

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."<sup>7</sup>

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".<sup>8</sup>

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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 . . ."<sup>9</sup>

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-

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