

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 numerous. In the Sermon on the Mount, he had made no less than two hundred and thirty alterations.⁹ About twenty-seven months after his arrival, 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