

fever chills, he was seen tucked away in a little canoe floating down the Dihing River, on his way to Sibsagar for medical aid. Barker, filled with American enthusiasm and overwhelmed by the great crowds and densely populated territory which he had seen near Sibsagar and Jorhat, was eager to have a mission in either one of these two places. Brown also had suffered much because of illness in his family; and conditions at Jaipur had only added to his burden. His wife and sick child had to spend much time in Calcutta, and his own poor health impeded progress. Cutter had struggled, in a shifting population, to maintain a school. Jaipur, they discovered, was not the paradise they had hoped it would be. Brown wrote:

"We have been disappointed in our expectation regarding Jaipur — instead of increasing in population it has rather diminished . . . owing in great part to the unhealthiness of the place, and the sparseness of the population in the immediate neighborhood makes it a very discouraging situation for missionary labor."¹⁰

THE DEMAND OF THE PLAINS

A new chapter in the life of the Assam mission is reached — a sort of reversal of plans. While no visible fruit had been seen as the result of the labor put forth in Jaipur, subsequent years proved that the effort had not been made in vain. Nidhiram Farwell, usually referred to as Nidhi, an Assamese youth employed in the printing press, became interested in Christianity through the reading of a short prayer in English which he found in one of his little books. On May 13, 1841, he was baptized by Bronson at Jaipur, amidst much rejoicing on the part of the Europeans, and real curiosity among the natives who had gathered to witness the baptismal act.

Thus, after nearly six years, amid most trying circumstances, the labors of the missionaries were rewarded. It is significant to note that this first convert to Christianity was an Assamese. This fact, perhaps, more than any other, led the missionaries to turn their attention to the Assamese rather than to the hill people, an attention which was to characterize the missionary effort for many decades to come.

Mr. Barker, as already stated, made a number of trips throughout the districts of Sibsagar and Jorhat; and during these trips he became more and more convinced that either Sibsagar or Jorhat was the most advantageous place from which to carry on missionary work. He thus brought before his fellow missionaries