Assamese. A constitution was prepared and adopted. It was read both in English and Assamese. It is interesting to note the make up of this first constitution:

"1. The Association shall be called the *Baptist Association of Assam*.

"2. The officers shall be a moderator, two clerks, for the purpose of keeping the records in Assamese and English, and a treasurer, — to be elected at the commencement of each

regular meeting, and to continue in office until another appointment shall be made.

"3. The Association shall be held annually at such time and place as shall be voted. Each church shall be entitled to send six delegates.

"4. Each church shall send with their delegates a letter, giving an account of their condition, their joys and their sorrows.

"5. The object of the Association is to promote the cause of Christ, and to counsel and assist each other.

"6. This Association disclaims any right to control or influence the action of the churches in their individual capacity.

"7. Any church of like faith and order may be admitted into the Association on application by letter at any regular meeting.

"8. The Association shall appoint two preachers, one to preach in English, the other in Assamese, at each regular meeting, for the next meeting of the Association.

"9. This constitution can be altered at any meeting of the Association."[1]

Considerable business was transacted, and it is noteworthy that the native brethren and the missionaries considered this as their common task. Often a motion was made by one of the native delegates, then seconded by a missionary, and vice versa. The problems that confronted them were many and varied. One of the first things done was the ordination of Mr. G. Dauble, formerly connected with the German Lutheran Mission at Tezpur. He had changed his views on baptism and had been appointed by the Baptist Board as an American Baptist missionary.

Their agenda of business contained, among many other things, the problem of evangelism. The Executive Committee of the Board had submitted instructions with "reference to the work of directly preaching the gospel to the heathen", which stated that the "leading

work of a missionary was the preaching of the Word".[2] There was full concurrence to this request and actions were taken indicating that five out of seven missionaries were exclusively engaged in preaching the gospel. It was voted that the cold season should be mainly devoted to traveling and that instead of passing rapidly through the country, several days should be spent at each important place. The necessity of traveling as simple as health would permit, when going on preaching tours, was urged. They emphasized, however, that the appropriation of the Executive Committee for the department of evangelizing was entirely inadequate.[3]

Actions outlining the work of the native assistants were taken and seven were appointed, namely James Tripp, Lucien D. Hayden, Charles S. Thomas, and Monroe B. Weed for Nowgong; Nidhi L. Farwell and Biposu for Sibsagar; and Apinta for Gauhati. It was further voted that the native assistants be divided into two classes: assistant preachers and colporteurs — including the duties of exhorters and tract distributors. The rules that were laid down for the assistants indicate, to a certain extent, the sincerity with which these early missionaries looked upon their task. No assistant was to receive salary as a preacher or colporteur for periods when not actually engaged in missioary work. It was also expected that every native assistant should present monthly a full report in writing, to the missionary under whom his labors were directed, namely, tours, places visited, kind and number of tracts and Scripture distributed, and conversations held.

Government schools under their supervision and missionary schools which they themselves had established were discussed. It is evident from records that schools were considered of great importance in the evan-

gelizing program. The experience of all missions, they claimed, favored the plan of educating both sexes. Girls' schools were established in Sibsagar and Gauhati. The orphanage at Nowgong was a co-educational institution and was considered of common interest to the whole mission. They, therefore, pledged to the principal of the Orphanage "their united co-operation, sympathy, and prayers."

The consideration of advance took up much of their time, and it was earnestly recommended to the Executive Committee that Golaghat and Mongoldai be immediately occupied. This, they felt, was indispensable to the efficiency of the mission. Golaghat was the connecting link between Sibsagar and Nowgong; and the occupancy of Golaghat would enable the missionaries to reach one another's fields of operation most advantageously. Further, it was a door to all the Naga tribes on the southern frontier; and it was an important civil and military station. Mongoldai was desired because of its dense population and its location. It was not far from Gauhati, easy of access, and in a vicinity where the Cachari tribe was abounding. The Cacharis were free from the shackles of Hinduism and were in many respects superior to the Assamese. The mission was unanimous in the opinion that no time should be lost in the occupying of these two stations.

Although this first Conference lasted for three weeks, the reader is impressed with the amount of work they accomplished. The missionaries were in no hurry to get back to their stations until they had completed their task. At that Conference the various forms of work were systematized and uniform methods adopted. Foundations of church order were laid and provision made for more extended and permanent evangelistic la-

bors in the outlying districts. Seven native brethren were carefully examined and formally appointed to missionary service. They took time to discuss with these brethren the common task of evangelizing Assam. They formulated rules for the publication of books, erection of buildings, training of teachers and preachers, and establishment of schools. In fact, all matters concerning the missionary program, ranging from inclosures of burial grounds and forms of burial of native Christians to making of plans for the formation of churches, were settled. It was of great importance because it gave the isolated missionary a basis upon which to formulate a working plan.

The economic establishment of the Christians was not neglected. A suggestion was made by the Commissioner that the Sibsagar missionaries should found a native Christian village, but this plan was not adopted. Later Messrs. Brown and Whiting took up grants of land for the native Christians to cultivate. It was felt that in order to establish an independent and strong Christian community, it would be necessary for the Christians to settle upon farms at their own discretion and to live entirely upon their own resources rather than to depend upon the missionaries.

The following few years were characterized by a slow but sure increase in the membership of the various churches. The majority of the converts came from the schools, and the effectiveness of the institutions as evangelizing agencies impressed the missionaries. New missionaries re-enforced the staff and the little mission that had struggled so earnestly for its existence for so many years began to sense a feeling of security.

CHAPTER XI

CRISES

With the churches fairly well organized, it seemed that "prosperity was just around the corner," as far as the little mission was concerned. The corner, however, proved to be farther away than they had expected; and it was well that they did not know what the future had in store. To be sure, Christianity had made considerable advance and the churches in the various stations exerted their influence to nearby villages. Just when things seemed most hopeful, however, threatening clouds arose on the missionary horizon; and the little mission was plunged into trials that almost annihilated all former gains. A combination of circumstances and events took place that severely depleted the missionary force and shook the whole missionary structure to its very foundation.

Mr. Barker, after a brief period of service, had to return to America because of ill health.* Mr. Dauble, who had come from the German Lutheran Mission and promised to be of help in the work at Nowgong and in the work among the Mikirs, died at Nowgong, from cholera. Mr. Cutter, who had served well and faithfully for almost twenty-years, became involved in questionable personal relations and was dismissed from the mission. It is difficult at this distance to appreciate the full impact such a blow must have had upon the morale of the native Christians.

* He died at sea on his way home in 1850.

The unfortunate experience in connection with the closing of the orphanage at Nowgong has been emphasized considerably by other writers. The Deputation sent out by the Board in America to consult with the missionaries urged the closing, or rather a change of program for the orphanage. It was but natural that the missionaries should resent any action, on the part of the Executive Committee, which would close an institution that was of province-wide importance. To the missionaries it was like throwing away the labors of many years and shutting a door of usefulness. They pointed out that to close the institution would mean a humiliation which would be difficult to overcome. Sudden abandonment or subversion would appear to the natives like religious bankruptcy.

The missionaries argued that the schools enabled the people to read the printed word and religious tracts. They helped to impart correct moral and religious ideals; and to facilitate the right apprehension of religious terms used by the preachers. This was particularly important as Hindu terminology often misrepresented great Christian doctrines, and needed special explanations. Education further exposed false usages, inwrought with idolatry. The schools gave opportunity for the first inculcation of the gospel, or in other words, for preaching to the pupils and others associated with them.

The missionaries maintained that they needed at least one high school for the whole mission; that a primary or village school be established in every place where the missionary was able to establish a permanent preaching post; that Scriptures and religious books be the principal studies; and that the schools be in charge of Christian teachers.

The tone of the deputation from home tended to discourage the educational efforts and to emphasize direct preaching. Dr. Solomon Peck, the chief member of the deputation, felt that secular education should be cared for by the government; and in his closing remarks in his report on the educational policy of the mission, said, "With respect to Assam, the demand for common schools will be met at no distant day, there is reason to hope, by the civil government, to whom it appertains. And there is also encouragement to hope that the language in these government schools will be the vernacular, so soon as suitable text books can be obtained; a result to which it is believed the influence of the mission has not a little contributed."[1]

The missionaries, after a long conference, reluctantly acquiesced to the following compromise for reorganization submitted by Dr. Peck. It was suggested: first, that the Nowgong orphans institution be changed with a view to its becoming as soon as practicable, a central normal school for the preparatory training of native teachers and preachers; second, that the institution be divided into two departments: primary and normal, and that the period of study in either department should not exceed three years; third, that the number of pupils be limited to forty; that none be admitted under ten years of age; that preference be given to Christians and to those regarded as inquirers; and that the normal department be reserved entirely for church members in good standing; fourth, that all instruction be given in the vernacular and that no English be allowed after the following October first; fifth, that the superintendent travel and preach in the cold season when practicable; and sixth, that the girls' de-

partment belonging to the institution be separated from it.

These modifications were suggested with the intention of making the school more strictly missionary and more consonant with the design of the Missionary Union. The object, it was argued, was not to take care of orphans or otherwise destitute children; but to raise up missionary laborers. Financial considerations undoubtedly also entered in because, comparatively speaking, these schools were a heavy financial drain and their continuation at the time seemed impossible.

The result was that the young institution died within a few years. The conditions were not yet ripe for so radical a change, even though the policy suggested may be considered as more sound than the policy which missionaries had followed. It is comparatively easy to appreciate the deputation's point of view. They feared that the school would produce lazy proteges, and a community of Christians who would be entirely dependent on the mission. On the other hand, the missionaries argued that the surest and safest way to win Assam for Christ was by winning the young through teaching. The Assam missionaries were a unit in their conviction that the late orphanage was a wise and Scriptural agency for propagating Christianity among the heathen people, as well as an indispensable means of training converts to be missionaries to their own countrymen.[2] They felt that preaching among heathen was emphatically and pre-eminently teaching — "to make wise unto salvation." Who was right and who was wrong is difficult to say; but the equilibrium of the mission was shaken considerably.

The psychological reaction upon the missionaries was greater than they themselves or the deputation

realized at the time. The goal which seemed to be just within reach was snatched away and the missionaries, overburdened with a multitude of duties and broken in health, were discouraged. Mr. Bronson speaks of considerable embarrassment in connection with his resuming the charge of the institution upon his return from America.[8]

Another calamity that befell the mission was the leaving and subsequent resignation from the mission of its founder, Nathan Brown. The twenty-two years which he had spent in the orient without vacation had taken their toll. His robust constitution began to crumble and it became evident that the only relief was a journey home. It was not hard work and exposure alone, nor wholly malarial climate that had sapped his iron strength. Mental anguish had done its part. Repeated discouragement and hope often deferred had not been without their physical effects; and now the time had come when he could do no more. It was unfortunate that his departure should come at a time when the mission needed him more than ever. His leaving was a shock, not only to the undermanned missionary staff but also to the Christian natives who looked upon him as a spiritual father. Mrs. Brown wrote of the farewell at Sibsagar and told how the Christians began to collect around the bungalow at early dawn on the thirteenth of February, 1855. The whole Christian community was soon on the veranda. Gray-haired, decently attired matrons, quiet mannered young mothers with wondering children clinging to their skirts, and wide-eyed infants in their arms; converts, preachers, and office hands had all gathered to bid their pastor and friend good-bye. "It was one of the hardest partings (and I have had many)," wrote Mrs.

Brown, "I ever experienced . . . we prayed and sang, and lingered from early dawn till near eleven o'clock before we spoke the final good-bye."[4]

In 1857, another disturbance of an entirely different nature came upon the mission — the Indian mutiny. "Wars and rumors of war" characterized the whole of India. For a long time it was hoped that Assam would escape the flame of insurrection which raged wildly in Bengal, since it was so remote from the center and since the people of the province on the whole were of a rather peaceful nature; but the spark of rebellion was soon fanned into a flame which also enveloped Assam. Secret messages had been sent to the province notifying the natives of the day and date when a general uprising was to take place. A plan was made to massacre every white person in Assam. The former Rajah had been chosen as the one who would lead the rebellion; but the English officer in command, Major Holcroyd, discovered the plot in time and nipped it in the bud by capturing the king and taking him to Calcutta as a prisoner.

It was a time of awful suspense for the missionaries. Threats were made on their lives. The Mohammedans threatened the native Christians that as soon as the missionaries were killed they would be the next objects of their vengeance, and Islam would be re-instated. The most atrocious deeds were reported. There was not a single European soldier in Assam except the officers in charge of native troops; hence, the protection of European life against a general insurrection was very meagre. Plans had been made for the Europeans to gather at Gauhati; but Gauhati was many miles from Sibsagar and Nowgong where the missionaries were located. Much could happen to them if they should

venture to undertake the long tedious journey down the Brahmaputra. Bronson finally decided to avail himself of the protection at Gauhati; and under cover of night he, with his family, slipped quietly out of Nowgong in a native canoe, down the Kullung River to the Brahmaputra, and on to Gauhati. Bronson wrote from his little craft on the river.

"A general feeling of insecurity is spread all over the country. All feel that it is emphatically true now that we know not what 'a day or an hour may bring forth.' It would be utterly impossible for me to tell you the horrors of this mutiny, or the 'refinement of cruelty' practiced upon all, even unoffending and helpless women and children, that fell into the hands of the merciless savages."[5]

Upon arrival at Gauhati, Mr. Bronson found "Brother Danforth in a soldier's garb, drilling morning and evening, resolved to defend his family and the mission property" if called upon to do so. "For more than six weeks," wrote Danforth, "I have done military duty daily, and that, too, directly in front of a large company of sepoys many of whom were known to be mutinuos."[6] At many times the least occasion would have caused an outbreak. Later Mr. Danforth wrote that after six months of incessant anxiety they felt comparatively safe.

At Sibsagar, the Whitings were alone. They had been advised to leave the village, and a comfortable little boat was put at their disposal so that they could move out on the river and thus be out of the reach of the cantonement at Sibsagar. Whiting contemplated going up the stream and taking refuge among the hill tribes who had not been affected by the mutiny. He wrote, "If I escape its fury, I may be able to collect some of the remnants of the mission." The storm blew

over, the missionaries once again settled down, but the uncertainty of life and the departure of missionaries left the whole burden of work on a very depleted missionary staff.

Bronson was forced to leave the little Christian group in Nowgong in charge of a native leader who had had little training himself. After eighteen months the membership had dwindled to five; making one less than it was when the church was organized. Other missionaries, owing to the strain of mutiny and disease, were obliged to take furlough so that in 1858 there was but one missionary in all Assam.

The mutterings of civil war and the slavery question were agitating the people in America. The churches in the South withdrew from working with the Missionary Union. Other strong differences of opinion rose among those of the North and among the missionaries on the field. Many of the missionaries resigned, among whom was Dr. Nathan Brown, as mentionad. For the next ten years, except for new missionaries learning the language, there were seldom more than two men in charge of the whole Assam field. Each station was left in charge of single lady missionaries, and often a station was left without any missionary at all for long periods of time.

CHAPTER XII

THE GAROS

The year 1867 marked another epoch in the history of the Baptist mission in Assam. It was almost another reversal of policy, namely, a change of emphasis from the plains to the hills. While the chief centers of the mission were located in the valley, there was, nevertheless, a considerable amount of work done indirectly among the people of the hills. The sturdy hill men whose minds had not as yet been indoctrinated by Hinduism attracted the attention of the missionaries. The Mikirs, a hill tribe near Nowgong, visited that station frequently and came in contact with the Christian workers there. They seemed to be interested in Christianity, making it impossible for the missionaries to ignore them. Several missionaries had been chosen to work among the Mikirs; but none of the appointees had succeeded in reaching the field as all of them were either forced home because of illness, or because pressing duties kept them at Nowgong, or they were removed by death.

The Cacharis appealed to Danforth at Gauhati. Their open and friendly attitude impressed him. He spent several weeks touring among them in 1857 and held many personal conferences with those who came to see him at Gauhati, while some of them became Christians. There is no record of any organized work among them until many years later.

The deputation which visited Assam in 1855 and

which has been mentioned in a previous chapter was very much pleased with the possibilities of the Assam mission as a whole. Dr. Peck, the chairman of the deputation, in his report to the Executive Committee appreciated the great opportunity but realized that missionaries could not be supplied. He wrote:

"The mission . . . is not adequately manned; not even on the presumption, could it be entertained, that the missionaries will all continue at their stations, and all be strong to labor at all times. The field is too broad, and interests and instrumentalities too numerous and varied and complex, for the force employed. . . . The breaking up or virtual abandonment of a station or of a department of labor, should not be staked on the health of a single individual . . . there is no one of the Asiatic missions, in my judgment, blessed with a better climate . . . none commanding a fairer prospect of health and long life to its missionaries, than the field of this mission."[1]

The deputation was particularly impressed with the promising fields among the many surrounding hill tribes that were untouched by the gospel, and they felt that these tribes were the most inviting portions of the Assam mission. The claims of the hills had been presented before but had not won the regard to which they were entitled. Dr. Peck concluded his report by stating, "In my own apprehension, — and I think it is the judgment of the missionaries, — the hill tribes are the hope of Assam."[2]

The Garos had appealed to the missionaries and to the government alike. Major Jenkins contemplated the Christianization of this great tribe even before the Baptist mission began. In 1837, or less than one year after Brown's arrival in Sadiya, Major Jenkins suggested the establishment of a mission station at Gauhati "with a particular view to the Garos".[3] Brown

agreed that "the Garos would present a field of extensive usefulness" although he was primarily concerned about the Shans and the hill tribes of the northeast.

The Board was unable to furnish missionaries to meet all the needs, and were, in fact, hardly able to care for the work to which they had committed themselves. The Garos were left untouched, therefore, until in 1847, when the government established a school at Goalpara, for Garo boys, hoping by this method to influence this fierce and untamable tribe. It was hoped that by means of education the government would be able to gain some influence and control over them. Ten boys attended the school, and it is interesting to note that seven of these boys later became Christians, three of whom became ordained to the ministry. Two of those three have become famous in the Christian history of the Garos. Omed and Ramkhe became their first missionaries. While at school they were aroused to a Christian consciousness by the reading of a tract which had been left by a Bengali missionary. After a few years, the school was discontinued, and Omed went to Gauhati and joined the police. Ramkhe joined them later. While in Gauhati they came in contact with Kandura, the Baptist evangelist. They soon decided that Christianity was the best religion and made up their minds to embrace it. On February 8, 1863, they were baptized by Mr. Bronson.

The burden of Christianizing their own people became so heavy upon their hearts that they procured dismission from the government service. They purposed to devote their entire time to Christian work and went out as mission assistants. While they were in the employ of the mission they were under the immediate

supervision of Captain Morton, the District Commissioner of Goalpara.[4]

Omed and Ramkhe went first to their own relatives and village. After a few weeks of preaching, a small group (six or seven) accepted Christianity and joined the two zealous preachers in establishing a new village — Rajasimla. This village became the nucleus for the Garo Christian community and one of the important Christian centers. The two evangelists continued to preach and to teach, dividing their work so that Omed remained at Rajasimla as an evangelist, while Ramkhe went to Damra about twelve miles away where he started a school. Later he took up a tract of waste land near to Damra and established a Christian village, Nisangram, which became another center of Christian influence.

Omed and Ramkhe met with considerable success, and the work grew to such proportions that they deemed it necessary to call Dr. Bronson to help them. In 1867, he made a visit to the Garo hills, and it must have been a day of great rejoicing for the missionary and for the Christian natives, for he baptized thirty-seven converts and organized them, with Omed, Ramkhe and Rangkhu, a Christian Garo policeman, into a church of forty members. He ordained Omed as the pastor, charging him to "range the hills, to preach, baptize, to do the work of a Christian pastor, and to be faithful until death."[5] This rather large ingathering was cheering news to the missionaries and to the mission supporters in America who had begun to look upon Assam as a barren field.

That same year the Reverends I. J. Stoddard and M. B. Comfort arrived in Assam. Dr. Bronson, who had just toured the Garo hills, was impressed with its

posibilities and sensed the importance of setling missionaries in Goalpara as soon as conditions would permit. Consequently he purchased an appropriate compound with a bungalow at Goalpara for Rs. 800, which sum he succeeded in raising among its citizens and among friends of the field. The two new missionaries were keen in prospect of work among the Garos; and upon the approval of the Board they became the first missionaries to this tribe. While Goalpara was not a part of the Garo hills, it was chosen as a place from which work could be done conveniently, as to settle among the tribe was deemed inexpedient. Further, Goalpara was within easy reach of the hills and was located on the very banks of the Brahmaputra which made it easy of access to the rest of the world.

Space forbids to trace in detail the development of the work in this promising field. It is noted, however, that Mr. Stoddard visited many villages the following year, baptizing a goodly number of persons and thus becoming encouraged in the work.

The government contemplated moving headquarters to Tura, a place located near the center of the hills, in order to be able to check the bloody head-hunting raids made on the plains people. In this connection (1870) a definite invitation was extended to the mission to make Tura one of its stations. The government also suggested the possibility of granting an appropriation to defray the expenses of a medical missionary, if such a man could be procured; and if the mission accepted the invitation.

The following year Messrs. Bronson, Stoddard, and Comfort visited Tura with a view to occupying that station. They were convinced that it should be occupied; and they procured a mission compound and

urged the Board to re-inforce the mission staff. No immediate possession was taken, however, other than leaving there a Christian school teacher and two young men from the Goalpara Normal School. In 1873, Mr. Stoddard was unfortunately forced to return to America because of ill health, but during his short sojourn among the Garos he had seen the Christian community grow from forty to 286, and many of this number he had seen trained in Christian work.

With the coming of M. C. Mason and E. G. Phillips, a long, unbroken and, in many respects, most remarkable period of missionary activity among the Garos was begun. They arrived at Goalpara on December 19, 1874, and were almost immediately thrust into a position of responsibility. Mr. Keith was just able to introduce them to the work when he was forced to take furlough. With undaunted courage the two young recruits set to work. Tura was visited in the hope of locating there. It was finally decided, however, the two should divide their responsibility, one remaniing in charge of the normal school and the other locating at Tura. It fell to the lot of Mr. Phillips to settle there; and this he did in March, 1877; and of Mason to remain at Goalpara in charge of the school. Soon after Phillips' arrival in Tura, he erected a temporary house; and while thus engaged, he conducted interesting tent meetings, with the result that several became interested in the Christian religion. In the following May six people were baptized; and a small church of seven members was organized.[6]

With the moving of the missionaries to Tura a new era in missionary work began. The government proposed to turn over to the mission all of their schools in the hills promising to support the same, providing

the mission would be responsible for the superintendence and would move the Normal School from Goalpara to Tura. Regarding settling in one place, Mr. Phillips wrote:

"The best interests of the mission would be served by their being located together at Tura. The location is such as to be nearly equally accessible from all parts of the district, the rainy season work could be carried on to better advantage in concert, and it is very advantageous to have the laborers so near together as to be able to consult on all important matters."[7]

The Board being quick to sense the force of this argument sanctioned the scheme of the two young men, and in 1878 Mr. Mason gave up Goalpara and moved to Tura. An intensive program of training, in secular as well as in religious matters, was launched, and the foundations for work that was destined to be one of the best in Assam were laid. Of this new plan, Mason wrote:

"Born and brought up on thrifty, well-stocked farms in western New York, classmates, rommates, and chums during our educational careers, and finally marrying sisters, we were far better prepared to be yokefellows in service than are most missionaries. And in the light of the field to which we were sent it certainly appears providential that we were thus brought together and for forty years permitted to pull together shoulder to shoulder, of one heart and aim."[8]

As compared with the work on the plains, the progress in the hills has been phenomenal. When the fifty years' jubilee was celebrated in 1886, it was reported that 1473 people had been baptized and that there were 870 members of good and regular standing in the churches. There were also forty-four schools with 766 pupils.[9] From the first, the responsibility of Christianizing the Garos was laid upon the indigenous churches

themselves. The missionaries felt that the churches were the chief agency in advancing the kingdom of Christ, and their duty was to educate these churches to independent action, both in management and in the development of evangelistic work among the non-Christians. The missionaries did little toward developing methods, but aided to develop the working spirit, leaving the churches to invent for themselves methods of management both financial and disciplinary.[10] There have been periods when the new churches of the Garo hills have gone through periods of severe trial, and there have been times when they have been involved in problems concerning discipline that have not always been conducive to spiritual growth. The problems of intoxicating liquor, immorality, land disputes, and court cases have occupied altogether too much of their time. Certainly not all of their actions have been commendable. Their program in Christian development, nevertheless, is worthy of note. Their Christian accomplishments regarding self-support and self-management rank high when compared with any other group of churches on the foreign field. The constant growth of the Christian community is indicative of that. In 1905 the church membership had grown to 4,340 and 7,326 people had been baptized. They had no less than 109 village schools with 2,221 pupils. Thirty years later this number had been more than doubled. It was reported in 1934 that there were 17,151 church members and 352 organized churches, all of which were entirely self-supporting.[11] These figures indicate to some extent the growth of the churches among the Garos and their present status.

The development of education has gone hand in hand with that of the church. From the very begin-

ning the Garos decided to be taught. The non-Christians were so anxious in fact that they built their own school-houses hoping thereby to get teachers. It was not a problem, therefore, of getting students, but rather of securing teachers of the right kind to fill the positions. The government handed over the entire school program with its grant-in-aid; and while that may appear to have been a great opportunity for evangelizing the people, it also presented a number of obstacles which were difficult to overcome. The government divided the district into four sections or *mauzas*, placing over each a Mauzidar.* These *mauzidars*, with the exception of one, were non-Christians and were in a real sense a hindrance. Thus the missionary had to supervise not merely the Christian teachers but also the non-Christians.

Soon after the Jubilee in 1886, a new arrangement was effected so that the Hindu-Mohammedan schools of the plains section came under the immediate care of the government, and the Garo schools under the management of the mission. That relieved the missionaries of the unpleasant task of superintending schools taught by heathen teachers. That also made the village schools strong agencies for the gospel. This is proved by the fact that in 1909 the missionaries reported an estimate of two hundred converts, two-thirds of which had come through the Christian schools.[12] Dr. Phillips wrote:

"Our school work has been an efficient agency in evangelization. While, save in exceptional cases, we pay our teachers for the work they do in the school-room, we expect them as Christian men to use their opportunities to preach

* A person appointed by the government to have oversight of a given district and to report all political and social conditions.

the gospel to others. While among a people utterly unable to read, an evangelist does an important work, there is need that the more constant influence be brought to bear. Our Christian school teacher is in just the position to exert such an influence. . . . First the pupils are brought to Christ, and then the parents and others."[13]

Though the village schools were effective evangelizing agencies, the station school was none the less influential, as it was the chief source which supplied the village schools with teachers, pastors, evangelists, and other assistants. It was chiefly for Christian students, but a good number of unconverted persons were also admitted and received stipend or mission aid. A missionary said, "I know of none for years who have passed through the school unconverted," which seems to indicate that the school struck a high evangelical note. Dr. Phillips wrote in 1886:

"Besides a few sons of Tura policemen, 237 have been in the school since it began . . . of these 237, I know of but fourteen who left school unconverted, and of these six were Hindus, leaving only eight Garos . . . Of the 206 besides policemen's sons . . . 103 have been engaged in teaching or employed in some religious work by the mission. Of those who have not been thus employed some have been earnest helpers in church work."[14]

It is evident from this statement that the school was an evangelizing agency of no mean proportions. It is easy, therefore, to understand that the missionaries were anxious to maintain that school and that it was considered to be a very important part of their work. They found difficulty, however, in maintaining a high scholastic standard because of the constant change of personnel and lack of European leadership. It was entrusted at several times to leaders who proved unable

to meet the demands put upon them, with the consequence that the school suffered.

The girls' school was started by Mrs. Keith in 1874 when she gathered ten or twelve girls into her school in Goalpara. She was, however obliged to discontinue her efforts; but not until some had been much benefited. In 1881, Miss Russell, who afterwards became Mrs. Burdette, made a small beginning of a girls' school at Tura. Later she made an extensive trip through the hills among the Christian villages and gathered up a large number of girls: and in 1884 she brought to Tura twenty-one girls who formed the nucleus of what became the outstanding educational institution among the Garos.

Because of the depleted missionary staff, the boys' and girls' school were united in 1898 This arrangement lasted for a number of years: and the school was supervised interchangeably by members of the General and the Women's Society. Later the government established a school for boys in Tura and the mission then surrendered the academic training to the government while the Christian training continued through the dormitories which were directly under missionary control and located on the mission compound. The girls' school was taken over by the Women's Society and it flourished so that the enrollment rose to well over two hundred.

The Garos rank high among the rest of the tribes in producing men of higher learning. There are a number of Garo boys who have been graduated from college and many are now attending college and medical schools. In fact, the Garo influence is felt throughout the valley of Assam. In every one of the mission stations there are several Garos who hold prominent places

of leadership and upon whom the mission is depending for support and leadership.

The story of the development of literature for the Garos is well told by Dr. Mason, in his *How Came the Bible into the Garo Language.* In this little booklet he has traced its course and has told of the obstacles encountered in reducing a new language to writing. The first attempt perhaps made by an Assam educational officer and by a Bengali gentleman, who published a phrase book and a vocabulary respectively, as early as 1867. These two works seem to have had no extended circulation. Later Dr. Bronson produced a small book of sentences, a *Brief Outline of Grammar,* and a *Garo Primer* in Roman and Bengali characters. Mr. Stoddard had a manuscript written for three primers, a catechism, and hymns, which Mr. Keith afterwards published. Mr. Keith also published an *Outline Grammar* and a small *Garo-Bengali English Dictionary,* and a translation of the four Gospels. The most of the translations of the Gospels were done by Garo helpers, which is evident from Keith's report where he said: "The Gospel of Matthew has been undertaken and with the efficient assistance of two or three of the native brethren has been carried forward to the twentieth chapter."[15] Later he wrote that the work was good enough to warrant translation of the rest and of all the Four Gospels.

It should be mentioned that none of the missionaries working among the Garos up to the coming of Mason and Phillips knew the language, but had to depend on the help of active assistants. It is true that Keith learned the Garo language so that he could preach in it, but not until toward the end of his term; and then he was compelled to go home! Mr. Stoddard spent five years

at Goalpara and it may be thought that he should have learned the language in that time; but he learned the Bengali and Assamese instead. The Bengali characters had been used in all of the literature that was produced in those early days; and it was not until in 1902 or after the twenty-eight years of struggling with the Bengali alphabet that the Romanizing of the language was finally adopted. With the coming of Mason and Phillips there was a change in policy, as far as publication of literature was concerned. These two men were the first missionaries really to learn Garo. A definite plan was evolved to produce literature in that language, so that the students in school could learn to read it rather than Bengali or Assamese.

It was Dr. Mason's privilege to see the entire Bible translated into Garo; but besides this book there is very little other literature in that tongue. Had the missionaries been freed from the care of a growing Christian community, the care of the schools and multitudinous other problems, there would have been more books. To be sure, a good many pamphlets were printed and a magazine entitled "*Atchikni Ripeng*" has been published for a number of years. Dr. Harding emphasized the need of more literature as follows:

"One copy of every Garo book now in print stands before me. If I exclude the Garo Bible and measure the standing books I find they measure exactly six inches. A six-inch library and that includes our hymnal, tune books and school books, everything in Garo except the Bible!"

This statement was made in 1933 and very few pamphlets have been added since then. That, of course, does not include the thousands of pages that have been written but never bound. It does, however, show the

time required to produce a piece of literature in a new language.

Much could be said regarding the medical work which has been done among the Garos. That, however, is a chapter in itself. Suffice it to say here that it was a long and tedious task to educate the child of the jungle to the value of medical science. It was not easy to break through the shell of superstition and the fear of foreign methods of treating disease. The medical work, therefore, has been slow and tedious; nevertheless, such men as Dr. Crozier, Dr. Ahlquist, and Dr. Downs have accomplished what was once thought to be the impossible. The medical work has grown to such dimensions as to occupy the full time of a doctor and several nurses.

CHAPTER XIII

THE NAGAS

The Nagas consist of a number of tribes inhabiting the mountain range between the Brahmaputra valley and Burma, commonly known as the Naga Hills. The word Naga cannot, therefore, be correctly applied to any one tribe; it would be more accurate to refer to each by its own tribal name as the Angami, the Ao, the Lhota, the Sema, the Rengma, the Tangkuhl, the Kabui, the Nzemi, the Khairao, and the Konyak Nagas. Each one of these tribes has its own language and customs. Their languages differ to such an extent that they are unable to understand one another without a common medium of speech or an interpreter. It is not the purpose to deal with each one of these tribes, but to mention briefly the development among them wherever Christianity has been organized for a number of years.

Mr. Bronson was the first missionary to the Naga Hills; and as early as 1838 he made his first tour among them with a view to establishing a mission. In 1839 he built a house at Namsang and spent eight months among that tribe living just above the ancient village of Jaipur. While the Nagas were friendly toward the missionary and availed themselves of the educational facilities offered, there is no record that any one of them made an open declaration of faith as a Christian.

The Nagas, then as now, made frequent trips to the plains for trading purposes, and some of them un-

doubtedly came under the influence of the missionaries and the Christian workers in Sibsagar. In 1851, the Rev. S. W. Whiting, then the missionary in charge of the work at Sibsagar, baptized a Naga from Morangkong village of the Ao tribe. This man evidently lived at Sibsagar, became connected with the church there, and remained as a member for two or three years. In the course of events, he returned to the hills to get himself a wife, but while he was there an attack was made upon his village and he was killed. If he were able to do any teaching in the short time he was visiting the village of his youth, his instructions made no lasting impression.[1]

Mr. Dauble had also become interested in the hill tribes, and Mr. Bronson spoke of him as a prospective missionary among the Nagas. It was even thought that Nowgong would be a station from which to work. Bronson wrote:

"From Nowgong, as a first stopping place, a missionary could work his way into the Naga hills. Step by step the future would open before him."[2]

Evidently the Christianization of the Nagas weighed heavily upon Bronson because he complained, saying, "When I look at all those fields, I wish that I might be young again; but here I am, only able to write and tell these things." None of the plans to reach the Nagas from Nowgong materialized.

Soon after the Rev. E. W. Clark had arrived in Assam he became interested in the Aos. He was, in fact, from the very first strongly drawn to them. In 1871, in referring to the hills people, he wrote:

"I am assured that, for some ten or twelve years past, there has been very little proclamation of the gospel to the heathen in this part of Assam, by a missionary. Tribe upon

tribe of Nagas are accessible to the gospel. It is certainly painful for us at Sibsagar to be unable to lift our eyes without seeing these hills and thinking of the men on them who have no knowledge of Christ."[3]

His interest in the Ao tribe finally became so strong that he induced one of his Assamese workers, Godhula, to acquire the vernacular of the Nagas who were at that time living at Sibsagar. Godhula consequently spent most of that rainy season with a teacher and in October, the same year, he took him with him and went to Dick Haimund village in the Naga hills. During this first journey Godhula remained for only a short time. Upon his return to Sibsagar, he reported a very friendly reception. He made several trips during that cold season, and in April, 1872, he, with his wife, left Sibsagar for this Naga village.

His labors during the following summer were not in vain. When he returned to Sibsagar the following November, he brought with him nine Nagas who had declared their desire to become Christians. Following examination of their Christian faith and experience, they were baptized and received into the fellowship of the church at Sibsagar. Those Ao men did not remain on the plains, but soon returned to their village where they immediately began Christian services and constructed a chapel. The following month, December, Mr. Clark and Godhula went to this same village and found that fifteen more men were ready to be baptized.

The work among the Nagas seemed as promising as that among the Garos, and Clark was eager to enter the field. He had great confidence and faith in the people; which is evident from a letter written at that time in which he said: "The Nagas are wild and war-

like, it is true; but they have a substratum of character, which, if they embrace Christianity, will make them worthy, manly Christians."[4]

The entrance into the Naga hills was in many respects different from that of the Garos. The greatest difficulty which the missionaries had to face was perhaps over-cautiousness on the part of the government officers, as they were opposed to the missionaries' "going into the territories of these independent tribes." The Nagas were not, as yet, under complete government administration, and the officers feared that any intrusion by white people into the hills might cause disruption and tribal war. Clark wrote: "If anything serious should befall me, occasion might be taken to forbid all missionaries going into the hills about Upper Assam." In regard to Dr. Clark's entrance among the Aos, the Rev. W. E. Witter wrote that Dr. Clark entered the Ao land in spite of "the bitter opposition of government officials" and the reluctant consent of the Executive Committee at home.

From 1871 to 1876, Godhula continued to go back and forth between Sibsagar and the Naga hills, and during this period a number of Aos accepted Christianity as their religion and were baptized. As soon as Mr. Clark could conveniently leave the printing press and the Assamese work in Sibsagar to the care of Mr. Gurney, he left for the hills, hence, on the second of March, 1876. Mr. Clark was found trudging along the jungle paths leading toward the Haimung village in the Naga Hills. He was alone save for the servants who were with him. Mrs. Clark was in America on furlough at the time. He wrote concerning this experience: "I left on the first of March expecting to see no more white faces for months and bidding good-bye

to nearly every earthly comfort, — a leap out of the world, and a plunge into barbarism."[5] He remained in this village until the following October, when he "went with the first company of Nagas to establish a new village at Molung."[6] The year following, Mrs. Clark joined him and this became the center from which the Ao missionary work was done for many years.

Mrs. Clark, although not in very robust health, maintained a school for girls while Mr. Clark set his hand to the task of producing literature for the tribe. During the first nine years among the Nagas, he wrote, besides the *Dictionary*, a *Primer*, a *Catechism*, a *Life of Joseph*, a book of about 116 pages, a *Hymn Book*, and translated the Gospels of Matthew and John.

In 1885, Dr. Clark was re-inforced by the coming of Dr. W. S. Rivenburg and wife: and the following year he left Assam for America for his first furlough after having spent seventeen years in the province, nine of which he had spent among the Nagas. In this time he had seen the Christian community grow from nothing to seventy-nine members, and a group of boys and girls eager to learn more of the Christian religion. Most of all, the hostility of the natives had turned into friendship, for they had in this time learned to love and revere him.

Village after village surrendered to Christ. The missionary staff was increased and the work prospered. In 1894, it was deemed advisable to give up Molung as a center and move farther into the hills. From that time greater effort was laid on organized methods of evangelism, both through the schools and in preaching. A station school, serving partly as a training school, supplied teachers for the village schools. The

Aos were quick to sense the value of an education. Mr. Dowd wrote in 1904. "Formerly it was difficult to hold the pupils for more than two or three years; now it is hard to persuade some of the older boys to leave for outside work."[7] Later he reported, "Our village schools have gained fifty percent in enrollment during the past year and doubled in average attendance." Mr. Perrine wrote: "I think all who work in the hills will agree with me when I say that with hillmen no mode of missions can compare with education."[8]

The Christian influence in the hills had become so great in 1906 that the Deputy Commissioner declared liberty of conscience to all, which was tantamount to relieving Christians from payment of village taxes for false worship and for the entertainment of visitors. While this act was of great importance to the Ao Christians, it also brought with it the danger of people joining the church in order to avoid the taxes.

The change of social customs that was bound to come in the wake of Christianity caused much disturbance in the minds of government officials. It created a new standard of ethics and it was but natural that difficulties should arise in making the adjustments. The old war songs were turned into Christian hymns and the villages here and there were crowned by large church buildings rather than by *genna* stones and pagan prayer flags.

Dr. Clark was not merely interested in the Ao Nagas but in all the neighboring tribes. In his constant correspondence with the Board, he emphasized the destitution of the hill tribes on the Naga range. In response to his earnest request C. D. King was appointed in 1878 to become a missionary to the Naga Hills, with permission to plant a station wherever he thought best.

Mr. King chose Kohima as his place of residence, and the Angami tribe, the most warlike and powerful of all the Naga tribes, as the people with whom he desired to work. Dr. Rivenburg wrote of this tribe:

"Of all the tribes — and they are almost as numerous as the hills they inhabit — into which the Naga group is divided, the most powerful and warlike, as it is also the most enterprising, intelligent and civilized, so to say, is the turbulent Angami."[9]

At the time of the coming of Mr. King, this tribe was at war and the government refused him permission to settle at Kohima. King, not to be outdone by such an order, began his work at Samagoting, a station formerly occupied as the headquarters of the military troop. Even at this place Mr. and Mrs. King were not safe from the attacks of the Angamis. In October, 1879, the Nagas rose to massacre all Europeans, and the Kings, after many vicissitudes, were compelled to leave their station and flee to Sibsagar. When peace had been somewhat established, King again applied for permission to enter the hills, and it was granted. He then went directly to Kohima where he immediately leased land for a compound and proceeded to erect a bungalow, a school-house and out-buildings. He had no more than finished this preliminary work and was giving himself to language study and to the care of the school when an order came from the government to vacate the location. Accordingly, he pulled down the buildings and moved to another site a half mile away where he erected new ones. The amount of labor this required can only be appreciated when one takes into account the primitive conditions under which he had to work. In the words of Mr. Tanquist,

"It took no small amount of pluck and bravery to press

on with the government advance in those days of turbulence in the Angami tribe, when government officers had been treacherously killed. . . . King made considerable headway with the language and published something by way of a beginning. No trace of it can be found, however. On the whole, that initial missionary effort, — though in some way unknown to us, it may have served as a foundation for the work that followed — seems to have left no permanent impression in the consciousness or memory of the people."[10]

When Mr. King went to Kohima, he took an Assamese teacher, Punaram, with him as an associate. A station school was soon under way, but since neither Mr. King nor Punaram could speak Angami, and since there were no Angami books, the school was conducted in Assamese. Later the teaching force was augmented by the coming of Henry Goldsmith and Sarby, both Assamese men from Nowgong. In spite of the handicap of having to use Assamese the school grew; and the station school here, as well as in all other mission centers, became a great evangelizing agency. Students from the various tribes atended so that Dr. Rivenburg reported a number of years later that "in the school we have pupils from the Sema, eastern Angami, Kegamia, Kecha Naga, and Kuki tribes besides our Angamis."[11]

In 1883, Mr. and Mrs. King, with four Assamese Christians, organized themselves into the Kohima Baptist Church; and in July, that same year, the wife of an Assamese was baptized, and in 1885 the first Angami was baptized. Two years later, Dr. Rivenburg reported that the church had seven members.

Illness in the family finally drove the Kings to the home land, and in February, 1887, Dr. and Mrs. Rivenburg, who had come to Assam the previous year and had spent a year at Molung among the Aos, were designated to Kohima. Dr. Rivenburg continued his

work among the Angamis until 1922 when he retired from active service. In that time he succeeded in establishing a Christian community, producing a literature, and maintaining schools that were of such quality that the government saw fit to honor him before his retirement with a *Kiser-i-Hind* medal. The development and progress of the work under Mr. Tanquist and Mr. Supplee belongs to another chapter. Suffice it to say that the most skeptical is impressed as he worships with the Angami Nagas on a Sunday morning in Kohima.

Again, the influence of the intrepid and self-sacrificing work of Dr. Clark was evident, and again his prayers and his zeal were rewarded by the coming of a missionary family, Mr. W. E. Witter and his wife. This young missionary couple was designated to Sibsagar, but it soon became evident that the Sibsagar climate was too taxing for them. It was then suggested that they move to Wokha, a station located 4,700 feet above sea level and in the midst of the Lhotas, one of the most needy tribes of the Nagas. The Lhotas were at this time none too friendly toward the white man, for, some time before the Witters arrived at Wokha, the English officer, Captain Butler, was killed.

Mr. Witter describes his transfer to Wokha in the following words:

"Brother Clark, however, believing that God by unmistakable providence was calling upon us to enter this new field, and that there should be no delay in hastening to these people with the gospel, after taking a few rapid, nervous paces across the drawing room of his rude Naga house at Molung, suddenly turned to Mr. Moore and Mr. Witter who had sought for a brief visit his mountain eyrie, and said, 'If the Witters will occupy Wokha at once, I will give the Missionary Union a special gift of Rs. 500 to cover the expense of their transfer, and I feel thoroughly convinced

that such an act will meet with the hearty consent of the brethren at Boston."[12]

Mr. Moore remained in Sibsagar to help the Witters back and get started up the hill. On March 31, 1885, "the dear, first home with its pleasant memories of work among the Assamese was reluctantly left behind."[13]

April 7, Mr. King came from Kohima to the Wokha tea estate at the foot of the hills to help Mr. and Mrs. Witter on their long and tedious journey to Wokha. On April 9, they reached their new abode among the mountains. The rest house at Wokha had been placed at their disposal by the Deputy Commissioner; and this served as their home for a considerable time.

The missionaries immediately set to work acquiring the language; and Mr. Witter produced in a comparatively short time *The Outline Grammar*, which for many years was the only attempt to reduce the language to writing and which constituted for a long time the sum total of Lhota literature. Unfortunately, Mr. and Mrs. Witter were, because of ill health, compelled to leave, and with their departure all organized effort to evangelize the Lhotas ceased. Since that day no missionary has attempted to live among them, but the work of Christianization has been carried on spasmodically from various stations — Impur, Kohima, and Furkating.

It was only for a short time in recent years that Mr. Longwell was designated to become a full time missionary to the Lhota Nagas and to be stationed at Furkating, a place on the plains deemed to be a terminal for the Lhotas. Other duties, however, soon made his primary task secondary, and the Lhotas had to be satisfied with such time as the missionary was able to give. Later Mr. Longwell was transferred to Gauhati, and the Furkating station was abandoned as a Lhota center.

In 1931 and 1932, Mr. Anderson, although living at Kohima, made an attempt to re-establish the station at Wokha. A small rest house was erected where the missionary could remain for prolonged periods, and the Lhotas themselves built a school house where a large number of Lhota boys came for training. This school is entirely in charge of Lhota leaders and little supervision is given to it by the missionary.

The introduction of Christianity among the rest of the Naga tribes is of comparatively recent date. Suffice it to say that the growth of the Christian community among some of these tribes has been phenomenal and has in fact been one of the most outstanding revivals ever recorded. The Sema Nagas are particularly worthy of note. Without the work of a missionary or the preaching of a native evangelist, people became Christians and organized themselves into churches. Without proper guidance it was but natural that much of their pagan superstition should be incorporated into these early churches. It has been reported in one village the illness of a certain woman was the deciding element whether the villagers should become Christians or not. The woman had been sick for some time and all methods of healing had been exhausted, when it was decided to try prayer to the Christians' God. It was agreed that if she became well, they would all become Christians and if she died they would remain in their former state. The woman recovered; and in consequence, and in accordance with the former pledge, they accepted Christianity as the true religion.

It is easily understood that people becoming Christians in such conditions and without any previous teaching whatsoever were in dire need of a guiding

hand. Misionaries from Kohima, as well as from Impur, sent teachers to this tribe; and the results were gratifying. The traveler among those hills is impressed with the growth and spiritual conception of the people. Their church buildings are the pride of the villages. Their Christian conventions are conducted with remarkable skill and orderliness. Their philosophical outlook upon life is genuinely Christian, and a visit among them leaves the most skeptical person wondering whence all this wisdom.

There remains but to mention one more field, — the Manipur state. No Christian missionary was allowed within its borders prior to 1894. Attempts had been made by Burma missionaries as early as 1836 to go through Manipur but permission was refused. In 1885 Mr. Robert Arthington of Leeds, England, wrote to the Assam Mission stating his desire to open a work among the Singphos, with a station at Mankum or Ledo, in Upper Assam.[14] This scheme did not materialize at that time, but in 1890 Mr. Pettigrew was sent out as a misionary under the Arthington Aborigines Mission. He located first in Bengal. In 1894, he applied for permission to enter the state and work among the Manipuri Hindus. That permission was granted. He established a school for Manipuri boys at Imphal, the capital of the state; but within six months the British authorities, who were administering the state in behalf of the minor Rajah, decided against opening of mission work. Mr. Pettigrew was permitted "at his own risk" to work among the Tangkhul Nagas in the hills to the northeast of Imphal. He chose Ukhrul, a little village about fifty miles from Imphal from which to do his work. In 1896, Mr. Pettigrew was appointed as a missionary of the American Baptist Foreign Missionary

Society and Ukhrul, with the work already started, was taken over.

It took a good many years before the missionary had won the confidence of the people and before he had been able to reduce their language to writing. It was not until 1901 that the first baptism occurred, at which time twelve young converts, boys from the mission school, were baptized. This little nucleus was the beginning, or the leaven, which spread throughout the mountains so that in 1917, there were 335 church members and five churches reported.

After twenty-three years of work at Ukhrul a new era in the Christian development of Manipur was begun, when the new station at Kangpokpi was opened. This station is located on a military road between Imphal and the railroad station, or twenty-eight miles from Imphal. A grant of 250 acres was given to the mission with the understanding that a medical missionary be appointed and located at Kangpokpi. This station soon developed into one of the most beautiful in the entire province. Two bungalows, a church, a school house, two dormitories, a dispensary, and houses for native staff, as well as a number of buildings for the lepers in their colony, graced the site.

An awakening among the Christians has taken place and the Christian community, according to the Census report of 1931, numbers 10,004. It is also worthy of note that in 1934 the third convention of the Manipur Baptist Association was held in the very capital of the state.

The permanent values of Christianity in Manipur are difficult to enumerate. The literature in Manipur, Thadou Kuki, and Tangkhul Naga may appear to be very small when on the shelf, but it does not adequate-

ly tell the whole story of the hours of toil. It is only as one enters the Christian villages, sits in the large conventions, and hears the resonant voices rise in unison in Christian hymns, that one becomes aware of the tremendous transformation. May it all be for the best!

CHAPTER XIV

THE DAY OF THE JUDGES

After fifty years of missionary labor in Assam, it was time for sober reflection. The stations at Sibsagar, Nowgong, and Gauhati were still the only stations on the plains. The growth of the Christian community had been far from rapid. The Assamese for whom the mission had yielded Sadiya and Jaipur, and who had promised a lucrative field for the gospel message, had failed to accept Christianity. On the contrary the Assamese had shown themselves a stubborn class of people, unyielding and self-righteous. They had successfully proved that it was not always the masses that constituted a successful mission field; for the number of Christians on the plains was comparatively small as compared with the number in the hills where the population was sparse.

It was only natural, therefore, that the question arose as to whether it was wise to continue to put as much emphasis on the Assamese as had been done. The Garos had yielded abundant fruit; and after twenty years there were over one thousand Christians among them. At the Missionary Conference, the missionaries from the hills spoke in glowing terms of victories won, and of rapid progress in the establishing of Christian churches, while the plains missionaries could but report hard labor with comparatively little success, all of which tended to emphasize the lack of fruit on the plains.

The churches that were organized on the plains outside of the mission stations were for the most part made up of immigrants; and the station churches were not as strong as they should have been with fifty years of misionary tutelage. Indeed, there was no church in any Assamese village, and those few Assamese who were converted in their own villages gravitated to the mission station and became identified with the mission compound.

It became evident to the missionaries that they had to depend upon the immigrants for the establishment of churches in the villages. Mr. Gurney wondered "what would we do without the Mundas", and well he might, for the numbers of baptisms among the immigrants, as recorded in 1886, far out-numbered the Assamese. He reported in 1889,

> "I have baptized six persons, three of whom were Kolhs. . . . Total number of Assamese members, twenty-four. The total number of church members in the Sibsagar district is 159, of whom 133 are Kolhs, the remainder being Assamese."[1]

If this was true in Sibsagar district, the very center of the Assamese, the conditions in the other stations can easily be imagined.

Churches sprang up everywhere among the tea gardens and the strength of the Christian communities was in the tea garden laborers, among a people who were foreigners to the land. Mr. Clark, in his paper, "Gospel Destitution About Assam"; read at the Jubilee in 1886, pointed out that the Kolhs, or Mundaris, as they were called in the tea gardens, "are as much hill men as are the Garos for they came from a like mountainous region in Central India."[2] He felt that after having devoted fifty years to the Assamese who had so persistent-

ly rejected the gospel, it was high time to recognize "our obligation to the people beyond."

On the strength of Mr. Clark's paper, a committee was appointed to prepare a letter for the purpose of acquainting the Executive Committee of the home Board and the whole Baptist brotherhood, with the needs of the Assam field. The first item emphasized in this letter was the designation of a missionary family to the "special care of the Kolh work in the Sibsagar district". This need was met by the appointment of Mr. Petrick who was at that time a missionary under the "Gossner Evangelical Lutheran Mission" in central India. Dr. Mason wrote of him:

> "He discovered the error of his denomination in admitting the unconverted to membership. This led to the discovery of other errors, until a little over a year ago he was baptized into an open communion church in Calcutta and during the last year appointed to our work in Sibsagar. At present he seems fully in sympathy with all our beliefs, and he has already been doing good work at Sibsagar."[3]

He was ordained during the Christmas week of 1889 at the request of the Gauhati church and became a regularly appointed missionary under the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society designated to the Sibsagar district.

The emphasis on the Christianization of the immigrants became more and more pronounced. The reports of the subsequent years indicate that new churches were established among the Kolhs, but there is no record of the establishment of a single Assamese church. In 1893, this work among the immigrants received a further impetus in the coming of three new missionary families, namely, the Rev. and Mrs. O. L. Swanson, the Rev. and Mrs. John Firth, and later the Rev. and Mrs. Jo-

seph Paul. These young missionaries were evidently not in favor of the tendency to put so much emphasis on the Mundaris and the laboring class of people, for they maintained that the work among the Assamese needed to be stressed. They were, however, soon converted to the viewpoint of the older missionaries and established a policy, indirectly at least, that has characterized the Assam mission on the plains ever since. In this connection Mr. Paul wrote to the Board in 1897:

"Swanson, Firth, and myself, each in turn, have strongly denounced the ideas of Messrs. Clark and Petrick regarding the Assamese people. On arriving in this country we firmly believed that the Assamese would yield to the influence of the gospel if it only was preached to them. Three years' experience has converted us to the opinions of the elder brethren. We find Hinduism in Assam to be a perfect organization for defense. Accordingly, the Hinduized people of Assam are absolutely under the control of the priests who leave nothing undone to prevent the people from being influenced by the gospel, and it is not so surprising as it was, that almost sixty years of missionary labor have been spent in the Brahmaputra valley without resulting in a healthy Assamese church."[4]

In the face of the growth among the immigrants, they could hardly be indifferent to the responsibility of caring for their spiritual welfare. The newcomers considered the best way in which to meet this problem and decided that they must spread out and settle at strategic points. Mr. Firth was transferred to North Lakhimpur, a district where the Mundaris were plentiful and where the growing population of tea garden laborers was on the increase. Upon the return of Mr. Petrick from furlough, Mr. Swanson, who had been in charge of Sibsagar during his absence, also decided to go to North Lakhimpur with the understanding that the North Lakhimpur missionaries were to have oversight of Go-

laghat subdivision as well. They soon came to the conclusion that it was best for Mr. Swanson to devote his time to the Golaghat field; and as a result, he made his first missionary tour in the district in 1898, accompanied by three native assistants. This first tour was significant in that it yielded a number of baptisms and three small churches were organized.

In the meantime, Mr. Paul had settled at Pathalibam, a little village on the Subansiri River, northeast from North Lakhimpur, at the foot of the Himalaya mountains. He had been designated to the work among the Miris, a hill tribe, many of whom lived on the banks of the river. It had been reported by a tea planter that the Miris were open to the gospel, and if a missionary were sent among them many would become Christians. It was upon this glowing report that Mr. Petrick pleaded with the Conference for a missionary for the Miris, and the Conference in turn made the appeal to the Board with the result that Mr. Paul was sent out to fill this need. A compound was subsequently purchased at Pathalibam and a bungalow built. Mr. Paul soon found, however, that the field was far from promising and in April, 1898, he wrote to the Board that "a great mistake has been made in placing a bungalow at Pathalibam,"[5] and suggested locating at another station.

In another letter, Mr. Paul pointed out the impracticability of continuing work among the Miris. He made several tours in the Dibrugarh district with Firth and Swanson, who were so impressed by the largeness of the city and its strategic situation, as well as by the number of large tea gardens, that they at once urged Paul to move there. In 1898, the Board sanctioned Paul's transfer to Dibrugarh for the one summer as a trial. Later, this transfer was made permanent and

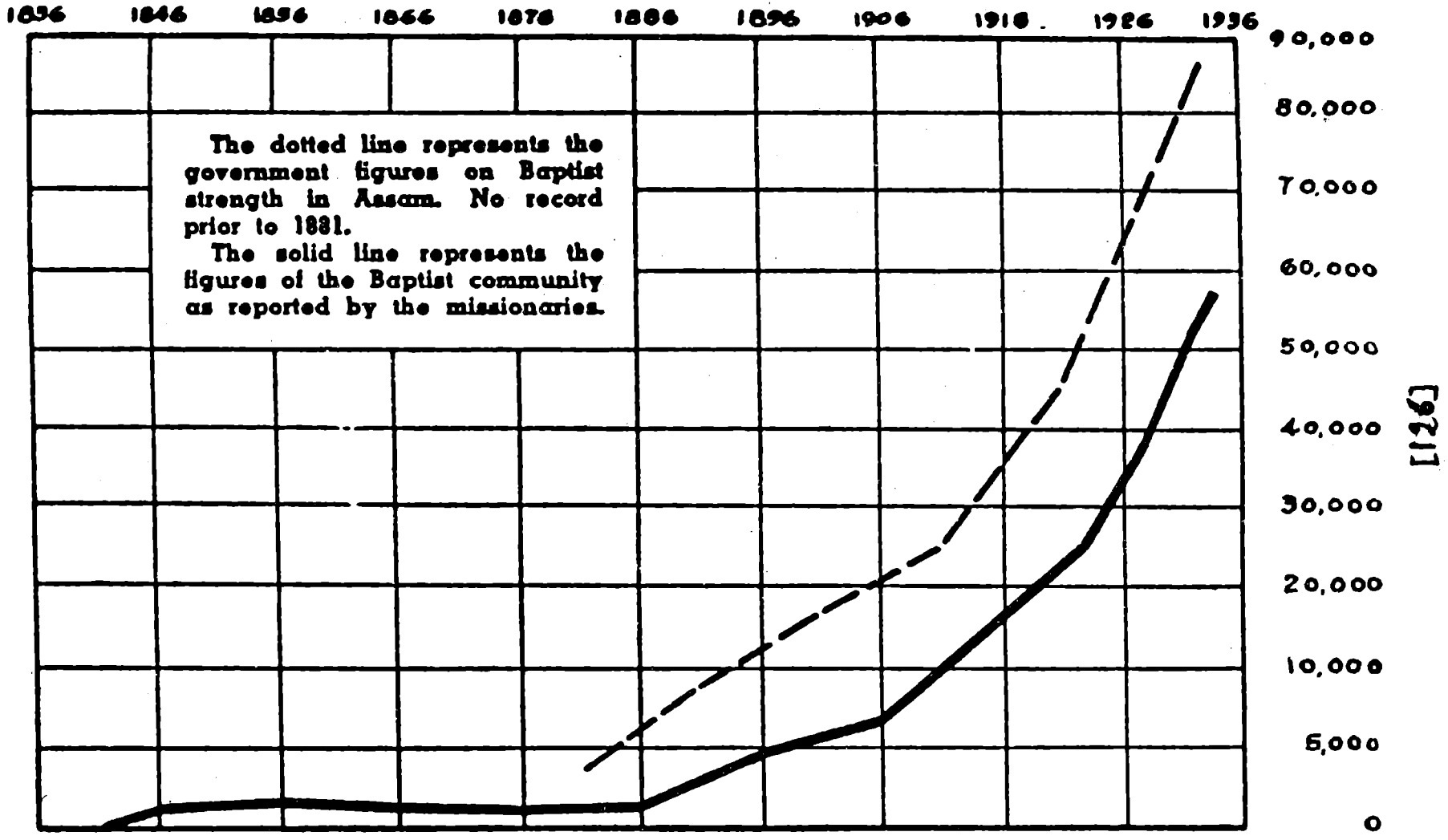
compound with a bungalow was purchased and Dibrugarh became another mission station for the North Lakhimpur district south of the Brahmaputra river.

That same year Mr. Swanson, having seen the possibility of developing the work in Golaghat, decided to make Golaghat his headquarters. A compound was procured, and since Mr. Paul had vacated the mission bungalow at Pathalibam, Swanson wrote that "it was decided by the brethren Firth, Paul and myself that this bungalow should be taken down and transferred to Golaghat and re-erected there."[6] As a result of this decision, the bungalow was dismantled and the usable materials placed on a raft and floated down the Subansiri river and then down the Brahmaputra and again towed up the Dhansiri river to Golaghat where the bungalow was built on the present site and where it stood until 1928, when it was finally torn down and replaced by a new one.

The purpose of the mission at this time was entirely changed from that of the early days. As one looks over the field he discovers that the emphasis was placed not on the Assamese, but rather on the immigrants who dwelt in the tea gardens. Even the enthusiasm for the hill tribes was, for a time, diverted. Once again Assam became the means to an end. The highways and village paths of the plains were traveled by the mesengers of God to win those people who were sojourners there. The number of stations had grown from the original three —Sibsagar, Nowgong, and Gauhati — to twelve. Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur, Goalpara and Golaghat had been established, making seven stations on the plains; and Molung, Kohima, Ukhrul among the Nagas, Tika in the Mikir hills, and Tura among the Garos, making five in the hills. Jorhat, the present educational

center, was organized soon after. It would not be fair to say that the change of plans during these hundred years impeded progress; if anything, it increased the usefulness of the mission. If there is a regret, it is because so few leaders have been raised up. This is largely due to the work having been done mostly among a class of people without a social background, and among a people who are themselves foreigners. One must also understand that while the hills people have gained respect, their social standing in the eyes of the better class Assamese, at least, is still considered inferior; and their leadership is hardly accepted.

In spite of the fact that the period just reviewed could be characterized as the Period of the Judges, when every man did that which seemed right in his own eyes, it was nevertheless a period of progress. The American Baptist Mission established stations in every district on the plains and ministered to the various needs of the people. With the educational center at Jorhat, academic training second to none has been offered the Christians who are able and willing to avail themselves of it. Hospitals and dispensaries which have attracted the attention of India's highest official are controlled and maintained by the Baptists. With a constituency of over 88,000 and with mission centers at thirteen strategic points and with Indian leaders coming to the fore, the future for Christianity in Assam is more hopeful than ever. The paths that have been blazed and the virgin soil that has been tilled will yet bring forth fruit worthy of the efforts put forth.


1836
1846
1856
1866
1876
1886
1896
1906
1916
1926
1936
90,000
80,000
70,000
60,000
50,000
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
5,000
0
The dotted line represents the government figures on Baptist strength in Assam. No record prior to 1881.
The solid line represents the figures of the Baptist community as reported by the missionaries.

CHAPTER XV

AFTER ONE HUNDRED YEARS

After one hundred years of missionary activity, it may be permissible to ask whether the effort has been worth while or not. It is impossible to take an inventory of spiritual values, but the reader may enumerate visible results in the Christians, the number of churches with their pastors, the Christian village schools, hospitals, and many other Christian institutions, and draw his own conclusion as to the soundness of the investment of lives and money.

A look at the graph on page 126 will indicate the growth of the Baptist community during the ten decades of its existence. According to the census report of 1931, there are nearly 88,000 Baptists in the province.* There are today 904 organized churches, 85 per cent of which are self-supporting. The majority of these churches are more than self-supporting and are busily engaged in propagating the gospel.

These churches are connected with one another through the District Association where they are located, and through this district they support the work of the Christian ministry. The Christians of Assam connected with the American Baptist Mission contributed to Christian work in 1933 the sum of $26,114.[1]

* The annual report of the Foreign Mission Society puts the figure at 54,154, but this is not a complete figure as it does not include the English Baptists. Further it does not take into account all those people who worship in Baptist churches but are not members.

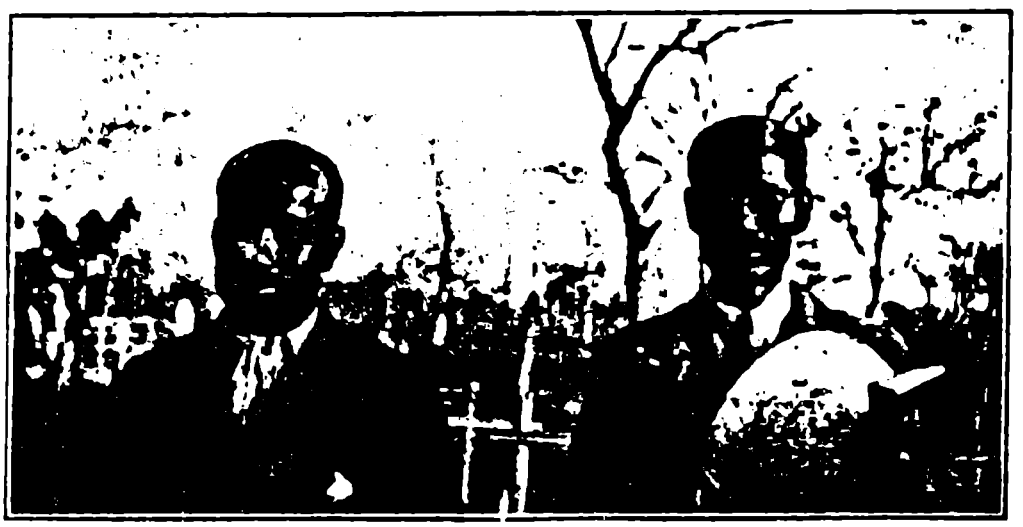
The All-Assam Convention is an independent organization governed and controlled entirely by indigenous leaders. It has its own mission and publishes its own magazine, and for a number of years it supplied the Sunday School leaflets for the Baptist churches of the province. The leaders of this convention have accepted remarkably well the responsibility of Christianizing Assam and have perceived that if Assam is going to be a Christian province it must be through indigenous leadership. A glance at the graph will convince the most skeptical that the growth of the Christian community has increased with the enlargement of the Assamese working force. It has been said that with the rise of a Christian community the already complex and difficult matter of racial and religious representation in government will become more complicated.

The Christians of Assam do not ask for political recognition and do not believe that it is their duty to develop a new political party in order to put the Christian community on an equal basis with the rest of the religious bodies. They prefer to remain as a leaven for good in the political world. This, however, has not left them entirely out of the social structure in the province, because the Governor of Assam has seen fit to appoint one of the Assamese Christian leaders, Touram Soikia, of Golaghat, as a member of the Legislative Council. Other Christian leaders are members of various local and municipal boards and hold government positions of various kinds. The Christians have become a part of the warp and woof of the social fabric and the texture has become noticeably improved where Christianity has been permitted to express itself.

It should be remembered that every missionary from the time of Nathan Brown to those now on the field

ONE PHASE OF MEDICAL MISSION

Dr. A. J. Ahlquist Examining Schoolboys



TWO ASSAMESE LEADERS

Comfort Goldsmith, Outstanding Christian Leader, Right;
Tonuram Solkia, Member of Legislative Council, Successful Evangelist, Left

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH

Hill-men of Sadiya

FIRST LESSONS IN CHRISTIANITY

O. L. Swanson Preaching in Bazaar

has been keenly interested in the training of the Indian Christians because he realized that without an educated constituency and trained leadership there was no hope of building a permanent Christian community.

When Brown started in Sadiya, his first task was that of establishing a school. When Bronson began his work in the Naga hills the school was the opening wedge that gave him access to a fierce and unruled tribe. When Bronson and Barker opened Nowgong and Gauhati they, too, used the school as an evangelizing agency, and all stations that have been opened since then have been opened and continued through teaching of boys and girls in the principles of the Christian faith.

For a number of years, each missionary carried on his own individual educational program. For the first fifty years of the mission there was no unified effort, save in the Nowgong Orphanage. It was not because of inability on the part of the missionaries to work together that this condition prevailed; but it seemed impossible to have a central institution where the youth of the new churches could be trained, because of the great distances between the stations and because of the numerous languages from which the student body would have to be drawn. It was not until 1905 that the mission finally came to the conclusion that, if a lasting work was to be built, a definite educational program must be adhered to. Illiteracy in the province was appalling, not merely among the non-Christians, but also among the Christians, whose constituency were but children, not merely in faith, but in intellect also. They were unable to read or write and even the pastors were illiterate, and were therefore incapable of making any progress in the instruction of their flocks.

Mr. Dowd, in a paper entitled "*The Educational*

Situation in Assam", presented to the Assam Conference in 1907, pointed out that "the per centage of children in schools to all those of school age was 21.6 per cent for boys, 1.4 per cent for girls and 11.79 per cent for both". He goes on and comments that "these figures of themselves are depressing enough but when we consider the attainments of the pupils the situation seems a good deal worse. Only one out of one hundred of school age is reading above the lower primary, and of girls, not more than one in 4,000. Only one out of 560 of school age enters high school, to say nothing of completing it."[3] It may be added to this statement that only 97 out of 60,000, in 1907, entered college. The above facts as given by Mr. Dowd pertain for the most part to the government. The mission, however, was not much better; if anything, it was worse. Because of its work being handicapped by financial difficulties, it was unable to supply the necessary teachers and equipment, and social ostracism put the Christian on a lower level in public estimation.

Mr. Dowd proceeds to point out that the four primary causes of the educational backwardness of the province were due mainly to poverty, climate, ignorance, and false religious beliefs. The reader can easily understand Mr. Dowd's statement without further elucidation. Suffice it to say that if the Christian community was not to disintegrate a united effort was needed to consolidate all the educational work; hence, plans were laid by which it would be possible to establish a school in some central station on the plains, to which all the missionaries could send such students as had received a primary and middle English training in their own districts. Jorhat was chosen as a central station for this purpose.

On January 12, 1905, the Rev. S. A. D. Boggs pitched his tent at Jorhat and proceeded to open that station by preparing the site for a mission compound and for the building of a missionary residence. In April, 1906, the Rev. Henry Goldsmith Babu, an Assamese, a tried and approved worker, came to Jorhat to be Mr. Boggs' assistant in the Bible school that was being opened. In 1907, Mr Boggs reported regarding Henry Babu: "His coming has been a great help in every way, and was the beginning of the work which we had gone to Jorhat to inaugurate." The school began in April with five young men in the second-year class and thirteen in the beginning class. The students came from the various districts in the province, six came from Golaghat, two from Kamrup, one from Jorhat, four from the Mikir hills, one from North Lakhimpur, four from Nowgong, and one from Sibsagar. From a racial point of view they were Assamese, Garos, Kacharis, Mikirs, and Mundaris.

In 1919, Mr. Boggs again reported regarding the development of a Normal department. "After further consideration and after the selection of the School Board, which occurred in 1908, it was decided to raise the grade of the school to the Government Middle English standard and also to add a Primary Boarding Department. This latter department was felt by the School Board to be a necessity because of the backward condition of education in the Christian communities. It has not been the thought of the Board or of the missionary at Jorhat that this department should be permanent. It has been established to meet present conditions. It is a passing phase of the work and it is hoped that it can be dispensed with in a decade."[3]

Another phase of Christian education was the grow-

ing need of industrial training among the Christian boys and girls. Mr. Brown pioneered in this work and saw at the very beginning the need of a school in which the Christians could be trained to till their soil better in order to produce greater crops. In the Garo hills the missionaries realized the necessity of industrial training as a needed adjunct to a well rounded-out Christian community. In fact, every school on the plains as well as those in the hills emphasized the dignity of labor and all boys were required to work from two to three hours daily, partly to defray expenses of the school, but also to teach them how to adapt themselves more usefully in a growing industrial world.

This whole problem of manual arts culminated in May, 1908, in the organization of an industrial department in the Jorhat schools. Mr. Boggs wrote:

"This was started for the distinct purpose of furnishing employment to the young men who are willing to work to support themselves while in school. At the present time carpentry only is taught, but it is hoped that other departments may soon be added. The opening of this department was at the very opportune time, as the government bungalows were being erected in Jorhat and our shop was given the contract for making the doors and windows. . . . Arrangements have also been made with the Salvation Army officials enabling us to manufacture for sale, in the province, of their Automatic Fly Shuttle Hand Loom. This, it is hoped, will prove a help to our shop."[4]

It is evident from this report that the first adventure in industrial training was founded to a large extent on a commercial basis; and it was partially defeated in its purpose to produce Christian men and women that would be able to cope better with the domestic problems of their rural surroundings.

With the coming of Mr. Charles Tilden in 1909, agricultural training was emphasized; but a combination of circumstances hindered the development of this branch so that in 1921 it was discontinued. In 1919 Mr. C. E. Blanc, who was also the Missiona Builder, a large industrial school building was built. This school was equipped with machinery from the United States; and a modern technical school based on principles of technical institutions in America was commenced. Boys received training in the various branches of manual arts; and one looking at the institution in 1922 was greatly impressed by the modern achievements of this venture. Unfortunately, there arose a need of cutting down the educational budget; and there was also a lack of confidence that the students were getting the right kind of training to fit them for their own communities. Further, the school at the time became involved in the large building program of the mission to such an extent that the educational features of the school were overwhelmed by the production of building material. This produced a situation which finally led to the discontinuance of the school in 1925.

In 1911 an educational commission appointed by the Assam mission submitted its findings, and made the following recommendations:

"In regard to the higher education of boys we recognize the following conditions peculiar to our field:

"1. There is an increasing demand for a high school education, especially urgent in the Garo hills;

2". There is especial need of educational advantages of all grades for the Christian community in the Upper Assam Valley;

"3. Here and everywhere there is danger in entrusting the youth of our Christian families to non-Christian schools, especially those of higher grades;

"4. In all parts of our field there is need of properly trained workers, which is constantly increasing and will be more pronounced as our work develops;

"5. Economy of time, effort, and money demand co-operation and concentration in educational institutions. It is a far wiser policy to develop one strong school, worthy of the confidence and support of all, than to endtavor to maintain several institutions in various parts of the field, none of which can reach the highest efficiency;

"6. While the diversity of language presents many difficulties, yet we believe that instruction in Assamese in the Lower Standards and the use of English in the Higher Standards will afford common mediums of instruction for many if not most of the youth who would naturally seek a higher education.

"In view of these considerations we recommend the following actions:

"RESOLVED:

"That there be developed at Jorhat, on the foundation already laid:

A. A Bible Training School, which shall be for the training of men for efficient work as pastors in the churches and for efficient evangelists for work among the non-Christian people. In the Bible School, the curriculum shall be adapted to the present need of the pupils sent and shall be changed (from time to time) to meet changing conditions.

B. A Christian High School.

1. That instruction in the school in lower standards shall be in the Assamese language and in all the standards above Middle English in the English language;

2. That the curriculum shall lead up to the Entrance Examination, but may be modified, especially for students from some of the Hill peoples, by the substitution of other subjects for Sanskrit, Persian, or Latin, provided this arrangement can be made with the Government Department for Education.

3. That the Bible shall be taught in all standards of the school, as one of the chief objects of the school

shall be to prepare young men to become efficient teachers in the Christian village schools, and laymen influential in the work of the local churches and in the general uplift of the Christian community.

4. That in order to cultivate the spirit of manly independence by making self-support possible, and in order to remove false notions respecting the honor and dignity of labor, there shall be maintained an industrial Department, and useful employment under competent direction and ennobling conditions.

5. That the control of these schools be vested in a Board of Trustees which shall be composed of five Missionaries who shall be nominated by the Assam B. M. Conference at the following Christian Associations: Garo Hills, Kamrup, Nowgong, Angami, Ao, Upper Assam, and North Lakhimpur. These members to be elected for one year by their respective Associations. It is understood that this provision shall be in force until the next biennial Conference when it is expected a more mature plan for control will be submitted to the Conference."[3]

This recommendation formed the foundation upon which the Jorhat Christian Schools were built. Several minor changes since then have been made. The Bible School, the Middle English School, the Normal Training School, and the High School are under the direction of one superintendent and are governed by a board elected as suggested in the above recommendation. The Primary Boarding Department referred to by Mr. Boggs on page 131 has been discontinued.

To the above brief sketch of the educational history of Assam should be added that an attempt has been made to maintain a school of Middle English standard in all of the main mission stations. In Kohima a "Higher School" where students have been taught high school subjects is also maintained. Many of the Christian boys who desire high school training have access

to the Government High School in Shillong, which is supervised by a Welsh Presbyterian Missionary and, in connection with a Christian hostel, is open to the Christian students.

In connection with Cotton College, a government institution located at Gauhati, a hostel was made available for Christian students. This dormitory was under the direction of a missionary, Dr. W. E. Witter, who was the first to supervise it. Students were taught the Christian principles of life, not merely by word of mouth, but by the method of living prevailing in the hostel.

Female education has been of a more vigorous character; and the progress has been greater than that attained for boys. With the establishment of the various mission stations, schools for girls were also organized. The effort to lift womanhood to a higher social level among the people appealed to the Christian constituency in America, who supported the missionary enterprise. Single lady missionaries were appointed to establish and superintend the education of indigenous girls. Thus it happened when the Nowgong Orphanage was closed a school for girls was established. The history of this school is a long and noble chapter and deserves more space than can be afforded here. Its training school for women has produced teachers who have drawn nothing but the highest commendation from the government officials. Similar schools were established at Gauhati, Tura, Impur, and Golaghat. In each place two or more lady missionaries have been constantly in charge, with the exception of the last two or three years when the personnel has been reduced because of lack of funds. Not having been encumbered with other duties, such as supervising churches, these

lady superintendents have been able to focus their attention upon their primary task of education.

Thus we have in Assam today four splendid schools for girls,[6] each one well equipped with buildings and apparatus; and all of them accredited by the government. A high school for girls has been established in connection with the school at Golaghat. Its short existence of only three years makes it impossible to estimate what its leading qualities may be.

In 1932 a new project was suggested to the mission, namely, a hostel for girls, in connection with Cotton College. This project is still an experiment and only the future can reveal what its effect will be upon the educated womanhood of Assam.

Closely allied to the educational problem is the production of literature. The Assamese language has often been interpreted to be a dialect of the Bengali. Even Dr. Brown looked upon it as such. The native of Assam, however, repudiates such a claim and insists that the Assamese is a language all its own. Unfortunately the Bengali characters have been adapted to express the sounds of the Assamese, with the result that many of the letters have received new meaning. For this and other reasons mentioned in Chapter VI, it was thought advisable by Brown to romanize the Assamese language. The languages of the various hill tribes, which formerly used the Bengali letters, are now using the Roman characters.

The literary production of the Assam Baptist Mission may be thought small as compared with other fields; but the critic must not forget that the Assam province is a philological conglomeration; and that it has been impossible to produce adequate literature in all of these tribal languages during the comparatively

short period in which missionaries have been working. There arises also the question concerning the wisdom of producing any extensive amount of literature for a small tribe.

P. H. Moore in 1907 said:

"The modern literature in Assamese, whether Christian or non-Christian, may be said to be the product of the last sixty years of the nineteenth century. Brown, Bronson, and Nidhi Levi are the trio of names that stand out pre-eminently as the founders of Assamese Christian literature. Brown was the translator of the New Testament into the Assamese, and saw it through three editions. Bronson's chief literary effort was an Assamese-English Dictionary, which he published in 1867, and which was the only Assamese Dictionary printed until the year 1900. His name is also connected with several tracts, leaflets, and hymns."[8]

The Assamese monthly periodical *Oronodoi* was maintained for many years and was popular among both Christians and non-Christians. It was the first Assamese newspaper and was the only one of its kind until a very recent date when other secular newspapers were published. It was later replaced by the present religious paper *Dipti* which is confined largely to the Baptist community and is published by the All-Assam Baptist Convention. The paucity of men has made it impossible for the later workers to maintain the pace set by the early missionaries, yet a considerable amount of literature has been produced and a number of books have been translated. The names of William Ward, the poet and translator of the Psalms and A. K. Gurney, the Hebrew scholar and translator of the Old Testament into Assamese, are worthy of special mention as literati. P. H. Moore also stands out as a linguistic scholar and had much to do with the present form of the Assamese Bible. During the last few years the

whole Bible has been reprinted and the spelling corrected; but no extensive revision has been made. A number of small books and pamphlets are available and while Christian literature is not voluminous it does satisfy the basic needs of the Christian constituency.

In the Garo language, the Bible has been translated and a monthly magazine *Achikni Ripeng* continues to make its appearance regularly. Sunday School leaflets, primers, song books, pastors' handbooks, catechisms, and a Garo-Bengali-English Dictionary with a number of other pamphlets touching the social and religious life of the people constitute available Christian literature for the Garos.

The Ao Nagas have the New Testament in their own language as well as the Ao-English Dictionary, a grammar, primer, and other school books, and portions of the Old Testament. For the Mikirs the New Testament has been published. A number of school books and religious pamphlets have been made available. A complete New Testament has been translated into the Angami language; a number of school books have been prepared; and literature for their Christian edification is constantly coming off the press. The Lhota Nagas were given a grammar and a vocabulary by Dr. Witter and a primer by Mr. Perrine. Recently two Gospels have been published as well as several school books and religious pamphlets. In 1931, a complete translation of the New Testament into the Manipuri was finished. Besides that, twenty-three text books for elementary schools have been produced in that language. The Tangkhul Nagas have also received a complete translation of the New Testament. A number of other tribes have received portions of the Scriptures in their ver-

nacular from modern translators, such as Pettigrew, Crozier, Tanquist, Selander, Hutton, Harding, et al.

The importance of this Christian literature becomes evident when one takes into consideration that the Bible and such other printed literature as the missionaries have been able to produce constitute the only available reading material for the students in the various schools, except the reams and reams of typewritten and mimeographed material which has been furnished for use.

Medical work has served as an important agency in building the social structure of the Christian community. The first seventy years were practically barren of scientific medical work. The only practice of healing was such as the missionaries were able to accomplish with the meagre training they had. The pagan hill-men feared at first the coming of the doctor; and it was not without much coaxing that doctors persuaded them to avail themselves of the medical service the missionaries offered. In Tura, Dr. Crozier opened a hospital; and following him Dr. Ahlquist built up a confidence among the Garos that enabled the present Dr. Downs to establish a medical practice such as the early doctors hardly thought possible. In Impur, among the Nagas, Dr. Bailey spent many years in medical service, which opened the eyes of the Ao tribe to the value of personal and social hygiene. It was Dr. Crozier also who opened the medical work at Kangpokpi where Dr. Wetelius is now in charge, and where the work is noted for its leper asylum, — a type of service which made it possible to open the mision at Kangpokpi and thus reach the many hill tribes in the Manipur state.

The Jorhat Hospital is the newest and largest medical work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society[8] in the province. Dr. Kirby and Dr. Ahlquist are

in charge of a large hospital with a well equipped dispensary and a medical plant that will be second to none in Assam when it is completed. The Jorhat dispensary distributes medicine to all parts of India while the people of Upper Assam come to the hospital because of the Christian treatment received.

The Woman's Hospital in Gauhati has been recognized by the government as an outstanding institution. The reception accorded this hospital among the Assamese is phenomenal. Both Europeans and Indians who have availed themselves of its services speak of it in highest terms. Besides the above mentioned institutions much work is done by small Christian dispensaries not ordinarily mentioned in statistical tables, in various stations superintended by missionaries or by some Indian trained doctor or compounder.

In summarizing the work in Assam, a few statistical facts may be given in order to set forth present conditions on the Assam field:

Missionaries A. B. F. M. S. and W. A. B. F. M. S.	65
Native workers	975
Churches	904
Churches self-supporting	792
Church members	54,154
Baptisms	1,893
Schools	591
Pupils	11,103
Hospitals	4
Dispensaries	6
Patients	26,517

The chart of missionary service in Assam will indicate the number of stations now in existence in the province. Some of these are equipped to care for two or more missionaries, and others are only for one. The

chart given below indicates the number of main and permanent buildings in each station.

CHART OF MAIN AND PERMANENT BUILDINGS OF THE A. B. F. M. S. IN ASSAM

Station	Missionary residences	Church	School houses	Dormitories	Dispensaries	Hospitals
Sadiya	2	1	1	1	1	
Sibsagar	1	1	1	1		
N. Lakhimpur	1	1				
Jorhat	7	1	4	2	2	1
Golaghat	2	1	1	1	1	
Impur	2		1	2	1	
Kangpokpi	2	1	1	1	1	1
Kohima	2	1	1	2		
Nowgong	1	1				
Furkating	1		1			
Gauhati	3	1	1	2		
Tura	4	1		2		1

In some of the stations school and church services are held in the same building.

In Nowgong and North Lakhimpur, the schoolhouse is a temporary structure.

In Jorhat there are two separate compounds. The medical compound has a hospital building, a ward building, large dispensary, assistants' quarters, a nurses' home, and a number of subsidiary buildings.

In Sibsagar, there is no church at present as it was wrecked in the earthquake in 1932.

In Tura, the students attend government school. Two large dormitories maintained by the mission take care of the boys.

No notice has been taken of the teachers' and preachers' houses as they are for the greater part temporary buildings.

CHART OF MAIN AND PERMANENT BUILDINGS OF THE W. A. F. M. S. IN ASSAM

Station	Missionary residences	School houses	Dispensaries	Dormitories	Orphanage	Hospitals
Golaghat	1	1	1	4		
Jorhat	1	1		1		
Impur	1	1		1		
Nowgong	1	1	1	4	1	1
Tura	1	1	1	2		

In Impur, one schoolhouse serves for both boys and girls. There is no lady missionary in residence now (1935).

In Gauhati, the medical plant includes a hospital, a dispensary, a nurses' home, laundry, cookhouse, morgue, and other subsidiary buildings.

In all the places a semi-cottage plan has been adopted for the dormitory accomodations. The number indicated are cottages.

No church building is indicated as students attend the church services generally held on the A. B. F. M. S. compound.

A student of conditions in the Assam field will be impressed with the urgent need for more missionaries. The statistics given above will indicate that the number of missionaries is woefully insufficient. This becomes more real when one takes into consideration the fact that the field is divided into numerous areas. There are at least seven major language groups and these create difficulties which make it impracticable to transfer missionaries from one group to another.

CHAPTER XVI

SUMMARY

The foregoing chapters depict, to a limited extent, the external accomplishments of the missionaries and their native brethren who have labored in Assam during the last one hundred years. Much of the work was sunk, as it were, in the foundations, and this labor will never be revealed. The many scrapped manuscripts, the hours of conference with pagan inquirers which bore no visible fruit, the many sermons preached in dusty bazaars, the long miles tramped on muddy roads, the hours of sleepless nights, tossing to and fro on hard camp cots in sweltering heat, the days and days of aching bones and chills from malaria fever, and the keen disappointments which the missionaries experienced when their "brethren in Christ" reverted to paganism, have not been recorded.

When Carey made a map of the world and hung it on the walls of the humble shack to look at while at work, he was appalled to see so vast a portion of the human race with no knowledge of the gospel. When he arrived at Calcutta, that need became still more appalling. The poor benighted people of Assam became a special object of his misionary zeal. He gave of his time and money. He did much to pioneer the way for the missionaries by sending his translations of the Bible ahead as a means of preparation to the Assamese. To be sure, this translation was extremely faulty and practically unintelligible, but still it prepared the

soil in which the missionaries afterwards sowed and from which they later harvested.

The assistance given the missionaries by government officials can hardly be over-estimated. Many of them were indeed true missionaries, and it seems that their ambition to advance the kingdom of God in Assam was as great as that of the men who had come for the purpose of preaching. Men, such as Major Jenkins and Captain Gordon, fall naturally within the scope of the religious history of Assam. They were the instigators of the spread of Christianity. They opened the path for the missionaries and made it possible for them to enter territories that would otherwise have been closed. They shared their homes and their comforts with the evangelists from foreign shores.

The period of sowing was long and tedious; perhaps, altogether too long. Perhaps a better organized scheme would have reduced the time of this early period. The discerning reader can see differences of opinion among the missionaries. It is evident that they were not always united as to where the main emphasis should be placed. Whether the plains or the hills should receive the chief attention was a constant question for debate. The missionaries often failed to look upon the field as a whole, but bent every effort to promote their own work, in the particular tribe or station in which they were personally interested. Young missionaries often came out for certain tasks; but changed their minds upon arrival on the field, persuaded perhaps by "older heads" to do so, leaving the original need uncared for. Individualism perhaps played too important a part for a healthy growth.

The American Baptist missionaries came to Assam, not with the purpose of Christianizing the province but

rather, to use it as a road leading to "the Celestial Empire". In this purpose they were defeated. They found the doors to China closed and the "promised land" remained beyond the mountains. For years they wandered about in the wilderness, so to speak, disappointed because the people they had come to serve were not within their reach. Other languages and dialects had to be learned. They soon found that Assam was a veritable Babel, with languages too numerous to be learned, and with religions too complicated to be understood, yet they adapted themselves to meet the emergency. The possibility of having a uniform working plan was remote.

Modern investigators would do well in looking back into the early days and seeing with what care these early missionaries emphasized an educated Christian constituency. To the missionaries, education was essential for girls as well as for boys. They raised the position of womanhood, and thus they elevated the home from a mere stopping place to a sanctuary of affection. Their educational program stands as a monument to their wisdom.

If there is a lack of Christian leaders among the churches on the plains, it can be traced, perhaps, to combinations of circumstances uncontrollable by the missionaries, such as a multitude of races, lack of financial and moral support, low social status of the people who became Christians, and interference by Missionary Boards who insisted upon direct preaching of the gospel. Let it be known that the missionaries did not strive to "educate the heathen" but that their chief purpose was to preach the gospel of life and to make "wise unto salvation" by means of teaching. To preach, teach, and make disciples was their purpose.

With this aim before them the missionaries penetrated teritories where no white person had ever been before, and by the grace of God changed savage head-hunters into promoters of righteousness. They laid the foundations for an indigenous church that will undoubtedly stand as long as Christianity lasts. All in all, they opened for the inhabitants of Assam the way that leads to a fuller and more complete life.

THE END

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The Parables of Christ, 32 pages	500 copies
Sermon on the Mount, 16 pages	500 copies
Catechism in Assamese, 16 pages	500 copies

The Alphabet, 1 page	150 copies
Catechism in Tai, 18 pages	500 copies
A Hymn in Assamese, 1 page	100 copies
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INDEX

STATEMENT ON THE CHART

The chart facing this page indicates the number of years of service of each missionary in Assam. It does not pretend, however, to show the exact months of arrivals and departures. Only the major transfers of missionaries on the field have been shown. Temporary designations to stations for language study, for substituting or waiting for permanent designations, have not been indicated. U. M. Fox should be shown as being in Ukhrul 1911-1915.

The author gratefully acknowledges help received from Mr. John E. Spann Jr., Chicago, in making the chart. He is also indebted to Miss Bates of the Missionary Rooms of New York, for rechecking the dates and movements involved.