

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."<sup>4</sup>

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 fur-lough, Mr. Swanson, who had been in charge of Sib-sagar 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,"<sup>5</sup> 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