

## A HISTORIC DECISION.

**"We shall not leave; we shall stay by our trust."**

*During the latter half of January, 1942, the white staff of the New Guinea Mission, at work on their stations on the north-east coast of Papua, consisted of the Bishop (the Right Reverend P. N. W. Strong), fifteen clergy, including the retired Bishop Henry Newton, three laymen and eighteen women. With the rapid advance of the Japanese in their southward drive, and their known intention of attacking New Guinea and Papua, almost the whole of the white population fled from the Territory. An atmosphere of panic prevailed; stores, banks, post offices—all public and commercial services—suddenly came to an end, and the Bishop of New Guinea was urged to leave the country. The Bishop and his staff refused to be drawn into the maelstrom of this panic, and he made public the determination of himself and his co-workers to remain at their posts at all costs.*

*On January 31 the Bishop spoke through the local station for those with radio sets, but the statement was later printed and distributed to each member of the staff individually.*

*Below is the full text of the Bishop's address to his colleagues on that momentous and historic occasion.*

### THE BISHOP'S MESSAGE.

As you will know, it became necessary to move our office and base from Samarai. We have successfully accomplished this now, thanks to the splendid co-operation, hard work and calmness of all our boys, without exception, who have been absolutely exemplary.

You will get to know the reasons and circumstances of this move in due course. It will be sufficient for me to say now that it was obviously the right thing to do. There was no point in remaining where we were, as most of the former reasons for being there no longer apply—indeed all.



Now, I would like a heart-to-heart talk with you. As far as I know, you are all at your posts, and I am very glad and thankful about this. I have from the first felt that we must endeavour to carry on our work in all circumstances, no matter what the cost may ultimately be to any of us individually. God expects this of us. The Church at home, which sent us out, will surely expect it of us. The Universal Church expects it. The tradition and history of missions requires it of us. Missionaries who have been faithful to the uttermost and are now at rest are surely expecting it of us. The people whom we serve expect it of us. We could never hold up our faces again if, for our own safety, we all forsook Him and fled when the Shadows of the Passion began to gather round Him in His Spiritual and Mystical Body, the Church in Papua. Our life in the future would be burdened with shame, and we could not come back here and face our people again; and we would be conscious always of rejected opportunities. The history of the Church tells us that missionaries do not think of themselves in the hour of danger and crisis, but of the Master Who called them to give their all, and of the people whom He trusts them to serve and to love to the uttermost, even as He has served and loved to the uttermost. His watchword is none the less true to-day as it was when He gave it to the first disciples: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall find it."

No one requires us to leave.

No one has required us to leave.

The reports some of you heard of orders to this effect did not emanate from official or authoritative sources. But even if anyone had required us to leave, we should then have had to obey God rather than men. We could not leave unless God, Who called us, required it of us, and our whole spiritual instinct tells us He would never require such a thing at such an hour.

Our people need us now more than ever before in the whole history of the Mission. To give but two examples:—

(1) OUR NATIVE MINISTRY.—We have accepted a big responsibility in the eyes of all Christendom in founding a Native Ministry. We have given birth to it. We are responsible before God and the Church for its growth and development on sound catholic lines. It is but still in its infancy. We cannot leave it to sink back into heathenism. We must stand by that to which we have given birth.

(2) OUR PAPUAN WOMEN.—Our influence is just beginning to tell with them. How would they fare if all our women missionaries left? It would take years to recover what the locusts had eaten! Our Papuan women need the influence of women missionaries to-day more than ever before.

No! my brothers and sisters, fellow-workers in Christ, whatever other may do, we cannot leave.

We shall not leave.

We shall stay by our trust.

We shall stand by our vocation.

We do not know what it may mean to us. Many already think us fools and mad. What does that matter! If we are fools, "we are fools for Christ's sake." I cannot foretell the future. I cannot guarantee that all will be well—that we shall all come through unscathed. One thing only I can guarantee is that if we do not forsake Christ present here in Papua in His Body, the Church, He will not forsake us. He will uphold us; He will sustain us; He will strengthen us, and He will guide and keep us through the days that lie ahead. If we all left, it would take years for the Church here to recover from our betrayal of our trust. If we remain—and even if the worst came to the worst and we all were to perish in remaining—the Church will not perish, for there would have been no breach of trust in



its walls, but its foundation and structure would have received added strength for the future building by our faithfulness unto death.

This, I believe, is the resolution of you all. Indeed, I have been deeply moved more than I can say by letters I have received from many of our staff this week who have been in a position to communicate with me, and I have reason to believe that others who have not had that opportunity think and feel the same. Our staff, I believe, stands as a solid phalanx in this time of uncertainty. Their influence has already had a stabilising effect on the community, and, though harm has already been done, counsels of sanity are beginning to prevail again in the Territory before the damage has become irretrievable. However, let us not judge others, but let us follow duty only as we see it. If we are a solid phalanx, let us see to it in the days to come that it is a phalanx of Divine Grace, for only so can it remain unshaken.

I know there are special circumstances which may make it imperative for one or two to go (if arrangements can be made for them to do so). For the rest of us, we have made our resolution to stay. Let us not shrink from it. Let us not go back on it. Let us trust and not be afraid.

To you all I send my blessing. The Lord be with you !