

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