

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.