"God Grew the Harvest"

DEDICATION

To the Divine Heart of the Master Reaper, and in Him to all those Missionaries of every Religious Order for whom the Pacific War brought the consummation of the total holocaust implied in their initial gift of themselves as reapers in the harvest field of souls.

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(Courtesy Netherlands Indies Dept. of Information)

To many a Missionary they were home — these forgotten islands washed by jewelled tropical seas.

(See page 159)

RED GREW THE HARVEST

Edited by F.M.D.S.C.

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Missionary experiences during the Pacific War of 1941-45 as related by Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

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Editor's Foreword

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This book has been compiled from eye-witness accounts written by missionaries who actually lived through the experiences described. Its various chapters first appeared as a series of articles in the Melbourne "Advocate". It is in answer to the repeated urging of those interested in the missions that they are now presented in book form.

A word to the reader. Apart from the necessary editing, the recital of these experiences remains exactly as recounted by the individual missionary Sisters. It may be argued that the narratives omit a description of important facts already known to readers, whilst at the same time they stress minor ones. This is true. But to have acted otherwise would have been to sacrifice truth to effect. It must be remembered that the writers are describing events as they themselves experienced or interpreted them. They are not attempting to write history. They are merely giving personal accounts, the majority of which were never originally meant for publication in any form. It is with all their limitations as such that the narratives are now offered to readers.

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent,
Kensington,
SYDNEY, N.S.W. May 31st, 1947.

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Prologue

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The harvest-fields had always been very white. Two thousand years ago the Master Reaper Himself had called attention to this. "Lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white even to the harvest."

As the known world expanded, so did the harvest-fields. Latest and loveliest of them was set in the Ocean called Pacific. Though the harvest was great and the labourers always few — yet reapers there were — splendid missionary reapers. Into the fields they came. The wind of the Spirit stirred through the white harvest and made it grow rich — rich unto the life of grace. Alongside palm-fringed beaches, washed by tropical seas, little churches housing Life Eternal sprang up. The bell of the Angelus rang out the Incarnation over mountain and jungle, and dark-eyed children knelt to hail Mary, full of grace. And the missionary reapers were glad, for the harvest-fields were white — very white.

Then one day the harvest-fields grew red.

They were lit with an awful glow — sinister and menacing. From far in the north came war. It hurled death from the skies, burned the little churches, blasted the golden-green palms, silenced the mission bell.

The harvest-fields grew redder.

And the red was the red of blood — the blood of the splendid missionary reapers. An enemy hath done this.

Then those who had eyes to see saw a vision.

Only it was not really a vision. It was more real than the actuality of the mission church in flames and of the dying missionary reaper.

It was the Passion of the Mystic Christ — not a new one, but the only, the ever-present one, that He said He would suffer in His members till the end of time. There in all its appalling aloneness was Gethsemane. In His missionaries the Christ wrestled with human fear and repugnance. The Scourging was there, for His reapers were beaten till the harvest-fields ran red. There was that night of outrage and humiliation between Gethsemane and Calvary and into its secret agony were caught up all the nameless horrors and heartsickening tortures which the malice of a pagan enemy could devise. There was a Way of the Cross and there was its awful climax —Calvary. The Mystic Christ hung on His Cross in the grip of the purest suffering, and in His eyes, dark with pain, were mirrored the supreme agony, sacrifice and love of those among His missionaries become victims with Him.

Yes, the harvest-fields grew red — very red.

Ordeal by Fire in New Britain

Prelude

It is December the 8th, 1941. A bombshell — as yet only a metaphorical one — has fallen on Rabaul. The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbour and Manila. New Britain will be next.

It was true. And we knew it. Rabaul — lovely tropical island town — nestling along the shore in the shadow of its high green mountains, Rabaul with its shady tree-lined avenues, its red-roofed bungalows, its riot of frangipanni and flamelike hibiscus blooms was in terrible danger.

The sun went down that evening on a scene of unwonted activity. Meetings were being held to discuss blackouts, trenches and air-raid precautions. In a few days the stage was set for the awful events which were to bring Rabaul into the blood-bespattered pages of history.

I have given you the setting for this story. Nevertheless, it is not to be about Rabaul. It is to be the story of the Catholic Mission of Vunapope. So we must move out along the dusty, palm-lined road for about twenty miles to this our head mission station, which is presided over by His Lordship Bishop Scharmach, M.S.C.

Here, out in the bush, is a thriving all-Catholic native settlement. It is completly self-supporting with its own hospital, dispensary, power-house, saw-mills, printery and bookbinding works. The large mission personnel includes nearly 120 Sacred Heart Fathers and Brothers and about 80 Sisters, including Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. There is also a Seminary for training native priests, and a native Sisterhood of about 45 native nuns. From this splendidly-organised head mission are directed hundreds of smaller ones throughout New Britain, New Ireland and neighbouring small islands. So much for the description of Vunapope.

Out here at the mission, too, everything was in a state of emergency. Though most of the womenfolk of New Britain had been evacuated, we missionary Sisters had been allowed to remain on to assist in nursing the wounded. Arrangements had been made with the authorities for a military hospital at the mission. There was now nothing to do but wait.

On January 4th we were sitting on the convent verandah gazing across the blue, tranquil waters of Blanche Bay. Matupit, our famous volcano, was puffing lazily away in the distance. Fleecy clouds hung low over the ranges. All was quiet.

Then it happened.

A dull roar was heard from across the waters of the Bay. At once a voluminous cloud of smoke, black and forbidding, seethed skywards. Natives, terrified but excited, raced madly towards the beach screaming, "A Kaia! A Kaia!" which means "eruption." This was the one thought in everyone's mind.

You see, no one had forgotten the devastating eruption of 1937. At 3 p.m. one afternoon little Vulcan Island, off Rabaul, which people who ought to know say is really a mountain

that in days gone by disappeared under the sea, suddenly woke up and decided to become a mountain again. His dreadful internal rumblings as he did so and the lava and pumice and smoke that he belched forth on the hapless town gave us good reason to remember Vulcan. In a few days he went to sleep again, but now we distrust him. One day he may decide to return to his island form again, and then. . .!

However, it was soon obvious that Vulcan was not guilty this time. Japanese raiders had been after Matupit aerodrome. In tense expectation we awaited news from Rabaul.

At 2 p.m. it came — short and curt as had been the raid. "Twenty Japanese planes over Rabaul. Dropped bombs in vicinity of native hospital at Rapindik. Many natives killed and wounded. Prepare for casualties."

Expectation had become reality.

Moreover, another raid was a certainty. The Japs had missed the aerodrome by a very small margin and would most certainly come back.

After night prayers we retired — fully dressed — to rest but not to sleep. But the raid did not come that night. It came in the cool quiet of the next morning. We made a dash for the trenches, and crouching there in the kindly protection of mother earth began a Rosary for the brave boys on the 'drome for which the planes were heading.

This solemn moment was broken in upon by an incident which caused serious alarm at first, but which ended in peals of laughter. Something heavy and bulky came hurtling into the dark trench, bringing with it a load of soil. Pulses beat rapidly and there was a quick scatter to the exit. Then the bulky object began to yelp. It was poor old Nip, the fowl-house guard. Finding that everyone else had evacuated, his doggy sense prompted him to do likewise. We forgave him

the shower of soil, so relieved were we that he was not a souvenir from a real Nip.

Every day we had raids. That of Tuesday, January 20th, commenced the sorrowful list of casualties among our missionaries — a list which was to grow longer and longer as the war years dragged wearily on. Early in the morning the little mission launch chugged across the sunlit waters of the bay and out into the open sea. On board were a Father and a Sacred Heart Sister en route to their home in the hills — a mission station in the Baining Mountains. As the little boat made its way along the beautiful New Britain coast the deadly drone of planes broke the silence of the tropical morning. Then from out of the blue, nine planes attacked the poor little craft. As they ascended preparatory to making another dive, nine more came down, pouring out a furious rain of machine-gun bullets.

It was a terrifying sight. Eighteen dive-bombers strafing a tiny craft carrying two missionaries and some native boys. Though wounded in the leg, the Father had enough presence of mind to make his way painfully down to the engine-room and shut off the engine. As the engine was obviously stopped and all life on the launch seemed to have been obliterated, the bombers flew off, leaving their poor little victim to drift helplessly about on the waters of the bay.

Vunapope received the news late in the afternoon. The captain was dead, the Father's leg crushed, whilst the Sister was bleeding from a wound over the right eye.

On Wednesday, January 21st, things were worse. Jap aircraft carriers had been sighted off the coast. Now the garrison at Rabaul had been placed there to ward off attacks from wandering raiders, not to stem the tide of an invasion. Besides, by this time our small air force had been put out of action and the anti-aircraft guns silenced. The news of the presence of aircraft carriers increased the atmosphere of trepi-

dation. Tension was strained to breaking point as everyone waited for the climax.

At 9 p.m. a Father's voice was heard calling from below our balcony. We were well awake and ready for action whatever it might be. Everyone was anxious, longing to get moving, to do something — anything. This was his news. An invasion was most certainly pending. The Methodist Mission Sisters were in the danger area. Would we take the four of them at Vunapope? Of course we would. By midnight the worried and weary refugees were with us.

Thursday dawned at last. The fairness of that morning did not portend the tragic events which were that day to darken the pages of Rabaul's history.

A cloudless sky over New Britain's grasslands and jungles.

A tranquil sea. A purplish haze enveloping the volcanic wall of ranges in whose shelter lay the ill-fated township.

The soft breeze, the dancing waters — what a contrast to the devastating hurricane of fire and lead which would in a few short hours lay waste the picturesque shores of Blanche Bay.

It burst upon us like a lightning flash. Plane after plane dived upon the Parade Point battery and its two guns which were to prevent enemy ships from entering the harbour. Some of the boys found themselves soaring skywards, only to land again and be buried under the load of earth that followed in their wake. Others, buried in one bomb explosion, were unearthed with the next. From our position we watched the whole scene. When the bombers had unloaded their deadly cargo they went off, leaving the field to the machine-gunners. It was a breathtaking spectacle. Swooping, diving, darting from one side of the bay to the other, they took aim at any living object.

Around the blasted shore battery survivors lay motionless till the foe took their final departure. Then a wild rush for

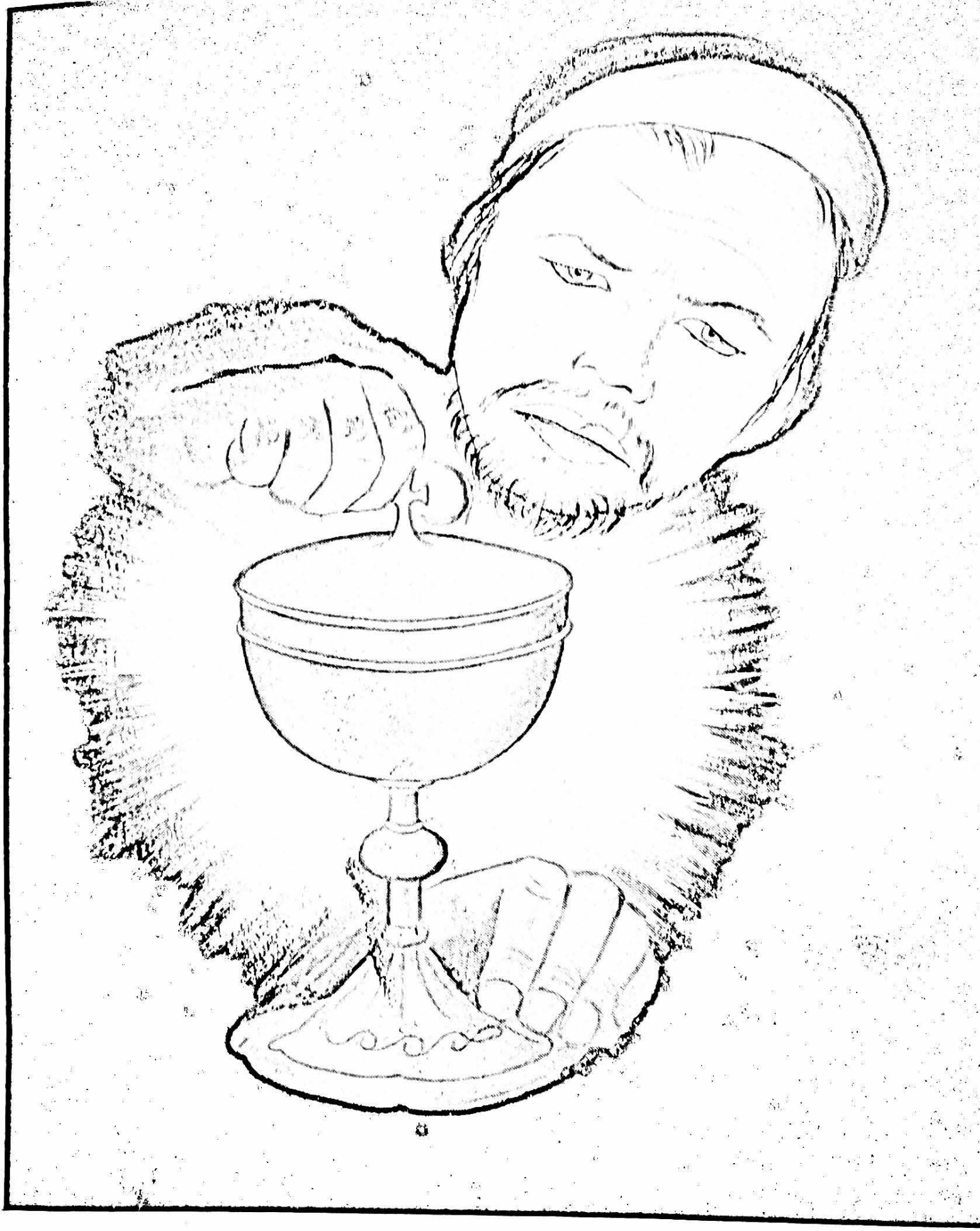
picks and shovels to extricate buried members of the unit. Fourteen had been buried alive. Others escaped with injuries and shock and were brought to us at Vunapope.

From the Nipponese point of view the final act had been played. With the last of Rabaul's guns out of action and the air force obliterated, all was clear for an unopposed move-in of occupation forces. For days aircraft carriers had been playing off the coast. Now the fleet began to close up.

With the exception of a few soldiers chosen to remain and make things warm for the Japs on their arrival, orders were given to evacuate Rabaul. We at Vunapope were told to prepare hospital accommodation for about ninety men, and quarters for the civilian population. Vunapope became the scene of a vibrant activity. Motor cars raised the dust as they sped from mission to hospital and vice versa. Ambulances loomed along the main road with their precious load of wounded and sick. Nuns flitted quietly about, preparing meals for weary troops.

At the hospital military nurses, assisted by missionary Sisters, got the sick and wounded into bed, despite the objections raised by more than one shell-shocked warrior, who, to everyone's mirth, flatly refused to get into bed until he "got a Jap," When all were settled in bed hot soup was served round and then in the midst of the perils of the hour the characteristic spirit of the Australian soldier asserted itself and the boys fell to laughing about various humorous situations of the morning.

It was now night. Having settled the hospital cases, we turned to the able-bodied who had decided on flight to the bush rather than surrender. Men heading for where they knew not had their kits packed with stores for the journey. Torrential rains added to the darkness. Tropical jungles on such a



Pagan Fingers Grasped the Ciborium.

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night were a fearsome prospect. With aching hearts and trembling lips we said our "God speed" to the brave lads stepping out into the blackness of that tropical night — stepping out, we knew, to privation, to suffering and to the terrors of the unknown.

Darkness hung like a pall over the Gazelle Peninsula. At Vunapope Mission missionaries, nurses, civilians, sick and wounded soldiers waited for news. There was a rumour that the American Fleet was hurrying to our relief. Improbable though it seemed, like drowning men we clung to this last straw of hope. Would they reach us in time? Could they beat off the mighty forces of Nippon which had swept victoriously from Tokio to Singapore?

Some of us went to bed. Others sat up waiting, waiting for the little word that all was not yet lost.

Wearily the night hours dragged on.

No word of approaching relief.

Then the long-dreaded announcement. "The Japs are landing!"

Nippon's forces were coming ashore at Pila Pila and Karavia. From the heights overlooking the beach a gallant party of Australians was hurling mortar bombs on the incoming landing barges. As the barges raced madly shorewards the bombs took terrible toll of the little yellow men trying to get through the barbed-wire entanglements. Forced to abandon

this deadly area, the Japs turned the noses of their vessels towards Rabaul. Drawing in at the main wharf they took possession of the town without firing another shot.

News of the progress of events was continually coming out to Vunapope by couriers and by ambulance men who were trying to get through with the wounded. Late in the night the last message came. The men could not get through again and we were left without further news as to developments.

Nevertheless, as we waited for the dawn the sound of artillery fire reached our ears. Deep red flashes could be seen lighting up the sky and hills round Rabaul and the north coast.

Morning and Holy Mass at 5.30 a.m.

What a Mass was that! Now, as never before, did the consecrating "Hoc Est Enim Calix Sanguinis Mei" become startingly real and personal. The shape of what lay ahead no one could know. That it would be a bloodstained Way of the Cross not a single one doubted. Even thus — "Ecce venio."

Through the fitful dawn light sinister black objects could be seen looming up on the horizon. Though their form was as yet indistinguishable, everyone knew what they were. As the sun came out the ugly black masses defined themselves into units of Nippon's sea power. Vessels of every kind and size stood out on the horizon. Gun muzzles were turned on our defenceless shore to repel any further resistance. An old Sister who had already seen two nations administering New Britain was now to witness a third. Ironically enough she walked out on to the verandah and, seeing the ships, exclaimed fervently, "Thank God the Americans have arrived in time."

At 7.30 a.m. it was realised that the boys at the hospital would be needing a cup of tea. Cautiously we made our way down through the banana plantation to the building, expecting to meet a Jap at every corner. After examining the hospital

pantry we found that stores were pretty low. A brilliant idea came into one Sister's practical head.

"How about a raid on Burns Philp's and Carpenter's? It's no use leaving the good things for the Japs."

How about a raid on Burns Philp's?
It's no use leaving the good things for the Japs.

This suggestion caused a wave of enthusiasm, and the soldier boys wanted to begin at once. However, their ardour had to be subdued till higher authorities could be consulted. The doctor, appealed to, gave his whole-hearted approval.

The attacking party was led by two burly Australians carrying tomahawks. They were followed by a crowd of half-castes and natives and bringing up the rear were — three nuns! But things were desperate. The more hands the more

food. This motley brigade was about to storm B.P.'s establishment when along came the manager, who promptly surrendered the key to the invaders.

A lorry was soon on the scene and while furtive eyes kept a look out for Japs it was loaded with good things for the hospital. The plunder went off in fine style. The lorry had departed on its last trip and the Sisters had remained behind to gather up any overlooked treasures. So absorbed were they that they had forgotten there was an invasion in full swing. A shot was fired. Japs were on the scene. The nuns looked for an avenue of escape. But it was too late. They had been seen. The Japs were bearing down upon them unfurling a flag from around their bayonets as they ran. In a second they were surrounded. "You English? You America?" One of the Sisters overcame her faintness to the extent of pointing to the Red Cross band on her arm. At this an excited babble went on among the Nips and, at an order given by one who was evidently in command, the party broke up and went off in search of new victims. The Sisters made off for the convent as fast as their trembling legs would carry them.

While this scene was being enacted at Burns Philp's, a different one was going on at the destination of the plundered goods. Excavations were being made in the hospital garden so as to hide the appropriated supplies. But the planes of the Rising Sun were on patrol and it was not long before the vigorous activity of the boys was noted. Down swooped a spotter over the scene of action. The boys went flat out on the ground and, when they saw that their yellow pilot-friend was becoming too absorbed in their doings, they discreetly retired, regretfully leaving the precious booty to its fate.

By this time Japanese troops had landed in enormous numbers along the coast, and planes were dashing overhead watching for any signs of resistance. There was none now. Our brave lads, completely overwhelmed, had retreated to the

jungle. Rabaul, another stepping stone to Australia, was in enemy hands.

At the hospital a quiet serenity prevailed. Cheery faces and joking words hid the anxiety within many a heart and kept up morale. Any minute the Japs would be in upon us and what then? We knew only too soon. With thumping hearts and blanched faces we listened to the blood-curdling yells as the ferocious little men charged the hospital. With bayonets gleaming in the brilliant morning sunshine they rushed upon us. Over hedges, over stumps they flew, not stopping in their mad rush until we were completely surrounded. Sick and wounded were forced to line up with the rest of us and hold their hands on high. Two Sisters, who had been busy in the hospital kitchen a couple of hundred yards away and thus missed the general round-up, put their heads out the window at a most inopportune moment. They were spied and forced to walk up to the hospital in front of a Jap with their hands up.

The pathetic sight of our sick and wounded boys using every effort of will power and physical strength to keep their hands aloft brought tears to our eyes. Missionary Sisters, military nurses, half-caste boys and natives, all were in line. Nevertheless even when our captors trained a menacing-looking machine-gun on us and the gunner pointedly took from out his leather pouch a number of cartridges and set them in the gun, no mark of anxiety was allowed to be seen. Hearts *did* flutter and rosaries *were* clenched more firmly but it was only the owners of the hearts and the rosaries who were aware of this. Cheery whispers came down the line from the soldiers: "Keep your chins up! It's only bluff! Keep smiling!"

Seeing a rosary dangling from a Sister's hand the commander beckoned her to him. He began examining the beads. No one will ever know precisely what passed through his pagan mind, but from that moment his attitude toward us changed. Taking advantage of this obvious change, a Sister ventured to ask permission to return to the kitchen and prepare a meal for

the sick. It was given and the soldiers were allowed return to their beds.

By this time our captors themselves were beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. They were offered a loaf of mouldy bread and a pot of black tea. But such fare was not to their fellowships' liking. They proceeded to make a raid on our precious supplies from Burns Philp's. Imagine our consternation and indignation when they bayoneted tin after tin and, not finding it to their taste, threw it away!

This first day of Japanese occupation came to an end and we lived to see many another. Nevertheless, the next day was to have its exciting hours, too. Things went smoothly till 4.30 p.m. A few Japs arrived on the scene. One of them wandered into the nurses' quarters and discovered khaki trousers, soldiers' boots and other things of a like nature belonging to the nurses' jungle kit. We must be hiding soldiers!

The alarm was given. In three seconds our house was surrounded by about three hundred jabbering little men. Imagine our consternation. We fled to the chapel for safety, fully expecting them to come tearing after us. Instead, an officer appeared on the scene and bellowed out orders in a harsh oriental tone. There was immediate silence, clicking of heels, and salutes. Then the officer, accompanied by armed guards, stamped up the stairs.

Guards were placed at each exit and machine-guns set up at various angles. One guard stood at the chapel door and ordered us out. It was 5.30 p.m. We all had to toe the line, the military nurses, ourselves and a Seventh Day Adventist missionary. One by one we were questioned as to our nationality.

The Australians of course were singled out for special notice and were separated from the others. An effort was then made to sort out the rest who included Dutch, French, German and Irish. "Dutch" and "Deutch" (German) quite mystified

the intelligentsia of Nippon and muffled laughter could be heard along the line when someone deliberately said "Dutch" when it should have been "Deutch" and vice versa. At last they managed to get us all classified, after our having had to pull down the map of the world and show them where Ireland and Holland were. Eventually at about 9 p.m. a commotion downstairs attracted their attention and we were forgotten. Half-way through night prayers a guard appeared at the door, bayonet in hand, and ordered us to bed. During the night soldiers tramped up and down the stairs and around the verandahs. Needless to say we trembled to hear them coming.

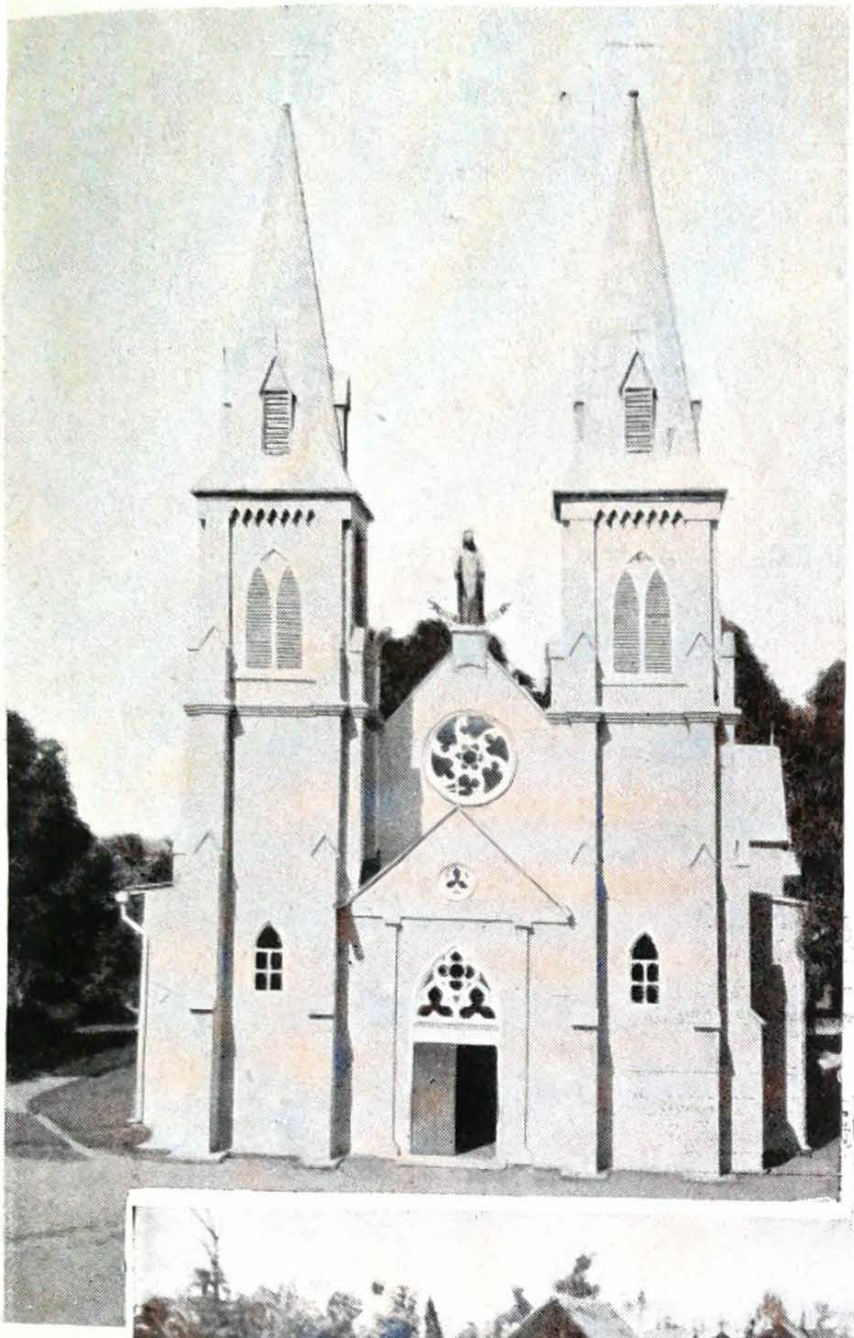
At 10.30 p.m. a resounding crash echoed all around the bay and there began a most furious bombardment. It was R.A.A.F. planes over Rabaul. The sky was illuminated with angry red flashes as the anti-aircraft shells burst in the air. Along the shore and on the water deep red flares shot up as bombs exploded and tracer bullets went seeking their targets. It was a picture of fire and fury. The din was terrible. The chapel shook and the windows danced on their hinges.

We prayed as we had never prayed before, not knowing just what would happen. The din eventually ceased, but many a Jap ship and its crew would not see the light of day again in New Britain.

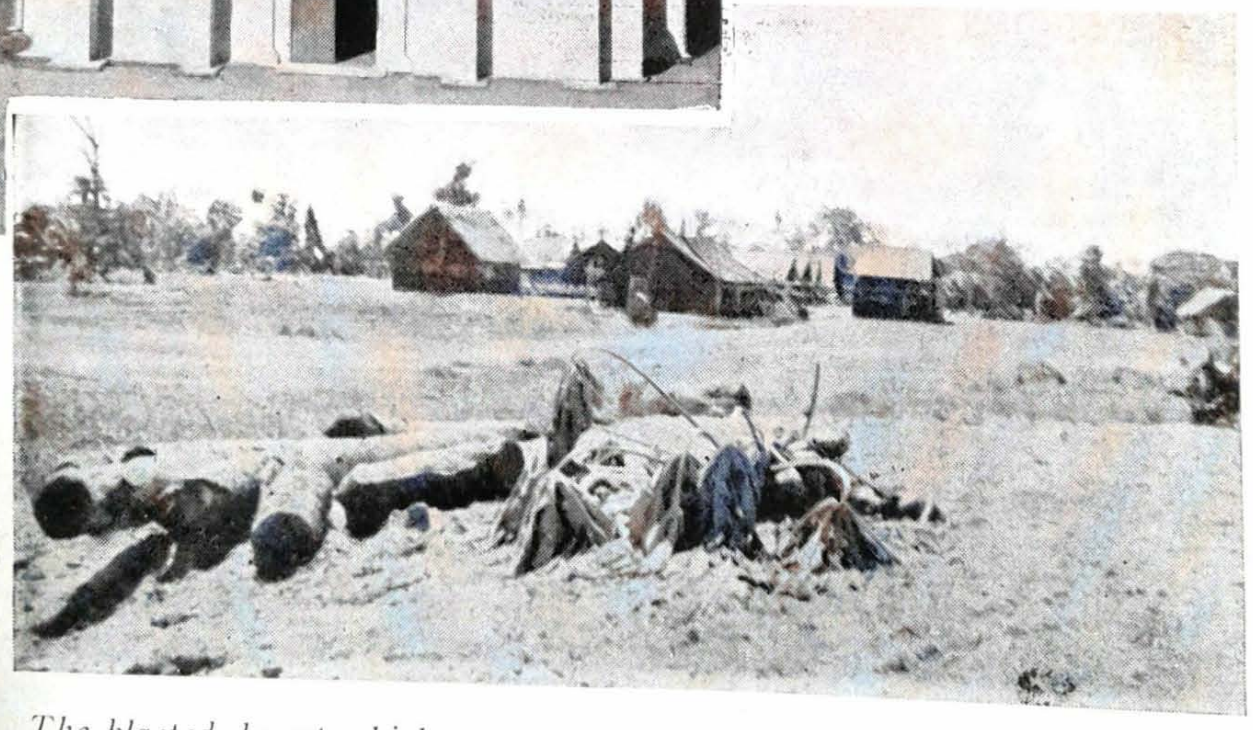
Next morning, Sunday, at 10.30 a.m. the bell was rung furiously. The Military Police were there. "Make line," they roared, and we toed it again. Once more the wearisome classification according to nationality. We then received our orders and the limit of our boundary. We were promised a certificate of good citizenship if we behaved ourselves — but we never got it! "To be shot to death," a phrase which was afterwards to become a kind of doxology to every Japanese proclamation, would be the punishment if we disobeyed. From now on we were prisoners of the Japanese armed forces.

Later in the day we were alarmed to see the Fathers being marched off with all their baggage — where to we did not

Before and After



Vunapope Cathedral — the heart of the Mission Station—before February 11th, 1944.



The blasted desert which was Vunapope Mission Station. Taken in 1946, twelve months after the liberation of the missionaries. Tents provide temporary dwellings.

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know. Our fears were allayed when a message was smuggled in later to the effect that they had been interned upstairs in the Convent of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The Japs said it was only for a few days but it lasted for many months.

Of course all communication with the Fathers was forbidden, so for a week we had no Mass. When a Sister ventured to ask permission for Mass to be celebrated the reply was, "Yes, provided a Sister says it." By degrees restrictions became less severe. The internment had come so rapidly that no one had had time to remove the Blessed Sacrament from the church. The Bishop eventually obtained permission to remove It and was overjoyed to find the Sanctuary untouched and a canvas sheet drawn across in front of the Altar. He brought the Blessed Sacrament to our chapel but being accompanied by two armed guards was unable to speak to us. With tears in our eyes we knelt down to receive his blessing and he turned sadly away. A Father was also allowed from this time on to come and say Mass for us every morning. In the end the Bishop, too, was allowed to visit us.

About the middle of April various changes took place in our camp. The male civilian prisoners were removed to Rabaul, as also the soldiers from the hospital. Rev. Father McCullagh, M.S.C. and Brother Brennan, M.S.C. were among the party. It was with heavy hearts that we bade them good-bye and a lasting good-bye it was to be. All these were aboard the "Montevideo Maru" when it was torpedoed off the coast of the Philippines.

We began to feel uneasy about our own fate. Our fears were confirmed when a very officious-looking Major came to interview French, Irish and German internees. Dutch and Australians were ignored. The outcome of this visit was that at 6.30 p.m. as we were sitting down to tea, the Bishop arrived on the scene. The unmistakable lines of anxiety on his pallid face told us there was something amiss. He had an alarming announcement to make. Dutch and Australians were to be

deported. We were to be separated from the rest of the missionaries. But the Bishop's face was defiant and we knew that something was brewing when he looked like that. So did the Japs! Before leaving us he advised us to pack our cases and be ready — just in case, but he added, "You will not leave the mission, and if you do it will be over my dead body." Then he left us.

Blinded with tears we stumbled and fumbled about as we got together the bare necessities for the anticipated journey. But it never eventuated. The Bishop won the first of his many battles with the Japanese forces and we remained to see the return of the Australians to Rabaul.

Coral Sea Aftermath

There was a great increase of military activity round about us at the end of April, 1942. It was evident that some big move was afoot. Large groups of bombers left Rabaul every morning and Japanese reports of bombardments on allied ports and shipping, particularly in Australia, made us tremble for the safety of our homeland. Our worst fears were confirmed when early in May the Japanese fleet sailed proudly out of Rabaul. "God save Australia," prayed the missionaries as the forty-fifth of the line left the harbour. Our rosaries were worked overtime during the following days of agonising suspense.

It was dawn on Sunday morning a week later.

Several battered transports limped into the harbour and discharged the dishevelled and defeated representatives of Dai-Nippon. Of the remainder we saw and heard nothing, but presumed that they had laid a leaden foundation in the bed of the Coral Sea. The Japs blandly informed us that they had sunk all the American ships and aircraft carriers and brought down all their planes, but had had to return home because they had run out of water!

During this time our little camp was converted into a miniature college. Commercial classes, nursing lectures, music and language lessons filled up the day. Regular hours of study were set but were often unceremoniously interrupted by guards

or other visitors. These gentlemen, keen on our learning their honourable language, would stand at the blackboard, chattering and scribbling. Then finding they could make no impression on our dull minds they would give us up as hopeless.

June 21st brought us some excitement. At 4.30 a.m. we were awakened by tramp, tramp around our verandahs. Two Sisters crept cautiously out and peered over the balcony. In a couple of seconds there was a bellow: "Get out and come down!" Only half-awake we tumbled downstairs to the clicking of bayonets and roars to "Hurry up!" The early morning gloom added to the air of mystery and suspense. The reason for the early disturbance was this.

After their defeat and subsequent inglorious return from the Coral Sea encounter, our Japanese lords were in a very nasty humour, and we became the victims thereof. They had not expected to be checked in the south and so came to the conclusion that someone in our midst had sent radio messages which brought about their disappointment. We, of course, were not supposed to know how unsatisfactory had been this venture, but their obvious annoyance only confirmed the deductions we had already made on counting the battered hulks crawling back into the harbour. And now we were under suspicion and there was going to be a great search.

We were commanded to form a squad, and whilst an armed guard surrounded us, a number of officers took up their position in front. Beside the spokesman were some promising-

looking gentlemen holding spades and ropes. We knew the Jap methods — the spades were for us to dig our own graves and the ropes were to bind us in preparation for the final scene. For once we were thoroughly frightened. Then the leading officer addressed us. We were to remain in our present position (the nurses were lined up some distance away), neither moving nor speaking, while they would search our houses. Afterwards we would be called one by one and interrogated. Anyone who dared disobey orders would be severely punished.

Then began a five hours' search during which certain parties in our midst began to search their consciences. Upstairs we had a few quite good little drawings of the Japs and at least two of us had diaries, the last entry being about the departure for and the return from Port Moresby.

An hour passed, two hours, and still our position was the same — the diaries above, the lads with ropes and spades before, our consciences none too easy within. Then the sun began to scorch down upon us. The guards departed in batches to partake of some morning refreshment but left us there dispirited and hungry.

All at once the tide took a propitious turn. An officer called upon Mother Superior to go above and help them. Now she is a resourceful woman and those diaries and sketches were on her mind as well as on ours. After ably directing the search into safe channels she proposed that it would facilitate matters if each Sister were to take her own books and belongings and line them up before her on the ground below. The Japs thought it a splendid idea and so did we! Therefore, accompanied by guards, upstairs we went, gathered our books (one incriminating diary was hastily stowed away on the owner's person) and took up our positions again. The owner of the second diary knelt on the grass arranging her books, slipped diary No. 2 under her knees, and remained kneeling until the search was over. When the inspectors came along, the two

diary owners wore a most innocent air, the one on her knees making a particularly good impression. Her humble attitude was the correct one for an Australian to adopt in the august presence of Japanese officers.

Then matters began gradually to improve, whether because no wireless sets were found or because the Sisters all appeared so innocent, I know not. However, in the end we were all upstairs again helping to conduct the search, and a very thorough one it was too — under mattresses and in every possible hole and corner.

It was almost 10 o'clock and the ordeal was nearing its end, so we were once again lined up. Mother Superior was commissioned to examine our persons. With her usual dexterity she kept well away from pockets (No. 2 diary was by this time reposing in that of its owner). Every little paper was examined and any suspicious article was pocketed by the officers. An invitation card to a previous camp concert caused a stir among the honourable gentlemen. They read, "A first class entertainment will be held on the lower 'drome (meaning our ground floor) out of range of air attacks — June 1942." We were questioned. They discussed. Then, still puzzled, they took it away. They also took away a few letters and drawings, one of the latter featuring the small Sugai, our Jap interpreter, standing before the tall nurses and telling them that they might write home on "family problems." Then we were let go. Naturally we were a little limp by this time. A strict guard was maintained till sunset but none of us had to dig our own graves.

That evening, by order of Mother Superior, two precious diaries disappeared into the kitchen fire and thus, so thought the owners, much valuable data was lost to posterity.

July 5th caused a stir in the camp. Officers appeared in the afternoon, inspected the nurses' quarters, inquired after their health and departed, telling them they would return in a month.

Instead the very next morning a large lorry arrived on the scene. In it were a number of officers and naval guards who said they had come for the nurses. The latter were thunderstruck and so were we. "They are going to a paradise," we were told, "where there is no malaria." The girls began to pack but took their time. When all was ready they retired to the front room to do a bit of singing. The strains of "Auld Lang Syne" and "Home Sweet Home" floated around the house. They defied the Japs' efforts to hurry them up until they had finished their concert. Then we were allowed to bid them farewell. To the strains of their lusty "Should Auld Acquaintance be Forgot" the lorry moved off and disappeared in the dust of the road. They were next heard of in Yokohama.

Round about this time there was again much military activity. Officers came to inquire if there were roads over the Owen Stanley Range. We feigned complete ignorance of New Guinea and left them to work out their own plans. They did, and the result was a nearly successful effort to take Port Moresby.

Once again we saw their forces leave Rabaul. Once again we endured agonising suspense. But once again only the battered remnants of the force that had set out returned to our shores. The mangled and broken bodies of the survivors of the Buna Bay and Kokoda affairs were landed on the beach at Vunapope. If ever a batch of men looked the picture of misery and defeat they did. The Japs had met their second great repulse and it was evident that the Rising Sun had now passed its highest point in the heavens.

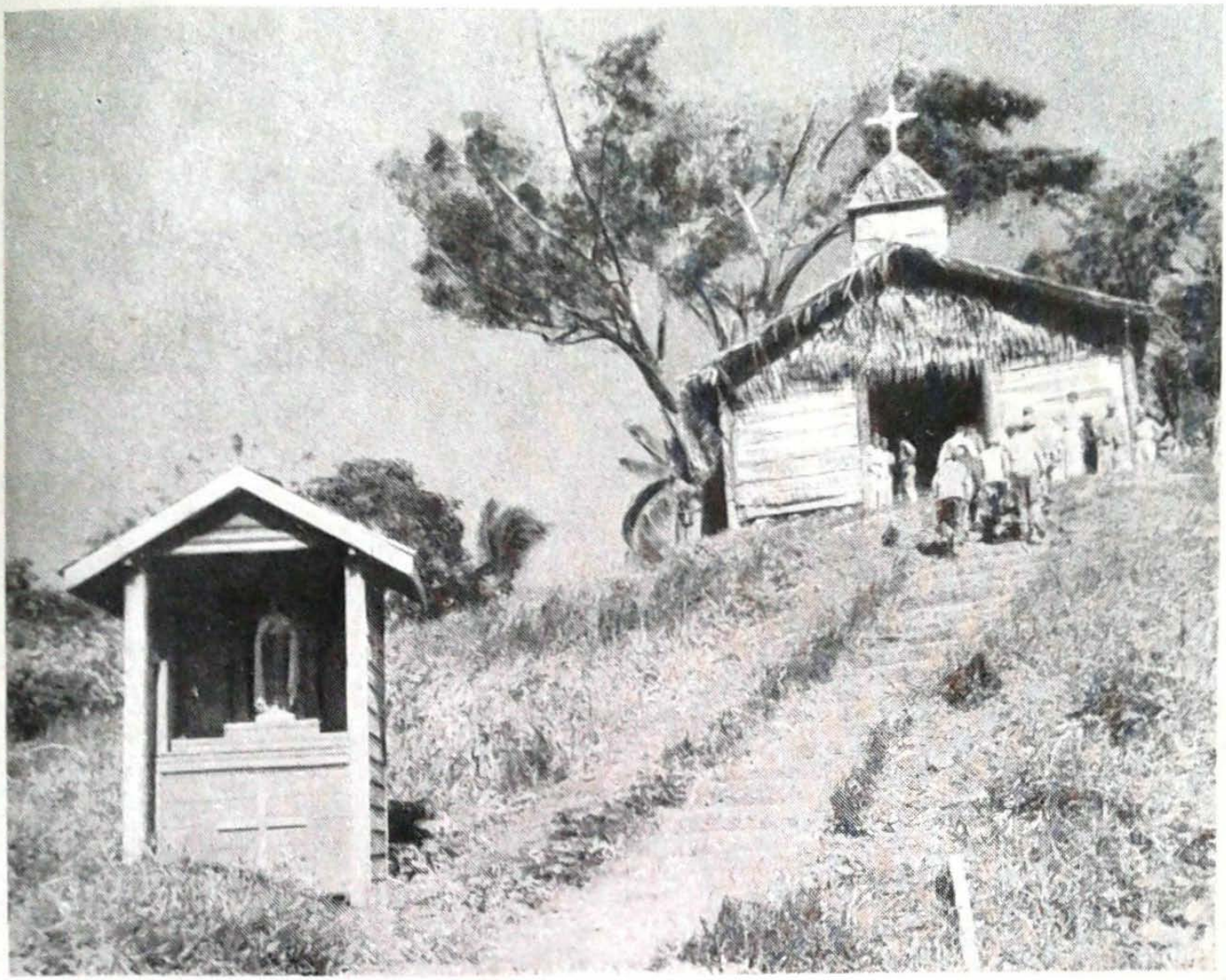
September, 1942, saw the Guadalcanal setback. On the first Friday of that month cruisers went speeding up and down the harbour as though Rabaul itself were threatened. We waited hopefully. On Sunday afternoon from the garden we noticed unusual signs of air activity. Fighters were getting up and bombers were leaving the 'drome. An air-raid was pending. Some of us took up our positions on the balcony to watch

proceedings. In those days we did not think much about trenches.

After about ten minutes we saw planes entering Rabaul in single file. Then the bombs began to fall. It was 6 p.m. and the flares gleamed in the evening dusk. Every second, grim red flashes burst along the shore, sending mountains of dust and smoke into the sky. Then came a horrified yell. Native boys, terrified and screaming, flew to us for refuge. The planes were heading straight for us and dropping bombs as they came. We had nothing to do but wait for the worst as on they came blasting and bursting everything in their way. The noise of the approaching engines grew to a roar and then died away again as they passed over and did us no harm.

Now we were to see some excitement. Two allied fighting planes had been attacked by two Japs and a fierce dog-fight took place over our heads. Ignorant of the danger we gazed spell-bound at the awful sight. In the gathering darkness the bullets gleamed red and fierce. The planes dived, soared, swooped on one another like vicious birds of prey. Every moment we expected to see one or other of our fighters come crashing down, but no. They both held the sky magnificently till Jap activities became diverted to a less able foe. An unfortunate bomber had been hit over Rabaul and was limping home, losing height rapidly. At once the Japs left the allied planes and turned their attention to the helpless bomber. The fury of their machine-guns soon burst its silvery body into a thousand fiery pieces. The crew could be distinctly seen parachuting out. Nevertheless, devoid of all humane sentiments the callous Jap pilots dived on the poor men as they descended, machine-gunning them furiously. We were speechless with pity, but more so with indignation. Needless to say there were no survivors. The bodies of seven of these men were buried by a missionary.

In October we received a startling piece of news. All the missionaries were lined up before a host of officers of various



(*Courtesy Catholic Weekly*)

U.S. Soldiers fighting in New Britain attend Mass in their quaint bush Church. The Statue in the foreground is one which they found in the jungle.

(See New Britain section)

ranks. A proclamation was solemnly read out to the effect that we were to be moved out of our houses and put inside a barbed-wire fence. The said fence was to enclose the smaller buildings at the back of the mission which were to become our dwelling places. The proclamation finished, we were ordered off to our rooms to await the arrival of officers who would once again search our personal effects.

The house was turned upside down. One officious gentleman, young and conceited, was busily searching a Sister's room when he discovered a rash appearing on his arm. "Poison! Poison!" he shrieked as he ran from one to another seeking advice on the matter. Sister's explanation that it was only prickly heat had no effect and he was not happy until the Jap doctor gave him an injection.

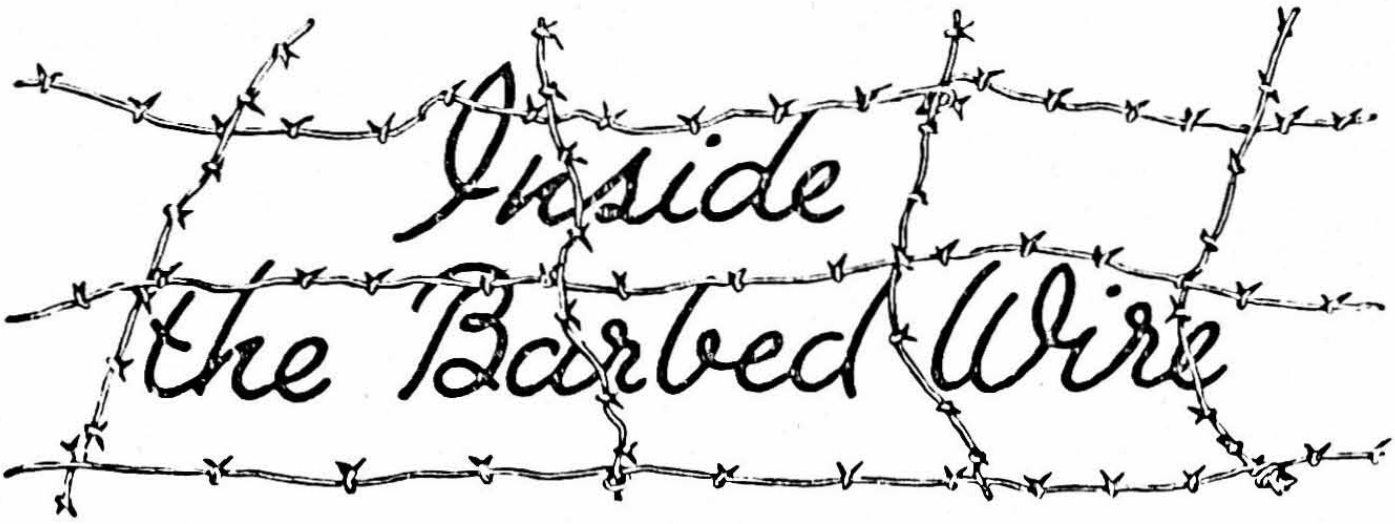
While this amusing incident was happening on one side of the house a number of Sisters endured a few moments' suspense in the chapel. A surly officer strode up to the Altar and proceeded to open the Tabernacle. The Sister sacristan ran for the Chaplain. Another Sister begged the officer to wait till the Father came. "We are not allowed to open that. Only a priest may do so." Said the surly one, "*You* are not opening it, *I* am opening it," and he proceeded to have his way. Pagan fingers grasped the Ciborium and placed it on the Altar. It was a tense moment. A line of Sisters was now kneeling, praying desperately at the altar steps. Did he dare to touch the Blessed Sacrament we were ready to defend It with our lives. He tried to remove the lid. Normally it was the easiest thing in the world to remove that lid, but now it refused to move. He twisted the cross on top of it around but nothing happened. Then probably under the impression that it was not meant to open he replaced it in the Tabernacle.

The search proceeded without further mishaps and we were ordered to be out of the house by 12 p.m. But the Japanese officials had never before had to cope with a removal of missionary Sisters. Out of the house came presses, out of

the parlours came chairs, and out of old cupboards came things too numerous to be mentioned. Looking in desperation at the keen-eyed and nimble-footed removalists, the Japs decided to allow three days' grace.

On the Feast of the Little Flower, Mass was celebrated for the last time in the little chapel. For the last time the native girls sang. After Holy Communion they began their hymn but could not go on. The singing ended in heart-breaking sobs. After Mass we said good-bye to our poor darkies and sent them off back to their own villages.

Thirty-two of us now had to live in a little three-roomed cottage. We were informed that we had been put out of our houses for safety's sake. The truth was that the Japs wanted our big buildings.



Once we were installed in our new quarters a substantial barbed-wire fence was put up all round our compound. An imposing gateway was erected near the quarters of the Military Police — the only means of entrance or exit. Signs of hospital activity were evident in the houses we had vacated. Japanese wounded and sick were being admitted in large numbers.

Air-raids were getting more and more frequent, and bombs were coming nearer and nearer so the Bishop advised us to build trenches. Small ones were constructed near our buildings and big tunnels were dug in the hills nearby. They were started not a day too early for they were just nearing completion when we had the greatest need of them.

Sorrowful times were coming too. On November 13th Father Barrow, Parish Priest of Rabaul, was stricken down with dysentery. All our pleas to the Japs for serum fell upon deaf ears and he died. A Sister returning from Father's funeral was attacked with typhoid. Other cases followed till there was a real epidemic. Father Kleintitchen, old and feeble, passed out of this war-weary world on the feast of Saint Francis Xavier and as we returned from our little cemetery everyone wondered

who would be the next. But the typhoid epidemic, though severe enough, did not claim any more victims. The poor patients, however, had a nerve-racking time being carried in and out to the trenches. Air-raids were now becoming very frequent and kept us on the run. Many a night was spent in the gloomy depths of the earth. It was certainly no tonic to the sick in their already weakened condition to have to be carried out there on stretchers, with spotlights illuminating the sky and anti-aircraft shells bursting in fury overhead.

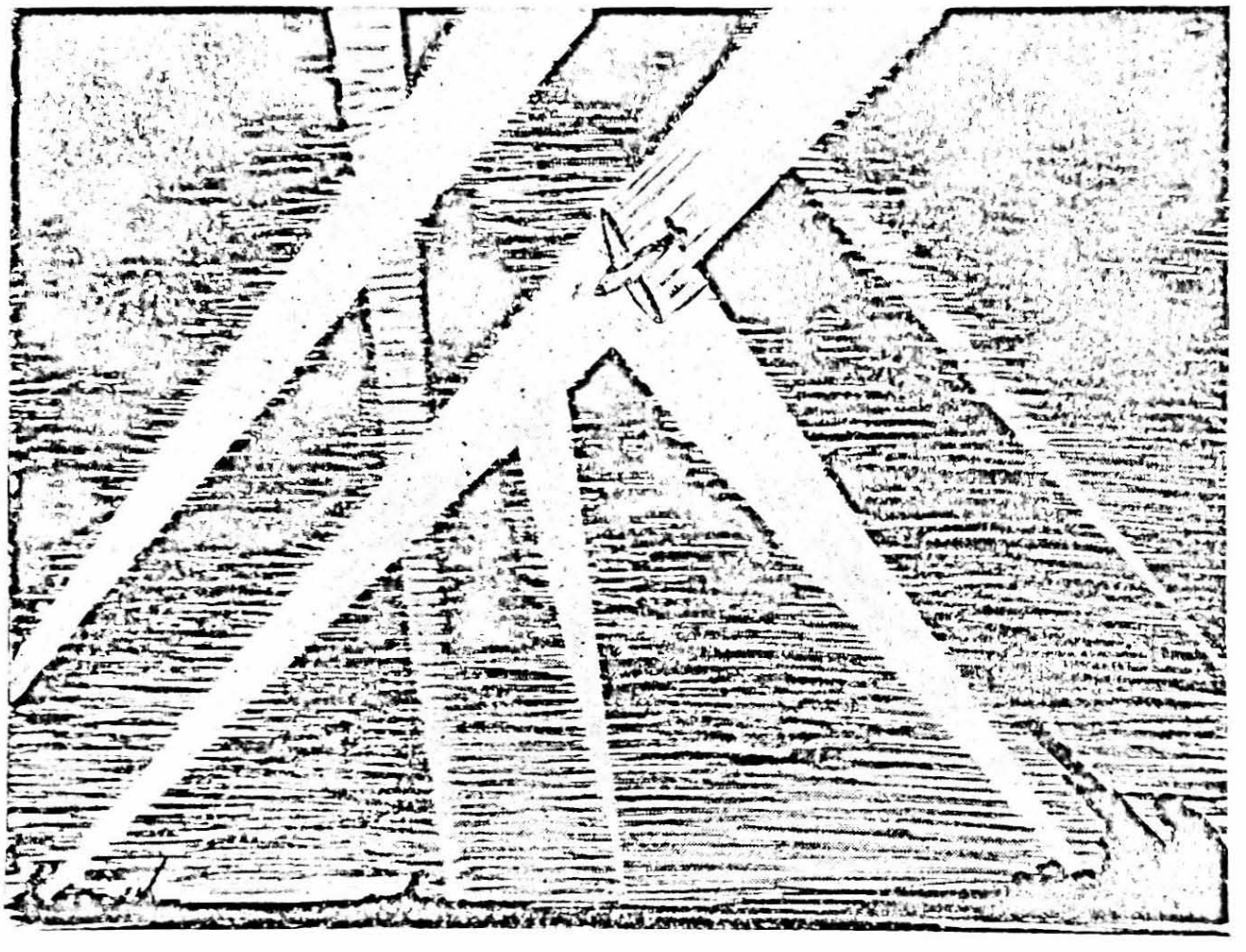
With the advent of the New Year 1943, more and more allied planes began to liven up our tropical skies. Early in January we were awakened one night by a furious machine-gun attack. Nimble legs flew to the trenches but the not-so-nimble took cover under tables, chairs and anything else that had a semblance of security. When the attack subsided somewhat, the not-so-nimble also made off for the trenches. As they went, the dreaded sound of the plane could be heard as it came in again from the sea. It was coming back — getting nearer and nearer. The poor late-comers made one desperate dive for the trench and just got themselves under cover as the night raider let go the contents of his gun. Around and around he tore, furiously spitting out his fiery missiles.

But this was only a beginning. Night raids became more frequent and more intense, and the hours were divided between our beds and the trenches. After three or four nights without any sleep at all a state was reached in which one could usually sleep soundly even during a raid.

Most of our sleeping accommodation was out under the stars in close proximity to air-raid shelters. Coconut logs, which had been cut and piled up to line the tunnels, provided ideal places for sleeping. A few banana leaves spread out on the ground were likewise quite comfortable. When bombs and bullets are flying around, prospective snakes and spiders don't worry you at all. Besides, open-air sleeping quarters had their

advantages. Without moving from our improvised beds we could watch the fire works. There was many a thrilling sight.

A little silver plane would be caught in the cross beams of about fifteen spotlights. Then fury would be let loose. Anti-aircraft shells would go darting up from every angle. As they burst they would hurl their fiery fragments in all directions and the little victim would seem to have absolutely no chance.



Swooping down one of the silver beams, the little 'plane would smash the Jap anti-aircraft at the bottom.

Then, casting off his air of helplessness he would begin — and what a beginning! Swooping down one of the silver beams he would release the deadly contents of his guns on what was at the end of it. Up he would soar and then down again, the rattle of his machine-guns mingling with the bursting noise

of the anti-aircraft shells. One by one the anti-aircraft guns would cease to fire. One by one the spotlights would be dimmed and extinguished. Then the audacious little plane would sail triumphantly round and round to drop a few more of his fiery visiting cards. At last he would depart, leaving in his wake a red trail as he disappeared into the blackness of the night.

Such scenes were frequent, often occurring four or five times in the one night, and always with the same result — Jap guns silenced, spotlights out, and a triumphant departure. Only during one night attack did we sorrowfully watch an allied plane burst into a flaming mass and crash down into the jungles of New Britain.

The 26th January brought further developments. In the middle of the morning the sound of planes was heard. After a few seconds sixteen of them were observed heading in our direction. Up to this time we had never seen more than three or four of our aircraft over at once. So it was decided that they were the remnants of the group of seventy Jap bombers which had left that morning for a raid on allied territory. We were used to seeing them coming back in minus quantities. But one little fact caused a certain uneasiness. The planes were in formation. Returning Jap planes always came in pell-mell.

Some people wisely got off to the trenches. Others, not so wisely, stayed where they were. A moment later they were sorry for their indiscretion. There was a roar as bombs went speeding to their targets. The onlookers went flat on the ground and a Jap merchant ship turned turtle in the harbour.

Towards the end of February more prisoners were brought into our little camp. They were Marist missionaries from the Solomon Islands. For eight months they had suffered severe hardships in the Rabaul camp with the added horror of frequent air-raids and small shelters inadequate to meet the dangers of these attacks. It was a joy and a relief for both them and

us when we heard they were on their way to join us at Vunapope. Our poor camp, humble as it was, seemed to them a haven of rest and security after their terrible ordeals.

The next few months saw a still further increase in our number when we received more Fathers from the south coast and an Anglican Minister from New Guinea, Mr. Benson. They managed to bring us quite a lot of news from the outside world. By all events things were moving rapidly and we looked forward to a speedy end to the terrible conflict. But two more weary years were to pass before its conclusion.

During this time we celebrated the Silver Jubilee of two among our number. This event was kept up with all the pomp which existing conditions would allow. The day began with High Mass celebrated by His Lordship the Bishop. A grand concert, which was attended by the whole camp, provided some lively entertainment. The main feature of this concert was a percussion band. Pots, pans, bomb fragments, empty shells, garden forks and spades — all combined to produce a surprisingly melodious result. The main item of the evening was a selection from Gilbert and Sullivan's "The Mikado." One of the musicians, to the Bishop's consternation, dressed up as the Mikado. Wary eyes kept watch for Japs. The concert went off well and no evil befell us for our irreverence to the divinity of Nippon.

Following this break in our now somewhat monotonous life came a lull of three months in the air-raids. This lull seemed to be specially devised to throw the Japs off their guard. It succeeded. They cast aside all precautions. The result was that the smashing blow made by allied planes on October 13th, 1943, caught them absolutely unawares.

It was 9.30 in the morning and a Sister who had fallen victim to typhoid was receiving the last Sacraments. At once a terrible rumble was heard. We rushed outside and a scene of terror met our eyes. Hundreds of planes were swooping

and diving over the Rupope 'drome. Dense black clouds were soaring skywards and Jap planes could be seen, as they attempted to leave the 'drome, crashing to earth again.

We had been so rooted to the spot at this spectacular sight that no one went to the trenches. After the mighty Fortresses departed a couple of daring fighters stayed behind to seek more game. A returning Jap plane provided a suitable target. A gun spattered forth and the Jap, caught unawares, had no time to retaliate. After making a feeble attempt to get away it rocked sickeningly and then went somersaulting down into our banana plantation. The plane had not been hit but the unfortunate pilot had a bullet through his neck. Immediately the Japs covered the red ball and announced that it was an American plane.

This was the beginning of large-scale attacks in which anything from seventy to two hundred planes took part. We were warned to go to the trenches as soon as the siren sounded. Taking up our positions there we would watch the bombers as they sailed proudly up the channel. They made a magnificent sight. Flying in perfect formation they would enter the furious anti-aircraft fire of the Japs. We would breathlessly follow them with our prayers until they departed again — invariably still in formation. We would count them coming in and count them going home and it was always a sad day when one was missing or lagging behind.

One air battle will live forever in our memories. Mass was just over when a deafening racket began in the direction of Rabaul. A lightning-like exit was made from the chapel. As we raced towards the tunnel planes dashed madly in our direction, machine-gunning as they came. We were petrified. There was no hope of escape. Then, as by a miracle, when they were almost directly overhead, they turned off out to sea. If they had not, none of us would have lived to tell this tale.

That same afternoon we saw Jap and American fighters at grips in a furious battle. In close proximity to the trench

(Courtesy Catholic Weekly)

Following the bitter fight for Talasea, New Britain, a Marine flings his rifle over his shoulder and kneels to pray at a native village Shrine.

(See New Britain section)

we watched this appalling sight. Within five minutes seven planes had crashed into the rippling waters of Blanche Bay and within the next few minutes many more followed in their wake. We could not distinguish whose they were.

Then the Japs began to send up murderous phosphorescent anti-air shells regardless of the danger to their own planes. It was an awe-inspiring sight as the burning rays spread out deadly fingers in the path of oncoming aircraft. When a plane came within a certain radius of the gleaming phosphorus it simply hurtled to its doom. The battle continued for some time and in the end it was obvious that the Japs had left the field to our men, for the latter continued a fiery parade around the shore till their machine-gun supplies must have been exhausted. During the latter part of this battle we buried ourselves in the confines of our tunnels for the planes had come too dangerously near.

For nigh on twelve months now Vunapope had been a regular Japanese Red Cross Station. Japanese military nurses, almost the only bright and healthy spot in the Japanese Army, were in attendance on the sick and wounded. They were a fine, well-bred and refined band of girls — a striking contrast to many of those whom they had to attend. It was due to their efforts that hygienic conditions improved considerably. Their methods were crude but they were clean.

Among them were a few Catholic girls who edified us very much by standing at our barbed-wire fence and assisting at Holy Mass — and this in spite of a prohibition to profess their Faith in the army.

However, after the smashing blow dealt by allied planes on October 13th, 1943, the nurses were removed and the Red Cross Station at Vunapope began a campaign of double-dealing. War materials and able-bodied troops sheltered with the sick under the sign of the Red Cross.

As we watched the soldiers, the military trucks, and the benzine drums moving into the shadow of the Red Cross we

trembled for our safety. The day was approaching when we, too, would be crushed under the weight of allied air-power. The daily air-raid alarm brought real fear now as it screeched out its ominous warning. We were waiting, waiting for some awful climax. In the beginning of February, 1944, a rumour made its way into the camp that a leaflet had been dropped warning us of a pending raid. But the Japs told us nothing. A few days later it was reported that an allied air-force prisoner was overheard to say, "God help the missionaries."

These reports confirmed our worst fears and we were all prepared for an imminent attack.

On the 11th February it came.

Exit Vunapope

On 11th February began the consistent large-scale bombing which could only end as it had been designed to end. It meant total obliteration. Our splendid mission station was to be razed to the ground. The Japanese had appropriated it for a Red Cross Station, but now within the very shadow of the sign of mercy they were hiding troops and munitions. Therefore, Vunapope was doomed.

The minute we heard the siren at 9.30 a.m. some of us hastily betook ourselves to shelter. We stood around outside talking and knitting, without any particular anxiety, for about half an hour. Then came the ominous sound of approaching planes — bombers and fighters. Four fighters headed straight in our direction. There was a helter-skelter and just as the last of us got under cover, hell broke loose over our heads. Up and down, round and round, zig-zagging and diving went the planes, bombing and machine-gunning without cessation. The vibration conveyed every movement to us. Inside the trench was darkness and confusion. The blast of the bombs had extinguished the lamps and driven us into the innermost recesses of the tunnel.

When things were quiet we came out into the open. Through the dusty haze a desolate scene confronted us —

battered houses, charred and smoking ruins. We had suffered a number of casualties, too, and some were receiving the last Sacraments. As we made our way sadly back to the little convent, we heard that Brother Redmond S.M. was missing. Meeting Father Reischel we enquired after him. Father said simply, "He is found. He is all right." Brother Redmond *was* all right. He was at peace. A bomb had sent him into eternity.

As we neared our house which was quite close to the Jap quarters we came upon a ghastly sight. There were pieces of human bodies everywhere. Many Japs would never hear the sound of a bomb again. Nearly three hundred of them had fallen victim to shrapnel or bullets or were buried in shelters which had become their graves. One of their trenches had received a direct hit and its ninety occupants had been buried alive. Our Superior and a few Sisters who had not had time to get to the big tunnel were in a small burrow quite close to the Japs' trench. They lived through a terrific nightmare as the bombs fell all around them but, as though by a miracle, left them untouched. Another house where sick Japs had been sheltering had likewise received a direct hit and the remains of the inmates were blown all over the countryside. The Japanese were amazed beyond measure when they heard that only one missionary was killed. Nevertheless on checking up, quite a number were found to be wounded.

Our home was still standing but the chapel wall was completely blown away. The Altar and seats were riddled with bullets, but to our joy the Tabernacle was untouched. The statue of Our Lady had fallen over it and protected it from all damage. The infirmary presented a woeful sight. The canvas was ripped to pieces, the floor littered with medicines, glass, broken syringes, needles and instruments of all kinds. Hardly a square inch of wall in the whole house was without a rip from bullets or shrapnel.

As we turned to go a gruesome sight met our eyes. The body of a Japanese soldier, rather a well-built man, was lying

half way through a fence. The legs had been blown away but the rest of the body was intact. He had a look of utter peace upon his face as though he were glad to be out of this war-racked world. We helped the Red Cross men to get him through the fence and turned away, thinking sorrowfully the while of our own poor lads who had met or would meet a like fate.

While some Sisters bandaged up cuts and abrasions, others turned to the almost impossible task of clearing up the debris. The more heroic among us gave themselves to the horrible task of gathering up the mangled remains of the Japanese soldiers. Bucket after bucket was filled up and handed over to the Japs for burial.

During the afternoon the Military Police paid us a visit of condolence, but they soon saw that they were the only ones who needed sympathy. The grand motto that the Bishop gave us, "Keep smiling," was not forgotten even on this terrifying day. Why should it? The very evident and almost miraculous protection with which Almighty God had overshadowed us filled us with untold joy and a feeling of security even in the face of what we knew was yet to come.

The Bishop came to see how we were and related what had happened in the Fathers' trench, which was in another hill. They had received the full vent of the storm. Brother Redmond S.M. was killed outright and many were wounded. The occupants of the tunnel had been horrified on hearing a few small bombs fall above their heads. Fortunately, however, the trench was strong enough to withstand them, but the air shaft in the middle collapsed, thus cutting off the main part of it from the outside. Refugees who came late could not get in.

The old and sick Fathers and Brothers were in the house all through the bombing as they had not time to get away. A torpedo bomb landed close by making a crater of about twenty feet deep. In addition to the Brother who was killed, other

Fathers and Brothers to the number of about twenty died through wounds and shock as a result of this raid.

During the afternoon we made an approximate estimation of total damage and losses. On the mission one was killed, three fatally wounded and fourteen had received injuries. Of the mission buildings the laundry, kitchen and girls' house, together with the hospital and pharmacy were completely demolished. The convent of the Native Sisters, which had been converted into a hospital for sick and wounded Jap pilots, was struck by a torpedo bomb and that was the end of the poor pilots. Our big convent withstood the bombing but was terribly battered. The Fathers' house, together with the Bishop's house was still intact.

The sun went down that evening on a desolate scene in Vunapope.

Orders were given by the Military Police that we were to keep near the air-raid shelters at night, so each took a blanket and pillow and went off to the tunnel. Inside it everyone took turns during the night at lying down. Those who could not do so sat up on either side. It was a pathetic sight in the middle of the night to see some who could not remain awake any longer lying asleep on the shoulder or lap of another. It seemed that daylight would never come.

Next morning Mass and Holy Communion gave us new courage. A general kitchen was set up. Washing was done in the open air. This was the most tricky business of all. Water had to be dragged from a pump which was on the other side of a bomb crater. To get to this pump we had to pass a trench in which soldiers had been buried alive and every day the stench was growing worse. The terrible heat of the days that followed did not improve matters.

In addition to this we had to extinguish all fires at the sound of a plane. The poor Sister in charge of the washing!

The antiquated copper took hours to come to the boil and when it was just on the verge of doing so someone would invariably call out, "Planes." Out would go the fire. Then when the scare was over the process with the copper had to begin all over again.

During that week the programme never varied from day to day. It was — Mass and Holy Communion at 5 a.m., breakfast, start the washing (washing had to be done every day on account of the wounded), siren, to the trench. As time went on, raids became fiercer. All were ordered to take up residence near the tunnels as it was too dangerous to sleep at the house.

During the next few days we were harassed by rainy weather and the lack of adequate shelter. At meal times the food was simply placed on a table. Then we each helped ourselves and went off to find some kind of a dry corner in which to dine. A couple of small shacks served as shelters for the wounded victims of the first bombing. When the alarm was given they were carried on stretchers into the tunnel.

On Sunday night Vunapope received a severe shelling from the sea. The noise was ear-splitting and you can imagine the state of our nerves at the end of that fearful hour. When it was over we came out into the night to get a little fresh air. The Fathers' house, a three-storey building, was ablaze. The sight was magnificent but terrible. Every few minutes there would be a deafening explosion which sent glowing sparks hundreds of feet into the sky. We could not convince ourselves that the explosions coming from that improvised Red Cross depot were caused merely by the medicines kept therein!

The next morning the bombers came over once more and hurled destruction again and again on our weary heads. Apart from more mission buildings, fowls, pigs and goats were the main victims of that morning's work. Therefore, when the all-clear sounded all the able-bodied were recruited to pluck fowls, skin goats and carve up pigs. Such an array of fresh meat we

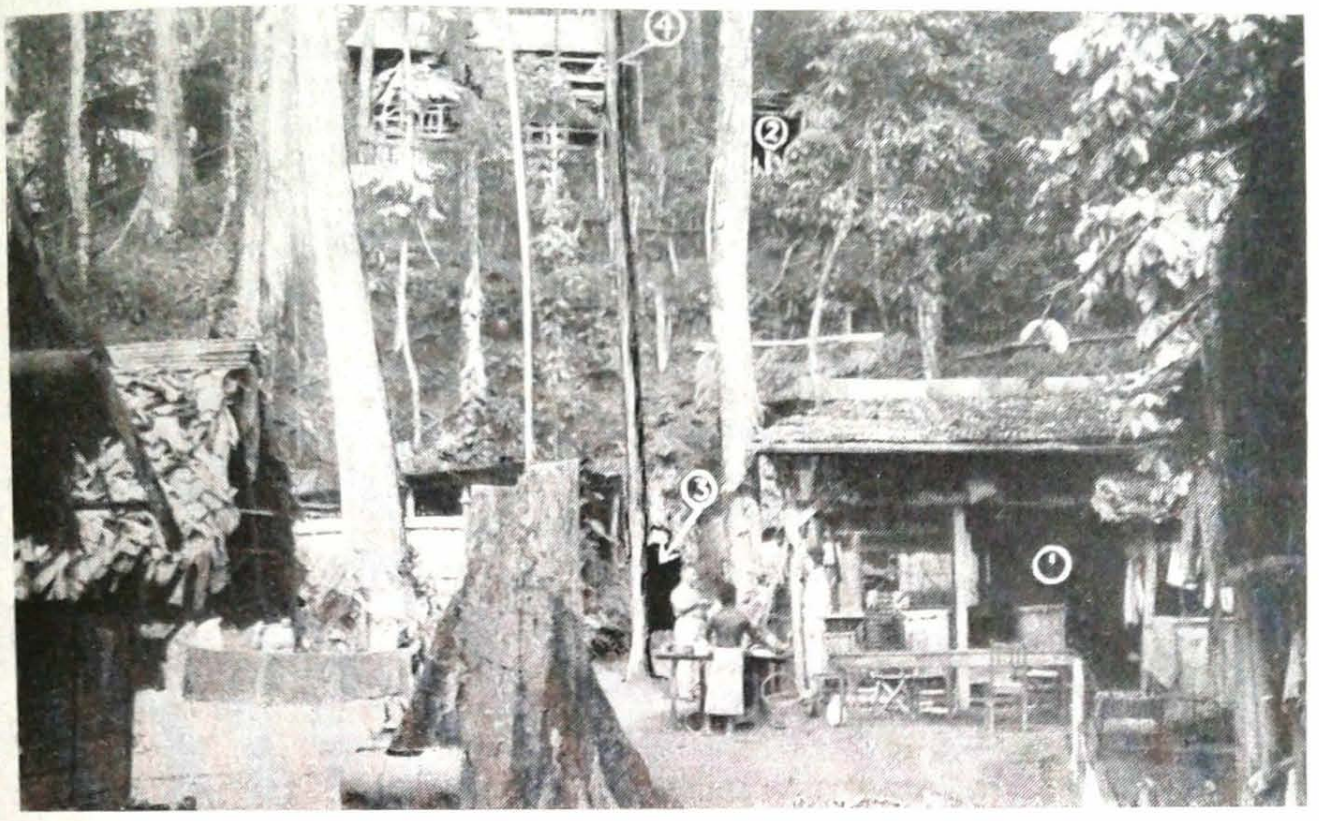
had never before had at the mission. Rain poured down, but no one budged. Wet to the skin we continued preparing for the morrow's feast. Towards evening all the unfortunate animals were in the pot. How we looked forward to the next day's dinner, considering the fact that the present day's midday meal had consisted only of coconut and banana. To our bitter chagrin that meal was not destined for us. The next morning the unkind Americans brought over another load of bombs and landed one right in the middle of our banquet-to-be! Imagine our sentiments as we emerged from our burrows at 1 p.m. There were "the flesh pots" of Vunapope, capsized in the mud with the contents blasted hither and thither to such an extent that it was impossible to recognise a piece of meat. Once again we sat down to our coconut and banana!

Fresh bombings, however, brought more farmyard victims and the plucking and cleaning began again — but this time only half-heartedly. Intuition told us that we were not destined to have any feast. It was true. The next morning the concert began again even more fiercely than on the previous day. Coconut and banana were once more on the menu.

Sunday, February 27th, capped all the bombardments. After three days of it our nerves were beginning to get on edge. The mere sound of a plane caused a universal shudder. It was after Mass and Holy Communion that we received the dreaded signal that a fleet of bombers was on its way. Pulses quickened as Father Hoehner came in. "A big line is heading direct for here. I shall give the last Absolution and then we'll begin prayers." All knelt to receive it and another priest absolved Father Hoehner. Then calmly he began the Sub Tuum and other prayers in which we all joined.

Hardly had we started when the inferno began. It was the most terrible that we had ever experienced. Dust was blown right up the tunnel from the outside. All lights were extinguished. The tunnel shook as though convulsed by a

SECTION OF RAMALE CAMP



(1) *The Fathers' "house".*
(2) *The Japanese air-raid shelter in front of which the Missionaries saw natives flogged and tortured.*
(3) *Entrance to Missionaries' tunnel.*
(4) *Where the Japanese police lived.*

His Lordship Bishop Scharmach (fifth from left) with the surviving Priests and Brothers of the Mission.

(See page 58)

violent earthquake. Earth fell from the roof and from the sides. We all crouched together trembling with fear, but murmering quietly, "Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in Thee"; "In Te Domine speravi."

Only a few minutes and all was over, but it seemed like a century.

We had just time to relight the lanterns when Father announced that the planes were coming back. They gave us another terrifying going-over during which a side entrance was hit with a torpedo bomb and smashed in beyond repair. This added to our discomfit, as the air supply from here was now cut off. The perspiration poured from us to such an extent that our clothes could be wrung out.

After this attack we had about ten minutes' quiet and began to think that the ordeal was over for the day. But no! The dread announcement that still another group was coming made the bravest heart sink. One and all thought that the bombers were determined to pound at the tunnel till they got it through. In fear and trembling, we began the prayers again. By this time most of us had got beyond caring. We felt that our last day in this world had come. As still another group was announced, we made our act of resignation to death.

But Divine Providence willed otherwise. When at last we were able to emerge once more into the light of day, our hearts welled up in gratitude to God Almighty for His absolutely miraculous protection of His missionaries. For there, only a few yards in front of the entrance were five enormous craters made by torpedo bombs. We shuddered to think what would have happened had the pilots released their bombs even one second later. The rest of Vunapore was a blasted desert.

This last raid ended for us the comparatively large-scale bombing since not a single building remained to be obliterated

except the church. This was almost in ruins. Eventually it, too, received a direct hit and Vunapore Cathedral, or what was left of it, crashed to the ground.

From this time on we lived a life divided between the open air and the underground. We had no houses — not even a bit of timber to put up a temporary shelter. Water was another problem. All the tanks and pumps had been put out of action. The water had to be carried from the beach by little half-caste boys.

Food supplies became dangerously short. But as the Japanese ran away during Allied attacks, we remedied this by making a raid on Nippon's substantial stores. We supplied ourselves with tins of cocoa, boxes of biscuits from Java, cases of Japanese tinned foods, boxes and boxes of caramels stolen from other occupied territories and a few tins of Australian Army biscuits. From this time on breakfast consisted of one packet of biscuits and as much cocoa as we could drink. As we still had access to our farm hardby, we could get sweet potatoes, tapioca, bananas and paw-paws. So, apart from our homeless conditions, we fared pretty well. Mass was celebrated every morning in the tunnel and Father carried Holy Communion around, as there was no room for communicants to approach.

During all this time the native boys had been working day and night on two air-shafts, to make the tunnel a little more bearable during the raids. We were counting the days and hours till the first shaft was through, as the heat and bad air in the tunnel were stifling. The longed-for moment came one midnight when the heat was at its worst. What a relief as the cool air poured into the trench. We could never express in words our gratitude to those faithful boys who carried out the difficult job of boring a hole through over forty metres of ground.

The Siren Sounds

Before proceeding with this narrative, we shall try to recapture the general reaction on the sounding of the siren.

Besides other camp duties, we Sisters had to wash and iron for more than a hundred Fathers, Brothers and Sisters. It was very heavy work. It was not a case of the weekly wash, but of the wash that began on Monday and ended on Saturday. So when the siren sounded there was really no time to waste in running to tunnels. Often when the warning was given the Sister in charge of the "laundry" would sally forth, observe the skies, and then come in again and assure all and sundry that it was a false alarm. If you were one of the "laundry" staff, you naturally suspected interested motives behind this glib reassurance. If you were young and placed a high value on your youthful life, you just dropped soap, clothes and dignity and fled to the sheltering shade of the tunnels. If you were a bit middle-aged and staid, you might possibly go on washing — just to get the job done — and trust to God's Fatherly protection to send the planes elsewhere. Sometimes, however, you were caught. The planes came over very low and began mischief at close quarters.

Then you dropped your courage, your soap and most of all, your dignity. and still in bag apron and wooden shoes, posi-

tively flew up past the Bishop's house and over the green, tunnelwards in a frantic effort to save your precious middle-aged life. Then uttering fervent ejaculations, whilst white face, gasping breath and fear-filled eyes betrayed your weakness, you would fall into some corner as the blasts continued.

But when big bombings began to be directed at Vunapope itself, even the head-laundress did not try to minimise the danger. The first sound of the siren found the whole wash-house staff speeding towards the tunnel. It was nothing unusual for someone to fall into a drain and break a rib or two on the way. Then if the machine-gunning found you still on the track or at the very congested entrance to the tunnel, you might find your five or six feet of length prostrate in the muddy entrance with three or four others on top of you, whilst thirty screaming half-caste boys ran dryshod over all. Naturally you would feel like screaming louder than anyone, since you were bearing most of the burden and the danger. But it would have been no use, for no one would be thinking of you as anything else but an obstruction blocking the entrance and keeping others out in the danger zone. Even so, you could flatter yourself in calmer moments that you were really an acquisition to the camp, since you helped to keep up morale by providing a good laugh for everyone when the scare was over.

Or you might not be a "laundry" assistant at all. You might just be one of those who were sitting around on tree-stumps, or whatever else there was in the line of seating accommodation, partaking of your frugal breakfast. Suddenly a plane would dart from nowhere and start its machine-gunning. But before you could reach the place of sanctuary, especially if you were wearing size eight Japanese wooden shoes, which someone at an opportune moment had appropriated from the Jap stores you might fall over. The owners of other wooden shoes, hobnails and every other variety of footware simply would not see you. As they scurried over the top of you, you might be

showered with the hot cocoa someone was trying to save. Your first impression would be that the contents of the machine-gun had all come to rest on your person. When all was over and you were able to take stock of your injuries, you would wonder whether in future it might not be better to let the machine-gun do its worst on you.

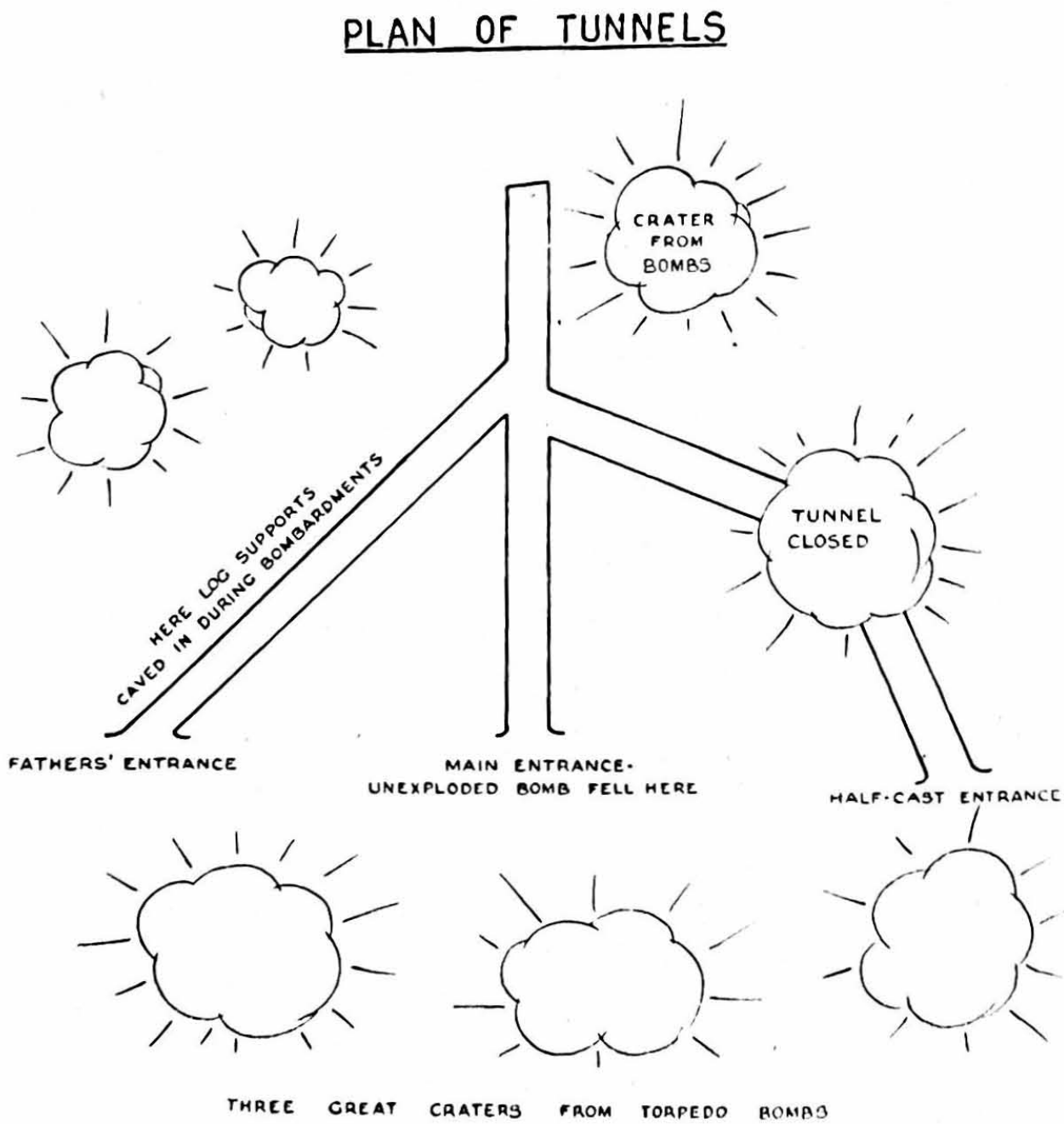
It seems very amusing to look back on it all now. But it wasn't then. It was tragic. Before the first big bombings we used often to go in a very leisurely fashion to the shelters. But some of those who acted thus casually lost their lives or were wounded when on that unforgettable February 11th we were taken by surprise. After that we lost no time in answering the danger signal.

We took no risks. Sometimes we were sitting waiting in the dark for hours, praying or talking quietly, before the actual raid came. The last Absolution was always given when it was announced. We had come to regard sirens and tunnels and the prospect of almost certain death as part of the daily round.

Let me introduce you to our tunnels. They were long underground passages, not quite six feet wide, and from the main entrance to the furtherest recess extended about 40 yards in under the hill. There was one central entrance for our use, another to the left for some of the Fathers and half-caste boys. The three branches met at about two-thirds of the way along. As a means of providing air an air-shaft was pierced through the roof and opened out on to the hill on top. Out here the native seminarists used to sit and look for the planes. Then they would come sliding down the shaft to warn us who were inside. There was a similar group of tunnels running into another hill for the Bishop, other Fathers and Brothers, the Sisters of the Sacred Heart and the half-caste girls.

We each had a blanket, a pillow and perhaps some clothes rolled into a swag. These bundles we lined along the wall for seats. There might have been sitting room for each had

we not been obliged to keep the wounded and very sick stretched out. Those who had malaria or minor ailments usually obliged by sitting up.



The heat was beyond words to describe. When the poor half-caste boys had their tunnel bombed in they had to come over to us and things were worse. We were so overcrowded that those who had room to sit were considered fortunate.

Quite a number had to stand. At night we had to find room for the smaller boys to sleep, so the braver among us went out under the stars, but had to be ever on the watch for planes. We lay on logs, in wheelborrows, or on anything of a like nature. When the rains came we raised little shacks over ourselves, but they had to be pulled down before morning so as not to attract attention from the skies.

We outside were quite comfortable as compared with those within the tunnel. They were bathed in perspiration and developed the dreadful Dhobi Itch. As the whole of our water supply had been bombed we had hardly any water, so that made matters worse.

But the real time of horror was when a raid was pending. Then one and all had to bury themselves in the tunnel. It was dark, except for a hurricane lamp here and there. It was damp — so damp that blankets and books went mouldy and fell to pieces. Near the entrance and some feet into the interior the rain dripped down and made the ground boggy. If you stood at the door to get a little air then others further in smothered.

But when the raid actually began . . . !

. . . . .

"Planes!"

The native seminarists come tumbling down the airshaft. You give a shudder and then pull yourself together. "Ego te absolvo a peccatis," begins the priest. Then prayers to our Lady — Salve Regina, Sub Tuum, Ave Maria, Holy Mary pray for us now and at the hour of our death. There is an interval of silence. You do not talk much when planes are near. The musty odour, the perspiration, the cockroaches do not worry you now. You are up against bigger things. Perhaps it is the agony —Gethsemane. How often you have prayed to share in it. Yes — but you did not think that it would be like this . . . That lining of coconut logs up there, will it really hold out again?

It did so the other day. But supposing another bomb were to fall in the same place? You try to think about the agonising Christ. What was that about Him? "He began to fear . . ." Yes, but — "I am not alone, for the Father is with me" . . . Our Father Who art in Heaven . . . if it be possible let this pass. Those blanched faces along the wall there — how drawn and haggard they look. But their eyes are brave and serene. Can they stand more of this and keep sane?

Everyone waits calmly. There is no hysteria, no murmuring. But you want to cry out. The waiting seems so long. The line of bombers must have made a detour. Come it will. There is a dead stillness. Far back in the dim rear an American Father begins whistling softly: "Just before the battle, Mother." Your heart is back home in Australia. You cry a little.

Here it comes!

Bombs crash into trees overhead. The lights go out. In the pitchy darkness earth falls all over you. The blast drives you all far back along the tunnel. You try to pray. Though I shouldst walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me. But you *are* afraid — you are so terribly alone. The others — you no longer see them. You are alone — with death. To be buried alive — and amid this infernal noise. What is that about "the crash of falling worlds?"

> I know that through the crash of falling worlds
> Thou holdest me.
>
> I know that life and death and all are Thine
> Eternally."

This must be death. If so, then gladly, almost exultantly, in union with the dying Christ in *His* redemptive sacrifice — "Hoc est enim corpus meum."

(*Courtesy Catholic Weekly*)

Perhaps the last Mass for some of these U.S. Marines. They are about to launch an attack on Japanese-held New Britain. The Celebrant is Rev. Father Gallagher, S.J., of Connecticut, U.S.A.

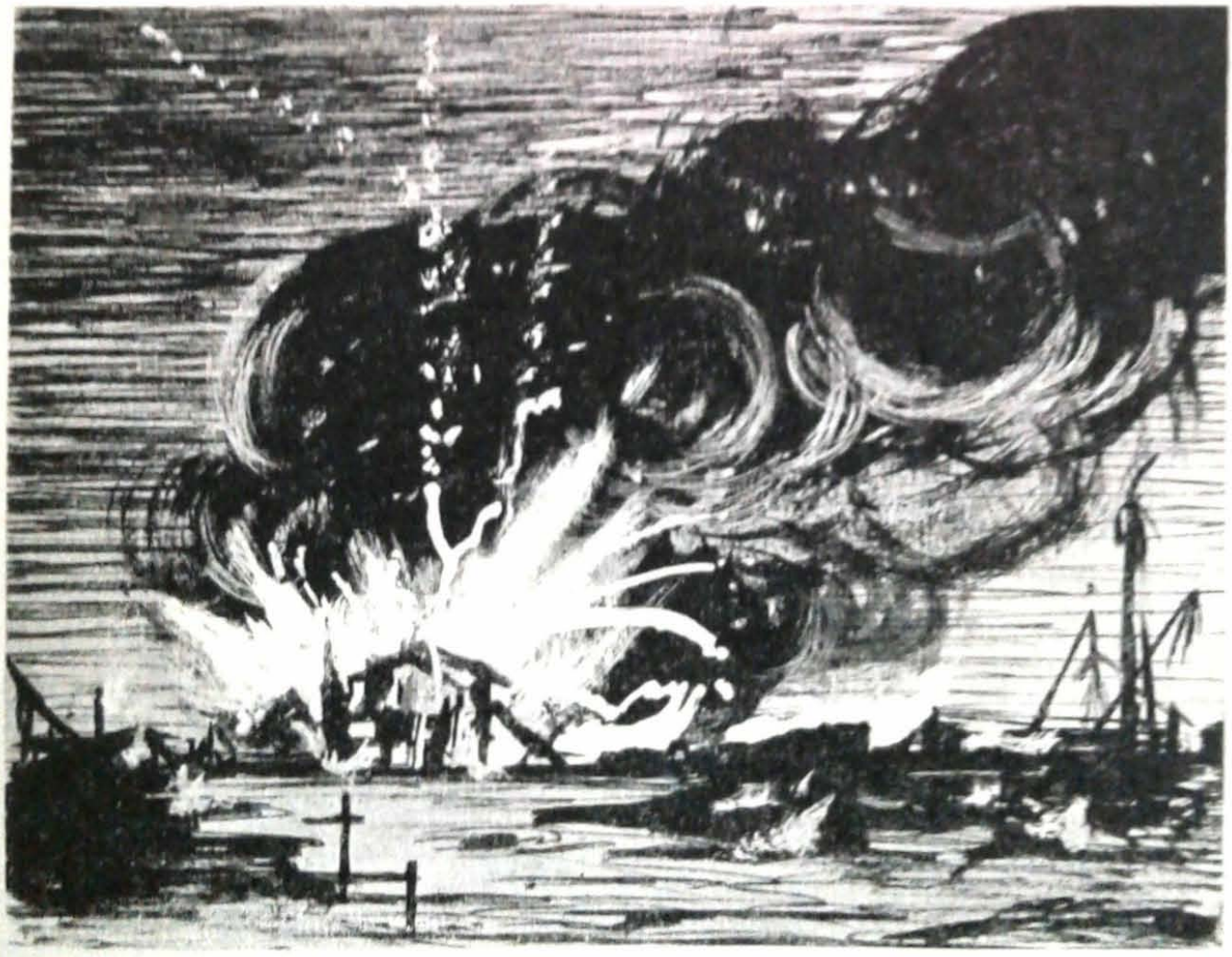
(See New Britain section)

You are not afraid now — only waiting.

Suddenly the trench becomes filled with blinding smoke. You are all nearly choking. Towels are used to fan off the fumes, but that does not help much. The men rush hither and thither with spades and water. It is no time to ask questions, so no one speaks. You hear a murmur down the tunnel. Perhaps the tunnel has collapsed and they are saying the prayers for the dying.

But no! The smoke is going away. The attack seems to be over. The explosions have stopped. There is talking going on around you.

At last you are allowed to go out. What a scene of confusion and desolation. The smoke has been coming from the coconut leaves used to camouflage the entrance. A couple of



The last few poor sticks of Vunapope are in flames.

incendiary bombs landed in the middle of them. There has been an unexploded bomb right in the tunnel entrance, but the Fathers have disposed of it. That explains the rush for spades and water.

As for the rest — the last few poor sticks of Vunapope are in flames.

A deep valley, or rather a gorge, with a swiftly-running creek away down in its depths, and mountains rising precipitately on either side. Up the mountain sides gigantic trees towering out of the tropical ferns and undergrowth. Tree tops densely interlaced with vines and lianas through which here and there a gleam of sunshine vaguely trickles. Its name is Ramale.

This green, precipitous gorge with its virgin forest is now, for the next fifteen months, to replace poor fire-blasted Vunapope as the headquarters of the Sacred Heart Mission. Poor mission! Not a trace of it left. Its missionaries all prisoners. But the spirit of Vunapope still lives. It has suffered a Way of the Cross — a Calvary. It has literally been buried in the depths of the earth. Its martyrdom is not over yet.

But the spirit of Vunapope cannot be put to death.

Vunapope shall rise again.

Now as to how we came to Ramale. When Vunapope became a wilderness without house or tree, the Japanese decided that we must move to safer quarters. But the solicitude for our safety which prompted this arrangement did not

impress us very much. The Japs had a more important worry. It was this.

Our present position afforded us a first-class view of activities in Rabaul and its environs. They knew that it was balm to our wounds to see Japanese vessels disappearing under the blue waters of Blanche Bay. Certainly it grieved our missionary hearts to see poor pagan souls being hurled into eternity. Nevertheless, we rejoiced at the diminution of Nippon's sea power. The marked decrease in the number of Jap fighters that went up to meet Allied planes was hailed by us with interior cheers. The Japs, becoming uncomfortably aware of our dispositions, decided to remove us to an area where we could no longer chart the slow but steady decline of Nippon's once mighty naval and aerial power.

We were all against the move. With the complete blotting out of Vunapope, the bombings had ceased. Though we had no homes left we still clung to the safe subterranean tunnels, built with so much labour. Perhaps we would begin in another place, only to go through the same experience again.

However, we were not the masters, so the Japs had the last say. The Fathers and Brothers had been busy relining our tunnels in places where the wood had rotted, and plans were afoot to pierce right through the hill in such a way as to provide an emergency exit. But the minute the move was decreed, the workmen declared a strike. They downed tools, refusing to dig another inch that might be of service to the enemy.

Our new camp was to be in Ramale in the jungle country a few hours' journey from Vunapope. Brothers and native boys were allowed to go out and make some kind of tunnels for us. They returned very dispirited. No one could live in the damp unhealthy place. It took four days to dry a shirt. The aged and sick could never get down the precipitous mountain sides. The light of day could barely penetrate the canopy of green which overhung the site for the camp. Flood waters

pouring down from above converted the place into an almost eternal swamp. Our fears were enhanced by the fact that our new camp was only a couple of miles from Tobera drome.

An advance party left Vunapope before the main body took its departure. These were the pioneers of Ramale who had the difficult task of making a clearing in the hitherto untouched jungle, and of building shelters under the hills.

June 6th, 1944, was scheduled as the day of departure for the main body of internees. It consisted of a group of nigh on three hundred people — Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, half-castes and native boys and girls, together with Native Sisters. At 4.30 a.m. we were called out of "bed". The tunnels were a scene of intense activity as the inmates proceeded to roll up blankets, pack bags and make various other preparations for departure. When the final arrangements had been made and packs were all stacked on the roadside the little Mass bell tinkled, and for the last time we filed into the tunnel for the Holy Sacrifice. How our thoughts drifted back to those dark ages when the early Christians, like ourselves, had been forced to seek safety in the confines of Mother Earth.

In the gloomy shadows of the dark tunnel the oil lamps cast a flickering light over the faces of missionary priests, Brothers and Sisters. There were bowed white heads of Fathers and Brothers who had laboured through the hard pioneering days. Was it for this that they had toiled? To see the fruits of their labours devastated by the destructive blast of war? To find themselves exiled on the face of the earth?

We had watched our homes, our church, our schools disappearing one by one. We had given back to the Lord of the harvest the souls of many loved and sorely-missed missioners. Now we were called upon to give up the very mission itself. Nevertheless, "Suscipe." Accept O Eternal Father the sacrifice of ourselves, of over sixty years of fruitful missionary endeavour. As the priest passed along the subterranean passage

carrying the Prince of Peace to each kneeling communicant, the hearts of His missionaries dilated with a holy joy — a heavenly peace. What had they done to earn this participation in His Supreme Sacrifice?

Day was just breaking across the sea as we issued from our tunnels. Then like the Israelites of old, with staff in hand, we partook of a meagre collation and gathered our bundles. Japanese armed guards called us to attention and ordered us to "make line." We did so and stood in processional form, two by two. Then began counting operations. Counting seemed to be a particularly complicated business to the Japanese. They always got into a frightful muddle, especially after five. They would count us on their fingers, and invariably after reaching the fifth would have to begin all over again. The women were sent to the fore and the men told to fall to the rear where armed guards could keep a prudent eye on them. Then, guided by the native Sisters, who knew the way, we set off for the unknown.

The procession moves off.

We take a last look at the charred and fallen ruins of our cherished mission station. To human ways of thinking it is beyond all hope of repair. But deep in the hearts of one and all burns faith in the Lord of the harvest — a faith that is living and glowing because it has risen above everything that, humanly speaking, should have wrought its destruction.

And because of that faith Vunapope shall rise again.

Darkness still hangs over the hills as we make our way along the rough and broken road that begins the way. The trek leads us past our desolated cemetery, through the fields adjoining the mission, every tree of which fields has been decapitated by Allied strafing. Dodging bomb craters and occasionally falling into them, we seem to be traversing a strange land rather than our familiar mission property. After half-an-hour's

plodding we come into our own tapioca fields, showing here and there bare blasted patches marking the spots where the Japs had put their anti-aircraft guns.

Suddenly the drone of a plane is heard. The machine flies low and turns on its side. What a scatter to the shelter of the tapioca leaves! However, presumably satisfied as to our non-Jap identity, it flies harmlessly on. In a few minutes an angry glow lights up the countryside as it drops a bomb along the shore. We pass the hut where our three farmer lay-Brothers, who have been allowed to remain at their work, rest when fatigued. We have not seen these Brothers for eighteen months. They seem like beings from another world. Our guards leave us no time for a prolonged greeting. Nevertheless, we manage to exchange a few cheery remarks before passing on to the unknown.

Again we hear an approaching drone. It is the plane, coming back. It is over us. A hoarse roar down the lines from the guards. "Stand still! Stand still!" We halt and tremblingly wait for our friend to pass over. He does so and we continue our march.

5.30 a.m. and the shadows are lifting.

The sun is beginning to cast a golden light on the green tapioca fields. The fields are vast and there is absolutely no shelter from aerial observation. How we pray that no planes will come over at this stage of the journey. Suddenly the dread sound is heard. All around us are anti-aircraft guns. Immediately they go into action against the oncoming plane. The racket from bursting shells on the one hand and exploding bombs on the other is deafening. Then the plane makes a nose-dive in our direction. Three hundred people disappear in a fraction of a second. When two of us who are in the lead turn round to see what the others are doing, there is not a soul within view. Thinking that doing anything is better than doing nothing, we dive under a frail cornstalk. Nothing hap-

pens. The plane passes over. The terrified three hundred come crawling out of holes and ruts. This episode makes us hasten our steps towards the jungle country, where we will have the shelter of enormous tropical trees to screen us from observation from the sky.

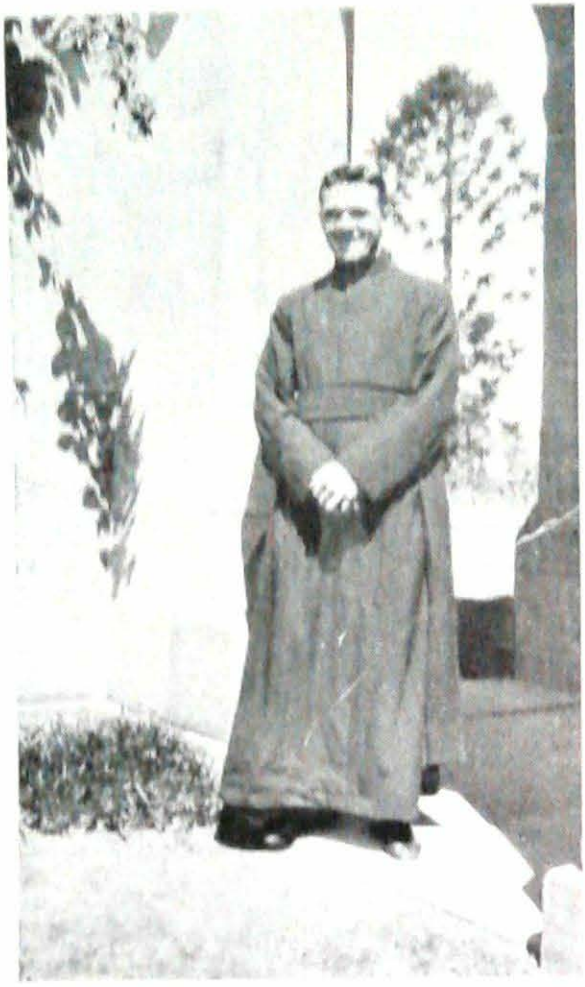
The track grows narrower.

On we go through deserted native villages. We meet only one native — a woman who had been one of our former orphans. Her face lights up with pleasure at seeing us once more. Then it becomes clouded with grief. She sees her Bishop, her priests and her Sisters being driven along by armed guards and she may not speak to them.

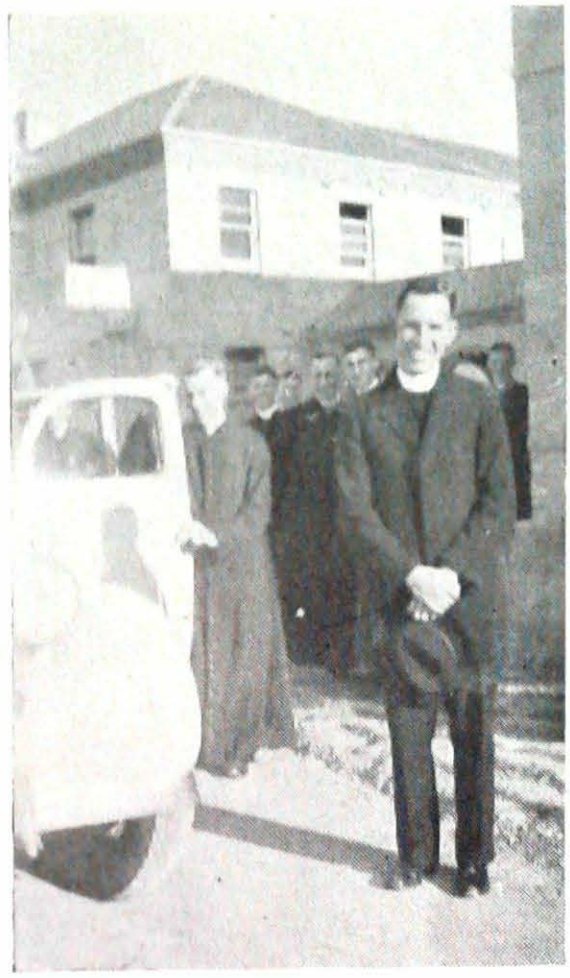
We are now in the bush country.

Tramping through puddles, pushing our way through brambles and overhanging boughs, tired and silent, thirsty and perspiring we reach the top of Ramale Gorge — our new prison camp. We gaze despondently down into the gloomy depths of that deep valley, and then three of us who have got a little in advance begin the descent down the almost perpendicular side of the mountain. Slipping, falling and struggling up again, supported by the ever-willing little native Sisters, we reach the bottom.

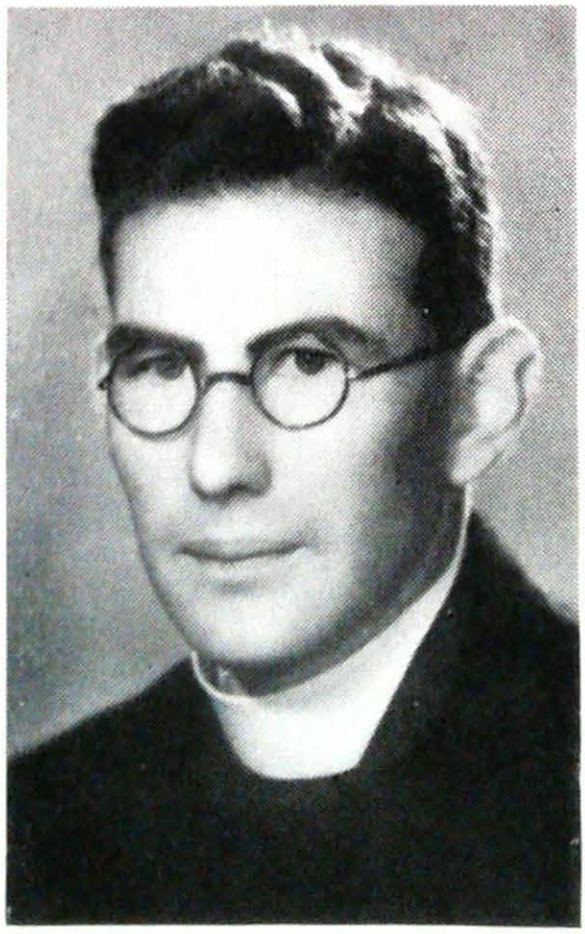
Then comes a stern order that we must reascend. It has been proclaimed that all prisoners must be counted above. No one can descend until we are on the spot. With visions of disgruntled guards, we manfully begin the ascent. Native Sisters push and pull. We puff and pant and strain every nerve in the effort to regain the heights. It is impossible. We just drop down exhausted. No amount of goodwill nor fear of Jap wrath can get us up that mountain side again. When we are near the top the guard decides to let us off. Then the formalities over, we all begin the descent into the valley, never to reascend until fifteen months later the war clouds will have lifted from the world.



BROTHER C. BRENNAN, M.S.C.



FATHER E. HARRIS, M.S.C., on the day of his first Mass, Croydon, Melbourne, July, 1939.



FATHER D. McCULLAGH, M.S.C.

(See page 76)

(Courtesy of Annals Office)

In the beginning there was nothing but virgin forest in Ramale Camp. There was no flat land, so a narrow strip at about five hundred feet from the top of the gorge was allotted us. Here the men had to cut away the hill, the soil from which we banked up to make platforms on which to build our shacks. There were wonderful giant trees all around us. Many of these giants had to be cut down before we could make our terrace. Just enough were left to screen us from possible planes. Tunnels were likewise constructed under the hills as a precaution against air-raids. It was not that we were afraid of becoming a positive bombing objective so much as that some of the bombs intended for the 'drome might miss their mark and land in our vicinity. It was almost impossible for us under our canopy of green to be seen from the air, yet a few miles is a very short distance to planes, and they always began their dive and often their machine-gunning above us. Hence we lived in mortal terror.

The Fathers and Brothers did the excavating and the Sisters carried away the earth for banking up the platforms. In these tunnels the majority of the camp internees slept at night. They were dark, damp and unhealthy, but we lived in terror of the bombs. As may be expected, coughs, colds, chest complaints and rheumatism soon became common in Ramale Camp.

Many contracted malaria after the journey from Vunapope. We had been closely confined for more than two and a half years and for the first few months all were sick. As time went on we became more acclimatised to the damp, often cold environment of our new home. Nevertheless, till the very last malaria was our close friend. Some had it every three weeks, others every ten days. Our legs were swollen and we suffered from a strange dizziness — all due, no doubt, to lack of nourishing food.

Ramale as a whole was rather attractive-looking, especially when peace came and we could ascend the mountainside and look down on our native huts dotted among the trees in this Valley of the Sacred Heart, as we came to call it. In front of the Bishop's bamboo "palace" and the Fathers' house was a cleared patch where we were assembled from time to time to listen to Japanese proclamations. Only when peace was announced was there no domineering proclamation. An unimportant matter like that had just to be mentioned quietly to the Bishop!

Further down and around the mountainside was our little grass chapel, source of all our comfort, for there the Eucharistic Christ dwelt day and night, though we missed the familiar glow of the Sanctuary lamp. Then came the "Convent" of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. It was merely a barn with no side walls. Walls would have obstructed the light. This one room served all purposes. Here we sewed, prepared vegetables and endured confinement. Here, too, we had Mass in the morning and said our community prayers. On one side of it was the main kitchen, supposed to be smokeless. It was hollowed out in the hillside and a succession of empty drums had been contrived to carry the smoke to an outlet at least five minutes' distance away. This was a precaution. It was not safe for smoke to be seen from the air. The Sister-Cook had to rise at 3 a.m. and shut the kitchen door so as not to allow the gleam of the fire to be seen. Her main trouble was that the smoke did stay in the kitchen and for three hours she was nearly blinded. So much for the "smokeless" kitchen.

Further along the terrace was the grass barn of the Sacred Heart Sisters and then the half-caste girls' huts. Along the other side of the hill ran another terrace of grass huts, for the Fathers, native seminarists and half-caste boys.

Frowning down from a tier above us were the houses of our Japanese police and guards. Above the Bishop's palace,

on either side of it, were two police stations and the descending track curved so as to pass between them. All who passed between these two barracks had to bow to the august occupants. Exactly above our Convent quarters were arranged the guards' houses, kitchen, pigsty, etc. We were the recipients of the debris, manure and odor therefrom. All the Jap houses were very sacred, most of them having wooden floors. Once when two Sisters were called up above to give an account of their "past lives" — a thing which often happened — they actually ventured to enter the sacred precincts with their shoes on. They were soon brought to order.

During the first three months of our Ramale internment, it rained unceasingly and the mud and slush from the Jap terrace inundated our grass "bungalows" with their earthen floors. A few of the braver spirits who could not endure the tunnels made grass sleeping huts. These were not very safe because when planes made a near nocturnal visit the occupants had to slither and slip and slide their way down the hillside in pitch darkness to safety. These sleeping places fared badly when the mud and water poured down from the Jap tier. You would awake in the night to find a perfect deluge coming down upon you. Then it was a case of taking up your already-drenched and only procurable pair of blankets and stumbling down into the already crowded tunnel.

Down below us was a beautiful ferny gully where the creek ran. The Brothers made a pumping apparatus, and by this means, with the aid of manpower and, in case of emergency, womanpower, water for daily use was pumped above. We prisoners were never allowed down as far as the gully. This lovely spot was reserved solely for the guards to bathe in. But in the particular portion in which we resided, where virgin forest had hastily been converted into internment camp, there was little of the beautiful to strike the eye. It reminded one of the old Irishman in the goldfields when the first white woman with some fowls and domestic animals loomed on

the horizon. "Before," he grumbled, "this was God's own country. Now it's a bloomin' suburb."

Ramale was never comparable to a suburb. It was just a Japanese internment camp, full of shacks, where in the narrowest possible space on the precipitous mountainside three hundred homeless prisoners cooked, washed and laboured, battled against overwhelming odds and did their best to survive.

Survival in a Japanese Internment Camp

I use the word "survival" designedly. The whole three years or so of our captivity was nothing more than a struggle for survival. Of foremost importance in this struggle was the matter of food.

During the first months of our captivity we were still in our own Convent at Vunapope. We had eighteen military, civilian and Methodist nurses with us, and were allowed to receive beef, vegetables and fruit from our mission farm. In our own house we had also a supply of rice, sugar and other commodities though the Japs had commandeered the mission store. When they departed on their Port Moresby venture they handed over the key to the Father-in-charge.

It looked as if they were quite sure they would not be back. When they were well out of the way all hands were called upon to get all the supplies possible — especially flour and altar wine — out of the store and bring it up the hill to our dwellings.

On the Japs' inglorious return they were too preoccupied to notice that many commodities had disappeared from the

store. Besides, many of the Jap officers who would have observed this had been killed in the Coral Sea Battle.

Early in July our good friends the nurses were taken away to Japan and we received the order of eviction. Nevertheless, we still continued to receive food from the farm. The Brothers had to do forced labour there but in return the Japs gave us rice and barley. Thus, though we had neither milk, butter nor bread, we did not go hungry.

Then came the terrible bombings which turned the farm into a desert waste and killed the few cattle which the Japs had not taken. About this time our rice supply was also bombed and we had to fall back on tapioca. This tasted like a very coarse species of potato. Not even the natives would eat it before the war. It was used solely for feeding the pigs. However, we came to cherish it, though our poor digestions suffered in consequence. After raids the Japs allowed us to gather up the remains of the cattle that were killed, so we did have some meat. The story of how a bomb landed in the middle of one such meat dinner has been told elsewhere. Most of that meat was provided by the strewn-about remains of our two poor old goats Whitey and Browney.

A new era began with our removal to Ramale. Let us call it Starving Time. The authorities issued ten bags of rice to us in payment for work and told the Bishop that this was definitely the last supply we would receive. Henceforth, they proclaimed, the three hundred members of the camp must be "tied together" (they meant "united") in an endeavour to support themselves.

And so there began a lean time for us. We were allotted ground for gardens at about thirty minutes' walk from the camp, but were given no seed nor the wherewithal to clear the land. It happened more than once that when we did clear a bit of ground the Japs demanded it for their own use. The rice had to be used very sparingly and supplemented with

boiled leaves, roots, coconut and anything else which necessity and ingenuity could devise.

Still we did not have enough. Some mornings we spent two hours picking grubs and caterpillars from the leaves, which were to serve as our main meal. Breakfast often consisted of boiled water and two boiled green bananas. The next meal was at midday — quite a little interval to be covered on the strength of two bananas and we were often very limp long before dinner time arrived.

Then the rice supply ran out and we existed solely on tapioca, sweet potato leaves and beans, when we had them. These delicacies were cooked in huge saucepans, stirred together with ladles as big as a rowing oar, poured into large dishes and sent round to the various communities — Priests, Brothers, Sisters, half-castes, native seminarists, etc. We each had an enamel plate and a spoon. We went in turn to the dish, ladled out our share of the "mess of pottage", found a seat when possible and wondered if there would ever come a time when we would see more appetising fare. Then sometimes, really quite often, one of the Fathers would appear with a suppliant expression and, like Oliver Twist, ask for "more". Only he wasn't really asking for more because in the first place he hadn't had any. The trouble was that the supply had refused to go round. So by means of various subtractions and divisions we would try to make good the deficiency. Many of the poor men used often to go and lie down at about 10.30 a.m. They were weak from hunger, and soon sunken cheeks and hollow eyes began to tell their own tale.

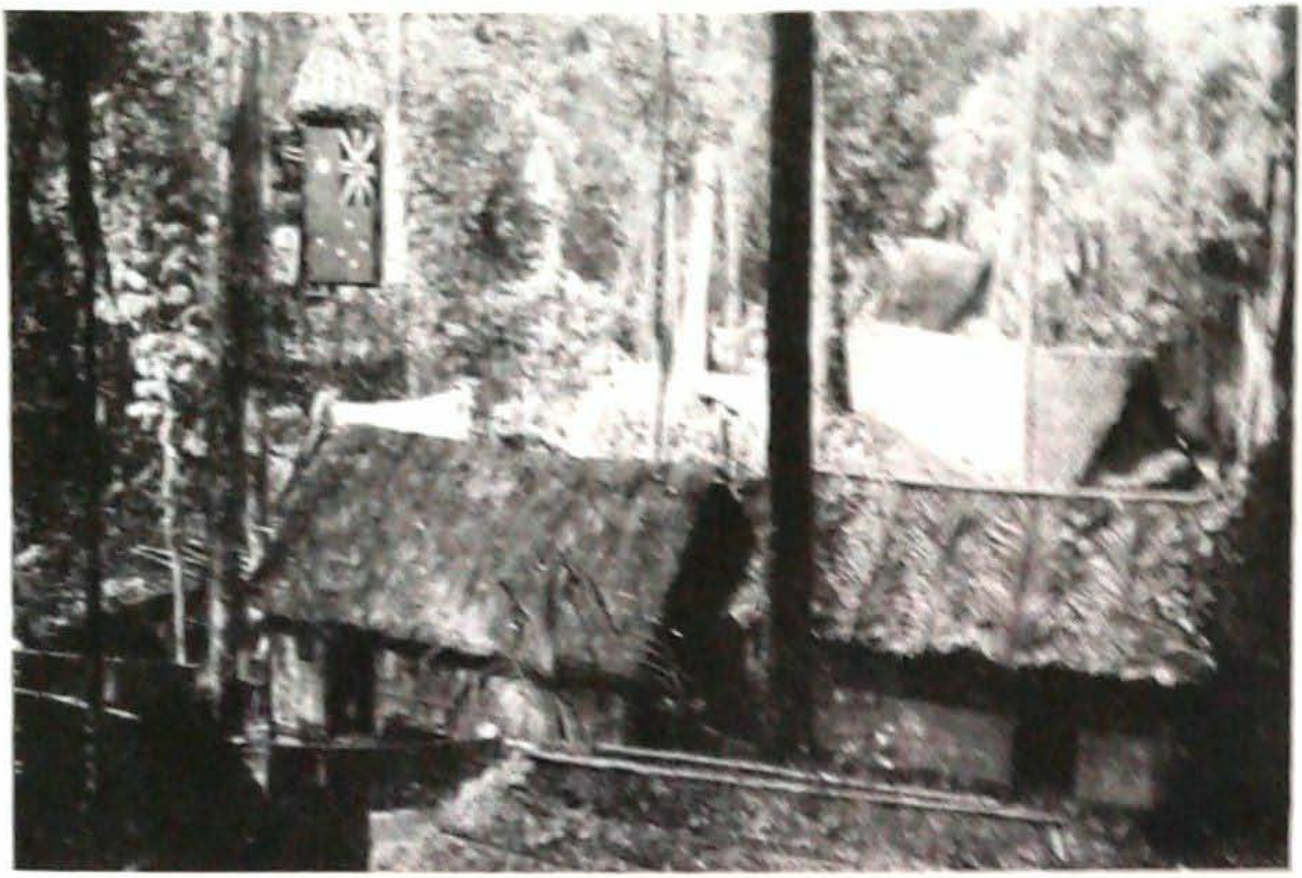
We suffered very much from digestive troubles, too, in those days — as much from the quality of the food as from the lack of it. This went on for months. Then a more prosperous period set in. Native boys smuggled vegetable seeds into us and we gradually got our gardens in good order. Daily the Father Director of the Seminary, the Father musician and

other priests and Brothers passed by with their guards on their way to work in the gardens. We Sisters went two or three times a week, when the cooking, washing and mending permitted.

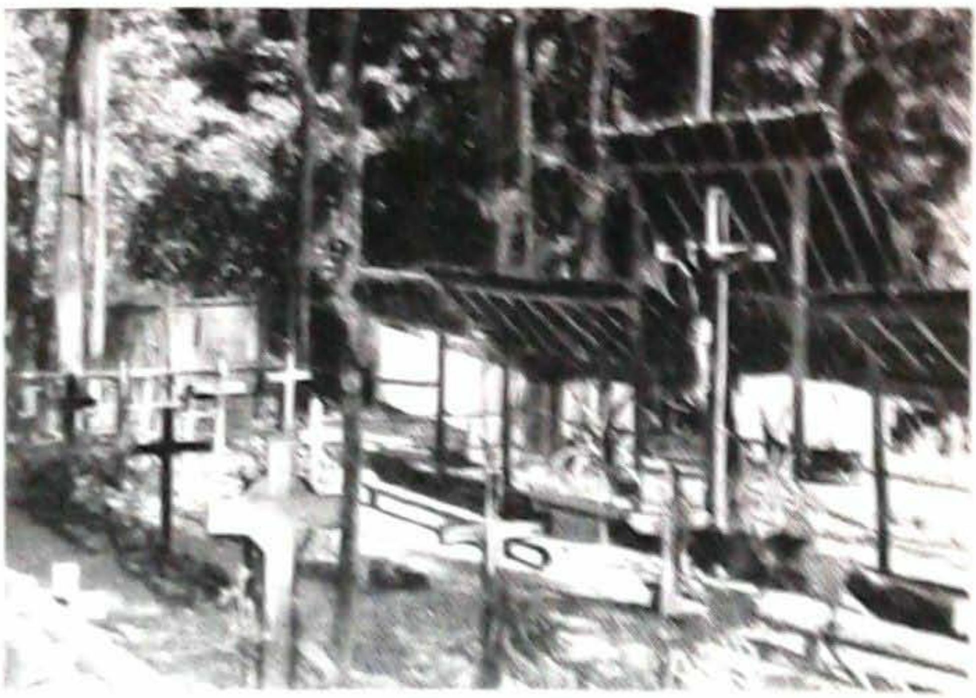
We were always guarded and had to stay for three hours, morning and afternoon, even throughout the tropical downpours. The guards' duties were rendered very light by reason of various laws regarding the gardeners. For instance, one native seminarist was responsible for all the workers in the particular garden in which we worked. If one of us escaped the boy would lose his head. Likewise, one Sister was responsible for ten Sisters. If one of her group escaped, off would go her responsible head. Even this was not security enough. All the Sisters' names had to be given to the police, and we were listed in twos — each one being responsible for the other's conduct under threat of "Head, head, head off." It is little wonder that there were no escapees with so many interested guardians in the camp.

Soon our gardens began to flourish. We had native foods, coconuts, beans and bananas. Though we still had neither meat, milk, butter, tea nor sugar and very little salt, we began to revive. The lack of meat was felt severely. Some even ate cat, dog and snake flesh, so great was their craving.

On one great feast day we did each receive a piece of meat. There was an old bullock who used to draw the tapioca cart. He was absolutely the last of his tribe, the only remaining two of his mates having been killed by a bomb when they were beside him drawing carts. One good day the poor old bullock went on strike. He refused to budge another inch. Threats, entreaties, even blows, failed to alter his decision. Thereupon we obtained permission from the police to eat the defaulter, and he was prepared for the pot. So great was the anticipation and so great the anxiety lest we be deprived of our treat, that two Brothers offered to sleep all night near



Delivered! The Australian Flag floats over Ramale camp



Consummatum Est! Crosses in the camp cemetery. Here were buried those Missionaries who were killed by the bombs or who died from disease and hardship.

(See page 78)

the kitchen door. Horatius at the bridge was not more resolute than these valiants that no foe nor thief should cross that threshold. How we enjoyed that morsel of meat and the soup which preceded it.

Once we nearly ate a horse. At least, it was not our fault we failed to do so. It was promised us, but did not arrive as far as the camp. One day a very high Japanese officer visited us and promised a horse as a souvenir of his visit. Shortly afterwards the Bishop received a letter saying that there was no horse available, but offering a pig instead.

Well, the pig arrived, and a very sick one at that, with black hairs sticking out all over him like a porcupine. He was very small, so it was decided to try and fatten him up a little. We called him "The General", after his donor. But all honours and attentions failed to arouse in him the will to live, and so to prevent his death from natural causes he had to be hastily killed. On account of the "General's" small proportions and our great numbers, his flesh had to be minced and mixed in with the tapioca, etc. We would never have known he was there except for the bitter flavour he provided, and so the poor "General" was even more unpopular in death than in life. As time went on the gardens flourished, and we became more accustomed to our vegetarian diet.

Closely bound up with the matter of food in this struggle for survival was the question of clothing. During the first few months after the coming of the Japanese we wore our usual white mission costume. After the bombings began the Japs informed us that anyone appearing in white would lose his or her precious head. So, behold us Sisters arrayed in large black and white checks. By the time the bombings were over there was not much even of the despised checks left. So the Bishop, seeing his missionary Sisters in such a reduced condition, asked the Japs if they could sell him some material. They had pillaged all our stores, remember.

One day a lorry arrived with materials of many hues, and purchases were duly made. It was a case of beggars not being choosers. So it came to pass that your humble Sisters had to submit to being clothed like Solomon in all his glory, or, should I say, Joseph in his coat of many colours. We bought yards and yards of a bluish-purple confection with dainty flowerets strewn all over it. Unfortunately, the flowers were not everlasting, nor was the bluish-purple foundation. Under the action of tropical humidity the colour oozed into one's body until the wearer became the same shade as her apparel.

Later in Ramale we did have a Sunday costume. It was a bright blue verging on heliotrope, and, like all Jap materials, the colour was not lasting. The material had been bought at the same time as the "flower garden" stuff, but during the terrible bombings of Vunapope, when we had to live and sleep for weeks in the same clothes owing to the dreadful lack of privacy in the tunnel, it was no use bothering about a Sunday garb.

In Ramale Valley, however, a feeling of respectability prompted us to wear the "heliotropes" with care — and that only on Sundays and very big feast days. About 4 p.m, they were changed and carefully put away. You see, each time they had to be washed they became more faded and shabbier, and, with the hope that springs eternal, we wanted to have them when the Australians or Americans should find us out and come down the mountain to rescue us

As regards footwear, camp fashions favored the wooden variety of shoe made from the Ramale trees. A Brother planed the wood into thick soles, tacked a band of cloth around the instep and there was your shoe! But Ramale Camp was built on a ledge cut out of the mountain side. There was much slippery mud underfoot, together with steep descents all around, so many were the sprained ankles and even broken

legs. Jungle shoes were not a decided success, but we simply had to wear them or go barefooted.

Therefore, there was great envy when the Brother boot-maker kindly presented me with a second-hand pair of Jap "hobnails". I did not know who had been the former wearer, nor by what means, fair or foul, the Brother had acquired them. Though they were much ridiculed by some and others advised me to disinfect them well, both ridicule and advice failed to impress me, I was well satisfied with my prize. When the other Sisters had to plough home barefooted from the gardens through the mud and slush, since the way was too slippery for wooden soles, I, at least, was well shod. Those old boots remained my boon companion in sunshine and storm, though the Jap guards often cast suspicious glances at them. When peace came and the first band of us were departing for healthier climes, a little Sister, almost with tears in her eyes, begged me to bequeath my hobnails to her. Though they were at least three sizes too large, her gratitude when I condescended to grant her request was touching to behold.

After the matters of food and clothing, the next most outstanding factor in our daily lives during our internment was our relations with the Japanese. During the whole three and a half years we came in contact with many Japs — some good, some bad, the most perhaps indifferent. In the first days, when thousands of Japs were everywhere, we had the tiny Sugai, our interpreter. He had an uncle a Methodist lay-preacher and was himself kindly disposed towards Christians. The menfolk, it seems, did not always find Sugai too accommodating, but towards the nurses and ourselves he was always kind. Once when the nurses saw a lorry-load of soldiers over in the mission grounds and ran over to talk to them, Sugai came along, lectured them and said he would have to beat them. He was five feet nothing and three of the nurses were about six feet. These latter roared laughing at the idea and poor old Sugai let them off with a caution. Before setting

out for the Coral Sea, Sugai came to say goodbye. He was given a Sacred Heart Badge. He never returned.

There was Ono, the policeman, who was stationed near us. When Japs came round to steal we had only to send for Ono and it was right-about-turn for them.

Our next interpreter was likewise named Ono. A nervy type of man, he was not unkind. He came about the same time as our eviction from our mission buildings at Vunapope. He said that he had lived for a long time in America, but with his very faulty English it was hard to associate him with anything American. After about twelve months he was ordered to the battle front. He cried bitterly when saying goodbye. Unlike Sugai, Ono did come back to pay us a visit. But he came as a poor lunatic relating all kinds of fantastic tales about his visit to Japan and bringing little presents for the half-caste children in the camp.

Nearly all our interpreters seemed to be shell-shocked men sent to us for a rest. The next one's name I did not know. He was supposed to be a professor of some kind, but as he was very careless about his personal appearance we nicknamed him "The Tramp". On account of his nerviness his eyelids were never at rest. By the time he arrived things were evidently not going too well with the Japs. So on various occasions "The Tramp" arrived, armed with pencil and paper, to find out and record what we "thought". Did we "think" we were in a prison camp or a protection camp? What did we "think" about the war, about the Japanese soldiers? We would tell him that we had no information about the war, that we "thought" the Jap soldiers were very numerous and similar non-commital answers. Off he would go contented.

At Ramale Camp our interpreter was named Tagai. He belonged to a rich family, it seems, and had had a good education, but his English was poor. He spluttered and stuttered when interpreting to us the proclamations of the higher officers

who assembled us periodically for that purpose. His renditions were comical in the extreme and we suffered agonies from suppressed laughter.

Tagai could be very kind and very brutal. We saw and heard dreadful instances of the latter phase of his character, especially when Japan was being bombed. But he seemed to like the Australian Sisters. "Why do you Australian Sisters stand aloof?" he said one day. "You have nothing to fear." He had noticed an Australian Sister keeping in the background.

For Tagai, too, we had to write many "expressions", as he called them. He said he was an intelligence man, and he used to give us sheets and sheets of paper to fill in, giving our opinion on war matters. We knew our precious heads were possibly at stake and it was hard to fill those sheets without saying anything.

Christmas was approaching and Tagai announced that all the members of the camp were going to receive a Christmas present. The announcement provided food for conjecture for days. Would it be a separate present for each individual, or one large present to be shared by all? The pessimists, basing their opinion on past experiences, suggested that it would probably be one very small present to be divided among all the internees.

Christmas Eve arrived, and so did the present. A guard, all smiles, brought it down. It was a dish of rice, about fifteen tiny bags of miniature dog biscuits and a large oldish-looking tin. As we Sisters had charge of providing the meals, the present was brought to us. We proceeded to open the tin. Lo! In one corner there was already a hole and blow-flies were issuing therefrom. A victory for the pessimists! There were biscuits, yes, pounds of them in all stages and shades of decomposition, from palest green to blackest black. It must have been a tin left over from the banquet given the Mikado's first ancestor when he ascended the imperial throne. Certainly

it had been carefully reserved for the civilian P.O.W's. The pessimists said, "I told you so!" The greater part of that tin of biscuits had to be buried, which fact is an eloquent one, for in those days what we whites could not eat, the natives ate, what the native boys could not digest the cats or fowls ate. But those black Christmas biscuits not even a hungry P.O.W. fowl could eat and survive

We had also a rather good-hearted Major, and a miserly doctor in charge of us. One Sunday when the Sister-cook was preparing our saltless dinner, she courageously decided to go up and ask the Major for some. She received a basin full. Unfortunately the doctor spied her on the way down. He rushed out and took back half the contents of the basin.

Eventually, however, both the Major and the doctor were removed and we were left to the tender mercies of the police and guards. The former were hated even by their own. Day by day we saw natives flogged almost to death. Sisters were called up on some paltry charge and threatened with floggings, large sticks being brandished over their heads the while.

All the world has since learned of the cruelties perpetrated by the Japanese invaders. We have seen natives hung up by the feet and beaten. We have seen priests still bearing the marks of their ill-treatment, have heard them describe the tortures inflicted on them, have known that some of our own Fathers were barbarously murdered. We ourselves were to have been killed on August 23rd, but on August 15th Our Blessed Mother stepped in and said, "It is enough."

Nevertheless, it is impossible to believe that the perpetrators of these outrages represent the real Japanese character. The few Christian Japs we met showed themselves most kindly disposed towards us. Two or three were Methodists and a few were Catholics. At Vunapope one came to hear Mass and receive Communion through the fence. Then for a short time there were Japanese nurses in Vunapope. One little Catholic

girl with the sweetest of faces used to steal to the edge of our camp to have a word with us and ask our prayers. The boat on which these girls were returning to Japan was torpedoed. The survivors were brought back to Vunapope to await further transport. There were only three or four left.

Amongst the poor common soldiers were simple, hard-working men who seemed to have no other ambition than to return to their homes and their rice fields. We had the Japanese mental asylum behind us in Vunapope. Occasionally the inmates would break down their enclosure and come in to us. Normally like caged lions, they were quiet and well-behaved in our presence. We would treat them very gently, and putting their hands to their poor heads for sympathy they would allow us to lead them back, as quietly as lambs, through the barbed wire. Certainly Christianity could solve the Japanese problem.

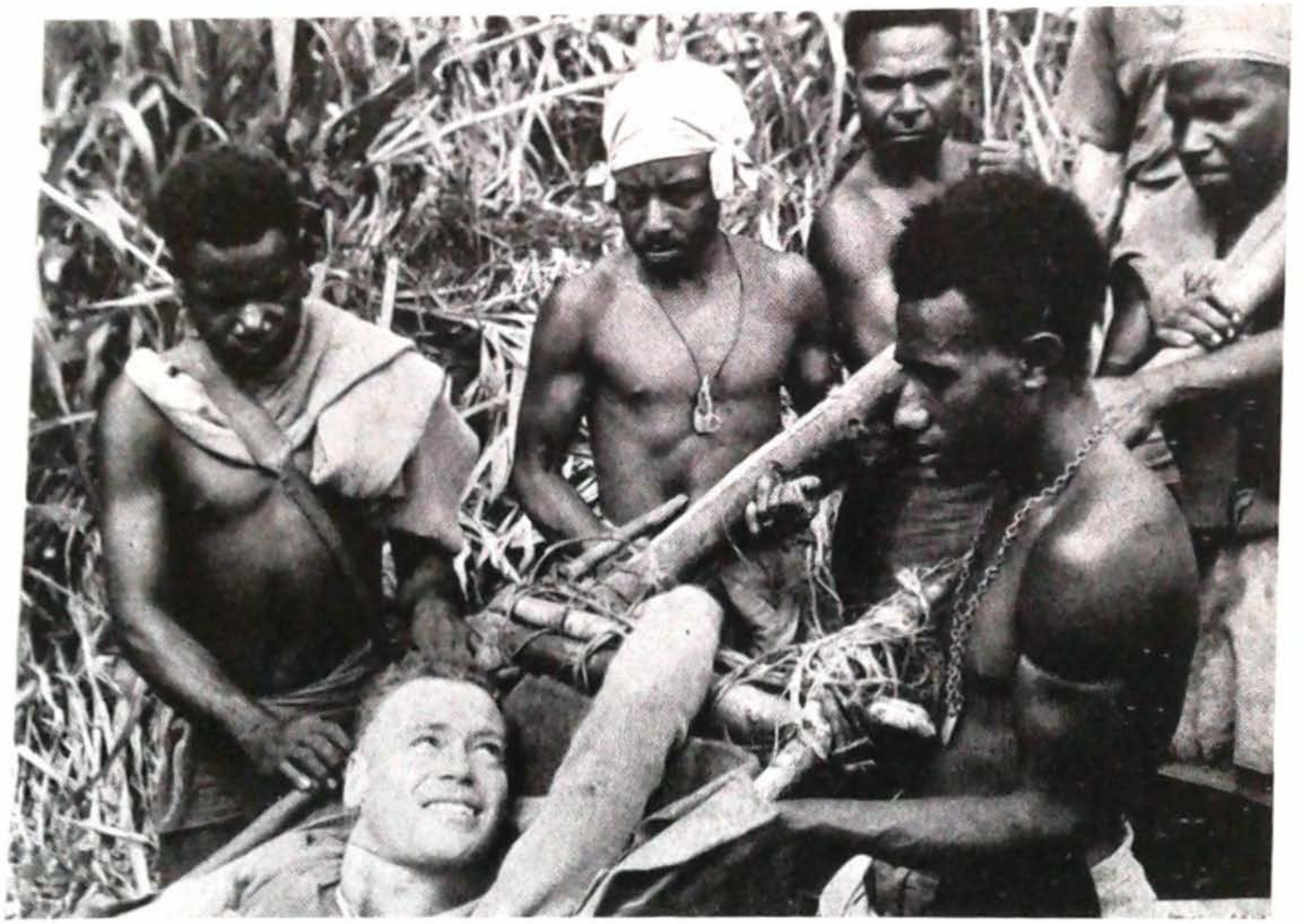
Consummatum Est

From the moment that the forty Japanese ships arraigned along Vunapope waters, unloaded their hundreds of yellow men, the missionaries' long Way of the Cross had begun. We were all asked to climb Calvary. Some — the privileged — died there.

After we were evicted from our rightful dwellings in October, 1942, and were occupying small buildings and sheds at the rear of the mission, dysentry, typhoid and other diseases soon manifested themselves. The Japanese sanitary conditions were appalling. We were thirty-two, later thirty-eight Sisters in a three-roomed building. Between us and the Japs were merely two rows of barbed wire, a few feet from our door. Large barns another few feet on the other side of the said wire housed sick Japs. The stench was almost insupportable, and one by one the Sisters went down with typhoid and other diseases which follow in the wake of dirt and filfth.

Then the dread dysentry broke out. The first victim was Father "Bill" Barrow, M.S.C., former beloved P.P. of Rabaul, who was living with other missionary Fathers in a native grass house not far from ours. An old shack where kapok had formerly been stored was hastily converted into an isolation hospital, and there our poor Father put up a fight for life. "Do you think I am going to win the fight?" "Of course you are," Sister reassured him. "Ah, but it's a long road," he whispered, and the weary smile told its own tale.

COMRADESHIP IN NEW GUINEA JUNGLES.



(*Commonwealth Dept. of Information picture*)

With the gentleness of women the native stretcher-bearers lessen the terrors of the trail for the wounded soldier.

(See page 87)

As the days crept on and the once merry Irish blue eyes grew large, the face white, the temples and cheeks sunken, it was hard to recognise the former stalwart priest in the poor weak form before us. The sick man craved for soda water and we had none. "Sister, if you ask Matsui (a Japanese officer) he will give you some," he pleaded. We tried Matsui, but he had no soda water either. He did send some Japanese "saki", but Father could not drink it.

The last night came. Outside dreary rain was falling. Within a dim lamp was burning. It cast shadows around the old hut, on a Father praying in a corner, on the wan face of the dying priest. Suddenly it thundered. He thought it was bombs, and his old whimsical humour reasserted itself: "That's good stuff," said he. All night he lingered and all night we prayed before the Tabernacle, pleading to keep him with us. Throughout the next day priests, Brothers and Sisters kept stealing in to have a last look at their dying co-worker. The Bishop came to give him his final blessing. Then perhaps for the first time did Father Barrow really realise that he was dying. Without a murmur he accepted God's Will, and we were left to mourn. It was Friday, November 13th, 1942, ten months after the Japanese landing.

Next to murmur his "Consummatum Est" was Father August Kleintitchen, M.S.C., one of the pioneer priests of the mission. He had been suffering for some time, but his great love for God made suffering to him a cherished grace. As his final testament he whispered, "Remember Bethlehem and Calvary. Our Lord went that way, and we must follow." He was taken from us and was spared the final overwhelming sorrow of seeing Vunapope collapse under the bombs.

Lovely little Crista, two-year-old daughter of our devoted doctor, who has dedicated his life to the mission, fell sick with dysentry. A small amount of serum would have saved her life, but the Jap doctor could not oblige. So baby Crista Elizabeth went home to Heaven.

Then came the first terrible bombings. Poor American-born Brother Redmond, S.M., was in the kapok shack recovering from a serious attack of beri-beri. The place got a direct hit and as his poor remains were hastily gathered up and buried, the rest of Vunapope went up in flames.

Brother Bernard, the infirmarian, was in the kitchen procuring something for the sick. He received a mortal wound in the head. He lingered for some days. It was a pitiful sight to see him, who himself had been gentle as a mother to the sick, lying, head swathed in bandages and suffering atrociously. After the bombing we laid him on a stretcher just outside the tunnel and put up a temporary shelter over his head. There he lay muttering incoherently and recognising no one. After a day or two the excited brain became calm, the poor bandaged head drooped and Brother Bernard, too, had reached the hour of his "Consummatum Est."

Brother Joseph Longkamps, M.S.C., was wounded in the abdomen. He lingered in pain for weeks, suffering agonies in the old dark tunnel. At night he could be heard murmuring, "Good Saint Joseph, give me back my health." It was not to be, and in the fitful light of a hurricane lamp the former hearty, happy young Brother received Holy Viaticum. Father Superior, who had just come from the death-bed of another of his sons, read the prayers for the dying. As we knelt there in the gloom with sick and wounded lined along the walls, he passed away. With him all was now peace. For us there was still war, horror, hardship. But we were strong with the strength of Him Who, too, knew bitterness and death, and in Him we put our trust.

We watched many others die in those days of terror when the bombs left us no place whereon to lay our heads. Sometimes two died in the one night. Those who died of dysentry had to be rolled in their poor blankets and laid outside under the stars or even in the rain. Our congested condition and fear of infection left us no alternative.

Brother Joseph Hesse, strong and virile, a fine teacher and a beautiful singer, was stricken with typhoid. Nevertheless, he walked into the tunnel till the day he died. The last time I saw him the dew of death was on his pale face and his hair wet and matted on his forehead. He was smiling. Death held for him no fear.

Then we watched beside little Sister M. Leonora, M.S.C. She suffered much huddled in the dingy tunnel on the hard school form which served her as a bed of death. During the last agony the Sisters knelt and prayed around her whilst supporting her poor little body on its narrow couch. Other sick Sisters were lined along the tunnel walls lying on our blankets which had been rolled into swags to give them a modicum of comfort. The tunnels were not wide, and all day we had to keep rushing in from air-raids, so that only a minimum of space could be allowed even for the sick.

When the Japs removed us to Ramale Camp the death-rate averaged more than one a month. Sister Mary Matilde, F.N.D.S.C., died of a cancer, which affected her lungs. What agonies she suffered in the dark, damp, stifling tunnel. We brought her outside as much as possible, but near the end all movement became a torture. So she died on her Calvary with no human consolation. On every side were the enemy, from the skies was being rained death, on every hand there was darkness and privation. Add to all this the falling earth, the cockroaches, the heat, the inability to rest in any position and the constant disturbance of people rushing in from threatened raids. Just as the Consecration bell was ringing she died.

Next to die was lively, generous little Sister M. Domitilla, S.M.M.S. It was jungle typhus that laid her low. She had never had any love for the dark tunnels and had been one of the hardier spirits who used to set up sleeping shacks at night and demolish them before daylight — making wild dives for safety when the planes swooped too low. We were declared to be foolhardy and threatened that we would not

receive a Requiem Mass if we continued to court death in such a cold-blooded fashion. But it was in the innermost recesses of the long-winding Ramale tunnel that she was destined to gasp out her last breath — fulfilling to the end her motto: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

To some there was granted a more intimate share in the Passion of the Lord Christ. Theirs it was to know all the bitterness, all the terrible aloneness of a violent death at the hands of a pagan and barbaric enemy. But of the redemptive value of this absolute sacrifice, who shall hazard a guess? The story of the martyrdom of the Irish priests, Fathers W. Culhane and M. Murphy, will never be fully known except to the Lord of the harvest. Of one or two, however, we do know. There was the Australian, Father E. Harris, M.S.C., who was stationed down the coast at a place called Mali Mali. As the Australian troops were retreating that way with the Japs hard on their heels, Father Harris took the men in, fed them, tended the sick and wounded, gave his motor boat to take them to a place of safety and radioed Port Moresby for planes to come out and rescue them. This he did over and over again. Today grateful men, who owe their lives to him, tell how they begged him to go along with them since to stay where he was meant certain death. But Father Harris' missionary soul could not fall in with that proposition. He remained adamant. "How could I face these natives again were I to quit now?" He was taken and died a martyr to his charity and zeal at the hands of his captors.

When young Father D. McCullough, M.S.C., was being taken from our camp at Vunapope to the Rabaul centre, where more than a thousand Australian prisoners were being held, someone offered to try and have him kept back. "Don't do that," said he. "I'd rather go along with the men." He thought there was no priest with them. So he and Brother Brennan, M.S.C., went with them on the "Montevideo Maru", which was torpedoed off the Philippines. Neither of them, nor a

Marist Father who was likewise on board, were ever heard of again.

Seventeen years ago when the first three Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart went to the little island of Manus, in the Admiralty Group, the Father-in-charge laughingly remarked, "You know, if the Japs ever come to invade the south this is the first place they will land at." At that time there was quite a sprinkling of Japanese around Manus. About twelve months before the actual invasion, when the writing was already on the wall and local Japs were drifting off back to their homeland, Sister M. Cunera, who was saying goodbye to us of Vunapope before returning to her island mission station, said in jest, "If the Japs come, don't go away and leave us, will you?"

Well, the Japs did come and we did not go away and leave them. They it was who left us. For, together with the three priests of Manus, Sisters Mary Cunera, Ancilla and Elizabeth, so a native rumour has it, were taken to some unnamed, lonely beach and shot. Consummatum est. It is finished — perfected. For when these and all those others who died offered themselves to the mission, this sacrifice of life was implied — for the consecration was absolute.

What of us who remained? Not even in the darkest hours, not even during the most furious bombardments were we left without the glorious strength of Mass and daily Holy Communion. The altar wine which we rescued from the mission store when the Japs went off around the Coral Sea way, lasted all through the three and a half years of captivity. The Fathers said Mass in turn, using the smallest amount of wine possible. Under normal circumstances flour remained fresh for a mere six months or so and that only by means of sunning and sifting and various other devices. Yet during these hard and bitter years it remained fresh and white and lovely without any of the above precautions. There is only one explanation — the fulfilment of the promise in

"I will not leave you orphans." Our Lord knew just how much need we had of Him.

During those days one learned to pray without ceasing. Death was always at hand. In the tunnel-days at Vunapope a little grotto was scooped out in the wall and a poor Tabernacle placed therein. So things went on until in Ramale we could once again have a little chapel.

We were all at prayer one day in this frail grass-roofed Ramale chapel when a lifeless form was carried in on a makeshift stretcher and laid before the Tabernacle. Brother Joseph Wochne, who was out working in the tapioca garden that we might not starve, had been struck by a piece of shrapnel and had died almost instantaneously. In the poor blood-stained body beneath the old grey blanket it seemed that we were offering to God just one more victim of propitation. God and eternity seemed very near.

Here each community had its turn at watching and praying before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, Who in His condescending love had come to share our confinement. How, in those days, the liturgy of the Mass impressed us. How the holy words became alive with new meaning. "Let the sighing of the prisoners come in before Thee, O Lord." "Going, they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves." "Though I shouldst walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils: for Thou art with me."

But it was all to have an end — the long, long waiting for news that never came, the uncertainty as to when the nightmare would end, the weakening strength and its consequent depression of spirit.

It was Mary, Queen of Heaven, who spoke the glorious peace-giving "It is finished." For on August 15th peace came to the Pacific. Three weeks later coo-ees from the top of Ramale Gorge. We were rescued! The Australians had come!

Of their kindness to us who shall speak? The best tribute is silence, since all words are inadequate.

War Shadows over Papua

(*Commonwealth Dept. of Information picture*)

An Australian soldier cheers a native casualty.

(See page 87)

War Shadows over Papua

It was a lovely tropical night. The date was February 2nd, 1942. Five missionary Sisters were sitting on the Convent verandah at Port Moresby in earnest discussion with their Superior who had just arrived from Yule Island further up the coast. The talk was of evacuation next day to the head mission station of Yule Island. For Rabaul had fallen in January. And everyone knew that the Japanese would swiftly strike at New Guinea with Australia as their ultimate target.

In fact the Japs had already told us quite boldly over Tokio Radio that they had intended paying us a visit on the night of January 1st and had boasted that they would have Port Moresby within the next eight days.

Now, Nippon feigned politeness in sending over word of his proposed visit, but forgot his manners in postponing it without notification. Nevertheless, we knew it would come.

Port Moresby, Papua's capital, was reacting to the grim reality of the onsweeping tide of war. No more tourist steamers leisurely making their way into the harbour cradled by the hills dotted with European homes. Only the troopships came now. No longer the quietness of her sleepy streets. Now

they resounded with the unending tramp, tramp of marching feet as the soldiers set out for the military camps of the neighbourhood.

Everyone, everything seemed in a hurry. Land was being cleared and roads made. 'Dromes were springing into existence. Women and children had all been evacuated. The mission children had been sent back to their villages, whilst those with only the mission for home had been taken to Yule, sixty miles along the coast.

And what were we Sisters doing in Port at such a critical time when all other white women had been evacuated? The reason was not, as a little Papuan once said, "They not women — them's Sisters!" It was merely that we were the last to leave. But to return to the party on the Convent verandah.

After some time we retired to bed. I awakened to the sound of a sinister buzz. Our ears were well attuned by this time to the sound of Port Moresby bombers and fighters taking off and returning throughout the night. But this was something different. Said I, "They're Japs!" Two other Sisters were now up and were equally sure that the planes were Japs. "Get up. The Japs are coming," I called to the fourth of our little band. She GOT up! Then round to the front to awaken Mother Superior, who was sleeping the sleep of the weary after her journey up from Yule. The Convent was tucked in between the chief radio station and the cannon batteries, so it was no time for sleep. "Get up. The Japs are here!" "Where, Sister?" was the weary reply. "Over the top," said I. In a couple of seconds we were all in the air-raid shelters.

A word about those shelters. They were the work of a very industrious Sister who had devoted much time and energy to their construction, whilst the rest of us had got more than a small share of fun out of her efforts. When they were complete, even down to the details of seats and water-bottles,

some officers, including one of the Fathers, came over to inspect. The officers forebore to say much about our little death-traps which were just at the bottom of the hills where the guns were, but Father's verdict was this: "Nice, neat little shelters. After the first raid I'll just need to come over, read the prayers and erect some white crosses suitably inscribed."

But when the big enemy bombers zoomed overhead we were very glad to disappear into the little burrows. Three Sisters and a native girl wormed into one hole which was built to accommodate two, while two Sisters and another girl squeezed into a second. Be it understood also that the selection of the hole did not take as long as the telling of the fact.

We listened to the sinister droning for what seemed an eternity, though it was only a few minutes. Above all we prayed. It takes bombs to make one pray with intensity. "They're not dropping anything," came a whisper. Then almost immediately a man's shout from a neighbouring shelter: "Here he comes!"

There was a screaming, wailing noise, followed by a terrific detonation. The first bombs had burst on Papuan shores.

One landed on the bakery, scattering bread, timber and bricks in every direction. Several in succession in our immediate vicinity convinced us that Nippon was trying to locate the radio. Had his calculations been a few yards less wide of the mark there would have been five missionaries less to carry on. As it was the earth was thrown right up to the door of one shelter.

After much noise there came another — a welcome roar as our "ack-acks" went into action. Soon the droning died away as the Japs departed. This ended Port Moresby's first raid.

The next day, of course, saw our hasty retreat to Yule Island, whence small parties began to disperse themselves

among the remoter villages on the mainland. Such scenes on the jetty! Such cargo on the launches — beds, cows, boxes, cats, dogs, bags.

Those of us who were to remain in Yule had plenty to do. Civilian evacuees began to arrive. We received as many as fifty. Some had come from the other side of New Guinea and had been walking through the bush for weeks. It had been their only chance to escape. Eventually we saw the last of them depart as the authorities took them into their care. Things became very peaceful on the island mission, and busy Port Moresby seemed to belong to another world.

Then, incredible as it seems, the Japs singled out for attack the tiny island reserved solely for missionaries and natives.

It was a bright, hot morning and all were going about various duties. I heard the planes coming. I saw everyone else making for the air-raid shelter, but calculating that I could never get there in time, stayed in the building where I was. The planes were coming straight on and had commenced machine-gunning. In a second I was in the thick of it.

A bullet came through, struck the sash of the window-sill opposite and then burst into a flame like a candle. It was one of the type meant to ignite when they strike. As may be imagined, I did not do any unnecessary running about to extinguish it. I just kept an eye on it and said to myself, "If this shed and I are here when the raid is over, I'll put it out." All round me I could hear bullets tearing into the tin roof and walls and smashing through glass windows. Then a bit of a lull and the planes seemed to have gone. But no, back they swooped and peppered bullets around again. I thought I was doomed. At last through the window I saw a plane rise up as though from the very roof and make off with the rest. I could hardly believe I was still alive.

When we all came together again we had a good laugh about the expedients some had had to adopt to get out of fir-

ing range. But how wonderfully God had protected us. I had been carrying a tin jug of water and had hastily put it down when the raiders came over. I now found the bottom torn out of the jug and the rest of it twisted about by bullets.

Yule was no longer safe, so His Lordship Bishop de Boismenu decided that we must move. By 4.30 p.m, we were on our way to the jetty, whence we were to be taken by launch over to the mainland and up a creek to an inland station. How we prayed whilst crossing the bay that we would get into the creek safely. We did, in spite of a storm and a good soaking, but darkness overtook us in the creek and the launch suddenly gave a heave and a bump. The rudder was broken. Instead of going up the creek the boat now began to go sideways into the bank which we all knew to be the haunt of alligators. However, after much back and side-stepping, the launch eventually landed us at our destination.

Three other mission stations were machine-gunned, two of them being high up on the Owen Stanley Range. In both cases the Japs chose a Sunday when the natives were gathered in the churchyard waiting for the bell to ring for Mass. Possibly the large concourse led the pilots to suspect the presence of military objectives. Thank God there were no casualties.

An event which saddened us greatly was the sinking of a boat which was evacuating a number of half-castes along the coast to Daru. Many of the children on board were pupils of the mission schools. The boat was attacked by a Jap submarine and the passengers machine-gunned. Only one man escaped to tell of the tragedy.

And how did the war affect the mission? With the evacuation of the schools and the majority of the mission personnel, it would seem that sixty years of zealous work had come to nought. The buildings on peaceful Yule became the headquarters of an American Air Force Radar Unit. Two aero-

dromes were built, trucks roared up and down the road day and night and military officials came and went. But God now had another form of apostolate for Yule. Americans, overcome with curiosity, strolled around the mission property. Curiosity turned to deep interest. Crowds came to Sunday Mass. Now, instead of the singing of the native children on Sundays, the deep mellow voices of American soldiers filled the little white pro-Cathedral. Conversions took place and many came back to the practice of their religion.

And where the lads in khaki and green came into contact with the Sisters, how good they were to them. Far distant coastal Terapo, one hundred and twenty miles from Port Moresby, had emerged overnight from a mosquito-infested swamp into a busy military centre — the unloading depot for equipment for the building of the Bulldog-Wau Road. Bulldozers raced around with noisy self-importance, and in a record time huge Douglas bombers were landing at the side of the Sisters' house. In the early days of the counter-attack against the Japs, it was planned to use this road in re-capturing Salamaua and Lae. The soldiers shared their provisions and medical supplies with the mission, which, in turn, grew green vegetables and made fresh bread for them. Many a little act of charity we were able to do for the poor boys.

Once a party of twenty-three straggled in from Wau, enroute to Port Moresby. They were sick and some had been hurt through falling into Jap traps in the bush. We turned the school into a miniature hospital, killed a cow to give them fresh meat, and looked after them as well as we could for a few days, though only the worst cases could be given a bed. The rest had to lie on the floor.

In this way men from everywhere came into contact with the missionaries and learned what was being done for the spiritual and temporal well-being of the Papuans. The whole English-speaking world has long since found a place in its heart for the black Fuzzy Wuzzy angels of the grim Kokoda

Trail days — those tireless native carriers and stretcher-bearers, who, with the gentleness of women, lessened for wounded men the terrors of the trail through the jungle.

Kokoda Trail . . . what memories of almost superhuman gallantry in the bitter fastnesses of the Owen Stanley Range, when the ill-equipped few fought to the death to hold back the tide of invasion that was to sweep to within twenty-five miles of Port Moresby!

Kept back it had to be. For the Japanese swoop down the Pacific had brought them to the northern fringe of the New Guinea mainland. On March 7th landings had begun which left them in possession of the goldfield airport towns of Salamaua and Lae. By July 21st they landed troops further down the coast at Buna and Gona, preparatory to a drive through the Owen Stanleys to Port Moresby — their last stepping-stone to the Australian continent. On July 23rd began the bitter fighting withdrawal of the tiny Australian force which had moved over the Range to organise — too late — the defence of Buna. Back they were pushed, fighting every inch of the way up to Kokoda. But it was impossible to hold it against a numerically superior and splendidly equipped aggressor. Back and back along the terrible trail fell the tiny garrison, fighting desperately and delaying the enemy's advance until reinforcements could come up. The withdrawal ended on September 11th. A few days later the invader was being pushed back over his own tracks down the northern slopes of the Owen Stanleys.

It was during those months of horrible jungle warfare that many a Papuan mission boy showed the grit which he shared in common with his Australian or American brother. In some cases the whole village from which these boys were recruited was Catholic. They carried supplies to the soldier wracked with malaria and dengue, or limp with the scourge of dysentry, yet grimly holding on in the attempt to delay

the enemy until help could come up. Defaulters there certainly were in these days when the bravest white soldier often did not know whether to hang on or to give up. Nevertheless, in most cases once the Fuzzy Wuzzy was on the job he saw it through. Moreover, there are trips on record that Catholic natives alone would make. They could make them because they were going up and down the trail to the rhythm of the Rosary

The war is now a thing of the past. The invader never got to Port Moresby's back door, and thus Australia was saved the bitterness of a struggle on her shores. We are grateful to the gallant men of Kokoda, of Buna, and of Gona; we are grateful to the lads of U.S.A. Nevertheless, may it not be that we should be the most grateful to some little dusky mission school child, whose reiterated "Please, God, help the Aussies" wrought more things for the success of the New Guinea campaign "than this world dreams of!"

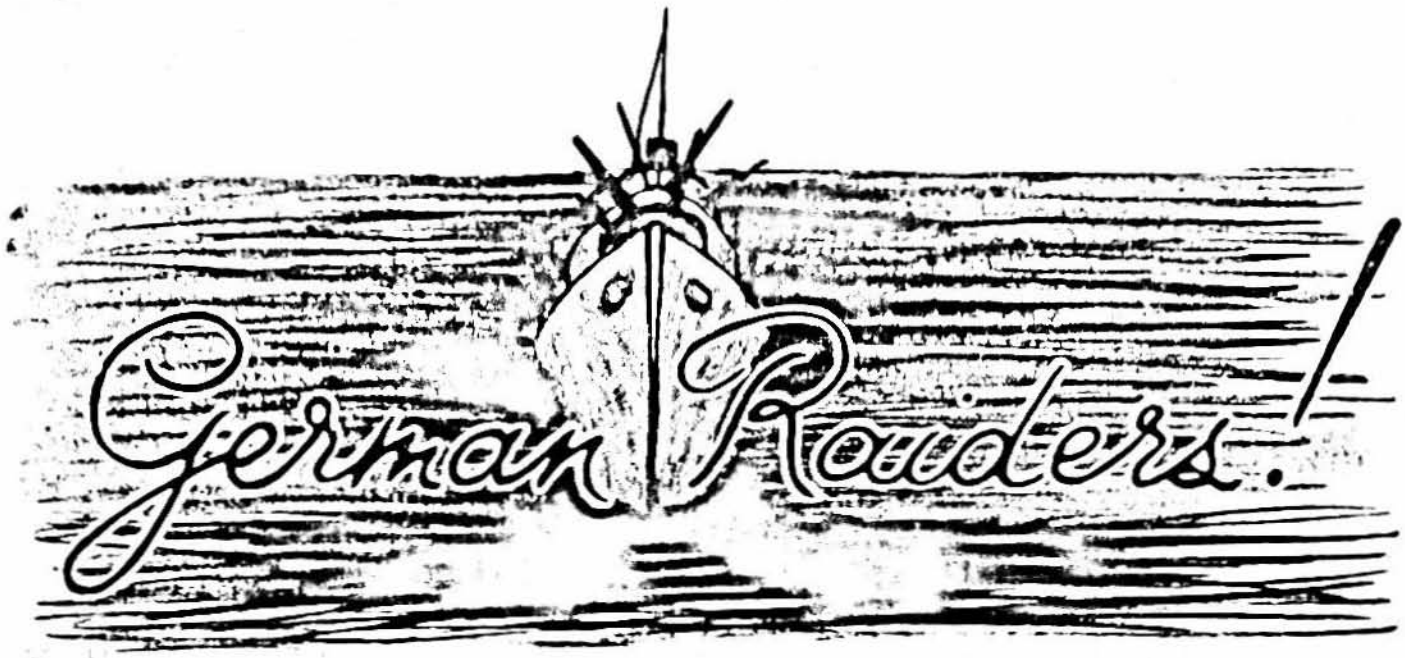
"Please God, help the Aussies"

(Commonwealth Dept. of Information picture)

Fuzzy Wuzzy "Angels" bringing Australian wounded through the jungle to the Hospital Base. The soldier in the stretcher had to be carried for eight days.

(See page 87)

Escape from Nauru



It is September, 1939. The news that war has broken out in far-distant Europe receives scant attention in Nauru. As a single sheet of wireless jottings is the sole newspaper, the war begins and continues without creating any undue sensation in the tiny mid-Pacific Island. To the four missionary Sisters Europe seems very far away. So Christmas comes and goes and the Christmas peace is undisturbed.

1940 has almost slipped away. Supplies and mails have arrived as usual all the year, and now it is December. Suddenly the mission gets a surprise. A Sister, en route for the Gilberts, arrives on the M.V. "Triaster". Unexpectedly and unannounced she comes; no wireless message to prelude her arrival; nothing but silence and secrecy. She simply arrives at the gate in Dr. Quin's little yellow car. With a shock the Nauru missionaries realise that the war cannot be so far away after all. But the newcomer has known it for a long time. She has travelled in a ghostly grey ship; she has stifled in a tightly-locked cabin; her porthole was bolted at sunset lest any traitorous gleam of light should unwittingly signal a message over the dark waters. You see, there were German raiders about — quite near in fact.

The new arrival brings a message for one of the Nauruan Sisters to go south to Sydney. The "Triaster" will take her on December 6th. But in Nauru man proposes a voyage and God sends a violent westerly wind. And when a hurricane is blowing in these parts no ship can even remain tied up. It must sail far out to sea to avoid being hurled against the treacherous reef fringing the island. And so on December 6th the "Triaster" is a mere bobbing speck out on the horizon — a tiny grey speck lashed and tossed about by angry foam-tipped waves. Giant breakers hurl themselves upon the reef with thunderous crash; spray and foam are flung upwards and, caught by the raging wind, are changed into driving, blinding mist. Surely no sane ship's captain would venture near this death-trap.

The days speed by. The gale increases. Coconut trees sway and crash to the ground. Heat, rain and wind fray the nerves of every island resident. It is the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception. The storm is unabated. Several ships besides the "Triaster" are out on the horizon awaiting a lull.

Then, lo! An unknown ship with strange markings sails in perilously close to the shore. Sighted by several Europeans and numerous natives, it sets disturbing rumours circulating. These are speedily followed by an official order from the Administrator, Colonel Chalmers, to maintain a strict black-out.

Suspense grows.

Our Lady's Feast dawns calmer and brighter. On leaving the church after Mass the five Sisters are met by a crowd of excited natives. "A ship is burning out there."

Can it be that the mysterious ship and its reckless captain has met its doom on the reef and gone afire? Hours pass, and then the question is answered. The burning ship is the M.V. "Triadic". She has been attacked and shelled by a German raider. Where is the "Triaster" and her companion ships?

Months are to pass before that anxious query receives a reply. In the meantime the missionaries thank their Heavenly Mother for saving one of their number from a possible solitary ride in a German raider.

Nauru is a closed port. All communication is completely cut off. Days drag by into weeks. Then news comes through as to the whereabouts of the passengers from the missing ships. All are safe on a tiny island in the Bismarck Archipelago. The Germans have wirelessed the information and asked for them to be rescued.

Boxing Day is enveloped in Christmas peace. Not a breath of wind stirs the trees. The Pacific surely earned its name on just such a day as this.

But calm comes before a storm.

In the brief interval of tropic twilight the mast of a ship is descried. Now, as Nauru has been declared a closed port, this unscheduled visitor gives rise to a most un-Christmassy suspense. Strictest black-out is ordered. The hundred soldiers under Captain King take up position at the harbour and watch for the dawn.

Morning comes and with it Mass at 6 a.m. Suddenly at the Sanctus loud explosions rend the air. An uneasy tension seizes upon the worshippers. "Blasting" you tell yourself unconvincingly. Then a series of explosions from the direction of the settlement. The Consecration takes place to the accompaniment of terrifying reports that can no longer be put down to the noisy breaking up of phosphate ground. The Sisters receive the Ruler of Heaven and earth into their hearts and confidently trust what the day holds to Him.

On leaving the church a wild scene of panic meets the eye. Scores of native women and children are rushing distractedly through the scrub to hide as far as possible from the scene of action. Screaming, shouting, terrified, they race off regardless of all reassurances. "It can't be all right. Look!"

A heavy, black, rapidly increasing cloud of smoke is rising skywards. Oil! The huge oil dumps have been shelled and are burning. Another frightened group joins the Sisters for a moment. "Listen!" they scream. Shells are falling thick and fast and the earth trembles to the accompaniment of the frightful din. The natives continue their mad flight.

The Sisters hurry to the beach and see a ship lying off shore with guns turned on the settlement. As the shelling continues they decide that it might be well for them, too, to "go bush" in case the ship takes up its stand outside the mission station. So two hasten to the church to put away the vestments whilst the others prepare for a trek to the inland — the high part of the island. When the two sacristans reappear they laugh heartily at the completed preparations, which include a bag of flour, a bag of sugar and a bag of rice!

With everything ready for flight to the "mountains", five Sisters settle down to make the spiritual reading from a book on the Psalms. The reader begins: "In the Lord I put my trust. How say ye then to my soul: Get ye hence to the mountain as a sparrow?" As eyes turn towards the luggage all feel that David is having a joke at their expense. As the reading continues the shelling grows slower. "I think it is time to unpack," laughs the Superior, and, as the shelling has completely ceased, and no ship is visible, the community readily agrees.

Almost immediately Father Clivaz comes up the back stairs two at a time. Eagerly his news is given, eagerly received. "The ships are the same German raiders that sunk the "Triadic". There are three altogether. The captain of one of them signalled a warning to the harbour master that they were going to destroy the oil dumps and phosphate works, and, to save loss of life, advised evacuation from that neighbourhood. No one has been hurt."

"But Captain King and his men?"

"Their guns were useless against the enemy cannon. They simply had to retire and watch the destruction of the phosphate works. If a landing is attempted, they'll resist, of course, but it's not likely."

It is evening. The sun sinks in a glory of gold, purple, rose and pink. The radiance and peace of the sunset dispel all fear.

But now the island begins to be kept moving by false alarms. Early in the morning of December 28th it is announced that the raiders are back. Cars dash wildly past. The settlement is evacuating. It is not long, however, before the cars come slinking back. They have fled from one poor, old tramp steamer that somehow or other escaped the early December sinking. The first signal it sends is a puzzled question: "What is the meaning of all the smoke about the island?"

Then another scare. This time the cars begin their mad race at 1.30 a.m. Ships have been sighted by four different people. Again nothing happens. Still another scare. Off race the cars once more. What is it this time? A miserable little sailing vessel from the Gilberts.

Days pass by and school reopens. The A B C and timetables are as uninteresting as ever. The wilder spirits among the pupils wish a few raiders would come and liven things up. It would mean a holiday at the least. The Sister for Sydney finally gets away on the "Trienza", the sole survivor of the "Tri" fleet. The vessel is accompanied by a warship, so those left behind watch her departure with less trepidation than would otherwise be the case.

Nevertheless, a premonition of evacuation is brooding over the Convent quartette. The European women are anxious to go south to safety. But the nuns have only one wish — to stay. So their answer is unanimous when they are asked their

minds on the matter. In the meantime the decision rests with Canberra.

It is July, 1940. One Friday along comes Father Kayser, M.S.C. The usual twinkle in his old blue eyes is not so merry to-day. He has some painful news. "Father, you have come to tell us we must go?"

"Yes, you must go. The Administrator has received a cable from Canberra. It orders the evacuation of *all* European women."

"When are we to be ready?"

"Monday, or any day after that."

Imagine the change from the ardent work relevant to a busy mission station to finding black outfits to replace the white habits of four disappointed nuns. How funereal black looks in the tropics. However, it is in perfect accord with the occasion.

But there is a hitch. We can find only three pairs of black shoes and we want four. Recourse is had to the solitary store, where occasionally it is possible to procure what is wanted. The only shoes of the right size are gent.'s tan, labelled "Talk of the Town." Since the prospective buyer realises that she would, indeed, run the risk of being the "talk of the town" on arrival in Australia, necessity does not do away with convention in this case, and the shoes are not taken.

Friday night is a long, long night. It is really strange how sometimes eight hours flash by and morning announces a fresh day, whilst on other occasions, such as this, fewer hours simply drag by and a timid dawn seems frightened to put in its appearance. Thus Saturday creeps in and the dismantling of the house and school begins in deadly earnest. With breaking hearts, and pleading prayers to Our Lady to protect their hundred little ones in Her own sure way, four missionaries prepare to leave. On Sunday morning, after less than two

Nauru's Boat Harbour. On the day of the shelling, the Germans took their stand in the vicinity of the ship in this picture. The phosphate buildings were an easy target.

YOUNG NAURUANS.

(See Escape from Nauru)

days that have somehow seemed an eternity, news is received that the boat is coming and will sail in the morning.

During the afternoon Aloysius, the head catechumen, affixes to the church door a three-page eulogy of the nuns. The heroines, or, should I say, victims thereof, are at once amused, abashed and appreciative. It is touching this gratitude and loyalty of their Nauruans.

It is 7 p.m. and the church is packed for Benediction. Then comes the final hymn — the Angelus in the many-vowelled native language. The missionaries have heard it before but never like this.

"Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word.' "

And all leave the little white church.

But the crowd does not disperse. A concert has been prepared to farewell the evacuees. The girls monopolise the programme so the men decide to assemble outside the building and await a lull. It comes. In the slight interval their deep, glorious native voices break into a farewell song, the final words of which make missionary eyes grow misty: "And when you return, you'll find us waiting here."

Next morning eager eyes scan the horizon for the warship "Westralia", which is to carry the evacuees to safety. Danger is growing. Japan is expected to enter the war. The suspense of waiting grows wearisome.

Then things suddenly come to a head. At five past ten a shout goes up. "The Administrator is at the gate. Sister! Sister! Goodbye!"

(Note.—Missionary eyes still grow misty at this memory. Hundreds of these fine Catholics died of starvation after being deported by the Japanese to the Caroline Islands.)

It was not "goodbye!" The Administrator brought a cable from Canberra. "The Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and three nurses may stay if they choose." Very gravely the courteous old gentleman points out the danger of taking advantage of this permission.

"There will be no further hope of evacuation."

"Thank God!"

"But Japan may enter the war any day, and it will be God help the isolated little island. Sisters, I can't tell you to go but for your own sakes I wish you would."

"Thank you, your honour, we are grateful for your concern for us, but since we are allowed to stay, stay we shall." (This most decidedly from the Sister Superior.)

"And the other Sisters, none of you wish to go?"

"We want to stay!"

The poor old man seems on the verge of tears. He cannot understand the folly of these irrepressible young missioners. He leaves with the offer of help on any occasion. Imagine the reaction, the celebration!

Japanese Attentions

August and September of 1941 have sped away since the departure of the "Westralia" with its evacuees. The war has now become a grim reality indeed. The surreptitious repatriation of some twelve hundred Chinese has made it quite evident that Japan's entrance into the war is imminent. Only four hundred Chinese now remain in Nauru.

To-day is October 1st and the Sister who came on the ill-fated "Triaster" in December, 1940, is off to the Gilberts. She has been awaiting an opportunity of completing her journey to this her original mission, and now the chance has come. According to wartime etiquette a nameless ship arrives unexpectedly and Sister leaves even before the mail it brings is sorted. The Nauruan Convent personnel is once more reduced to its original number — three.

The next weeks are full indeed. School, cooking and house have all to be managed by a community of three. Each is responsible for one meal, and as army biscuits are easily prepared, they now form a very popular part of the diet. For army biscuits have come into their own even among soldiers of Christ. Flour is getting scarce, and it is necessary to lay by as many tins as possible for making altar breads in the times ahead.

Here it is once more December 8th — only it is 1941. The tide is inviting and a hundred or so little Nauruans splash and scream along the beach.

Suddenly the water loses its interest. A plane is heard. All look up and point, then leave the water to race screaming and shouting beneath the beautiful machine. "Sister, look! A different plane! Look!" Sister is looking all right — but very uneasily at the fine silvery thing flying low overhead. Then it is gone. "From America?" query the children. The Sisters are quite sure it is not. A disquieting suspicion has made the sunshine seem less brilliant. "But Japan has not even declared war," they remind one another.

Two hours later the news is through. War has been declared on Japan, who has already bombed Ocean Island.

Nauru is now in a turmoil. Real fear has gripped the hearts of these primitive people. Frenzied, shouting natives retire as far as possible from the important centres. The sun sinks with a provocative calmness over the agitated island.

The midday lunch of December 9th is over. As sixty children are playing around Sister on the playground, Father Clivaz races over. "The planes are coming! A message from Ocean Island. Run to the scrub and keep hidden."

Hardly has Father ceased speaking when a chattering crowd of Chinese clatter madly down the road, their terrified jabbering mingling weirdly with the clap-clapping of their wooden sandals. Natives of all ages and sizes, half-castes, Chinese and nuns all rush helter-skelter for an opening in the rocks as the first faint sound of a plane is heard.

All are huddled under cover. Three planes speed overhead. Thunderous reports reverberate throughout the coral peaks. The earth rocks.

Japanese bombs have fallen on Nauru!

The Sisters persuade all to sit down and begin the Rosary. The Rosary ended, panic again threatens. Suddenly a diversion, in direct contrast to the Rosary, is created. A very intoxi-

cated and consequently very merry native produces a bottle and caresses it lovingly. Such ludicrous behaviour raises a roar of laughter. What a scene! The fearful din of bursting bombs and the purring of planes has blanched every countenance. Yet those strained faces are laughing at a foolish, half-tipsy man. The Sisters watch quietly and are relieved to note that the bottle is empty, grateful though they are for its tonic effect on the crowd.

After one hour the din abruptly ceases and the planes make off in the direction of the Marshalls. The same thought occupies the mind of all. Has anyone been hurt? What will happen next? Reports state that the wireless equipment has been destroyed, but that no bombs have fallen outside this region.

Up betimes next morning the Sisters make all in readiness for the next flight from the planes. When will Nippon come? Will he come to-day? It is at the midday meal that these questions are answered. And they are answered at almost the last bite. At least the answer makes this bite the last one!

In two bounds Father Clivaz is up the verandah steps. "They have left Ocean Island. There are four to-day," he cries excitedly. "The natives have put up a few shelters over there. It looks like rain." In a flash he is gone.

Yesterday's scene of wild scurrying is re-enacted until the scrub is reached. The sound of oncoming planes is heard. Every nerve is tense as the machines swoop low down over the trees. All hold their breath. The great planes are immediately overhead — very, very low.

"They are walking on the trees!"

This ingenious remark comes from a little native girl. Sister again begins the Rosary to the accompaniment of pandemonium.

Day after day the bombing is repeated. Though the main wireless station is destroyed, messages continue to be sent and received. Nippon is annoyed. He comes every day till he finds out the chief of the secret stations. He is going to land and does not want Australia to know of his movements. That is why he is so interested in the wireless.

Now suitcases are beginning to be packed. Why? Because Father Kayser has told the Sisters that when the Japanese land they will most certainly take both themselves and the nurses to Tokio or the Carolines. So plans are made for the trip. Could the Japanese hear the eager anticipation of a free trip at their expense, they would possibly be taken aback at the pleasure they are giving. But could they see into the heart of each actress, they would see a deadly fear which nothing but a blind trust in God could calm.

Christmas comes.

"Peace to men of goodwill!"

The words ring through the dimly-lit church. Its windows are covered with coconut leaves and not a glimmer of light betrays the presence of the worshippers. Despite the setting, peace comes to the hearts of those who adore the Word become Man. All are confident that He Who left His glorious Heaven for their sakes will not abandon them now.

One midnight ships are reported. Quickly the soldiers are drawn up on the beach. Poor men. They are badly armed and face certain death. Father insists on an immediate departure for the bush.

There is no chattering crowd this time. All the natives have long since vanished. Only one poor little waif, whose mother is a leper, clings to the Sisters as all stumble forth into the dark. It has been raining and the scrub is wet. It is hard to find a path in the night, but finally a cave is reached high up in the coral mountain. Little Gerda is put to sleep

and the Sisters kneel and pray for the poor men on the shore. At length, exhausted, they sit and watch the world awaken.

The first streaks of sunshine make the raindrops on the tomano leaves gleam like lights. The noddies and terns rouse themselves and fly away over the swaying green coconut palms to the sea. What a picture of peace and beauty. The black and white birds soar gracefully above the green leaves till they are lost in the deep blue of the sea which washes the outer edge of the reef with shining white breakers.

Crash! Boom! Crash — Crash — Crash! The Sisters quickly resume a kneeling position and pray as never before. The noise continues coming from the direction of the harbour. Soon it ceases.

"Our poor men must have surrendered!"

"Poor lads! What else could they do?"

At long, long last it is eight o'clock. Two Sisters decide to go down and see what is happening. Father, who is waiting for them, is strangely unconcerned.

"What has happened?" Sister's blanched face puzzles the young priest.

"Happened? Why, they didn't come. The ships have disappeared. Heading for Rabaul, they think!"

"But — the noise at the settlement?"

Father laughed outright. "That was the British Phosphate Co. staff. They have blown up the cables. When Nippon does come he won't be able to tie up."

1941 glides into 1942.

Nippon flies over almost daily but he comes to schedule — always between noon and 1 p.m. The visits are only for reconnaissance. Early in February he changes his tactics. A few minutes after nine the warning sounds. Eighty little

Nauruans are hastily shepherded to shelter. I should have said seventy-nine, for, whilst the planes are flying directly over the hiding place, one bold young spirit has been sitting out on a prominent pinnacle "to get", as he explains, "a good look at the red ball on the side!"

Japanese attentions are becoming very pressing. Danger is growing. Nevertheless, we feel very secure in our permission to stay on. One day our feeling of security is rudely shattered.

The Administrator comes to announce that all must pack up and leave the island!

Protests are in vain. "Everyone is going this time," insists Colonel Chalmers. "The nurses, Captain King and the soldiers, the Phosphate Co. staff, the Chinese — all are going except Dr. Quin, Mr. Shugg, Mr. Harmer, Mr. Doyle and myself. I s'pose the priests will insist on staying. They may if they wish, but you Sisters have no choice."

"When are we to be ready?"

"I can't say exactly. My information simply states that a warship is in Australian waters and is on its way here. It may come to-morrow. It may be next week. Most certainly it will be by the end of the month."

"Very well. And you will let us know in time to get a car?"

"I shall send my own car for you."
"And if you forget, may we stay?"
"I shall not forget!"

The Administrator has gone. Three very sad missionary Sisters once more set about packing their few possessions. Soon after Colonel Chalmers has left, Mr. Cude, the lawgiver and law enforcer of the island, arrives at the back steps.

"You have seen the Administrator?"
"Yes."

"Then here are some travelling companions for you.

He holds up three military knapsacks, each with a water bottle and a tin cup attached. The evacuees cannot restrain their mirth.

"You may each take one small suitcase, but as you probably won't see that until you arrive in Australia, you will each have to wear a knapsack and pack essentials in it." Off he goes laughing.

Little Nauruans are convulsed at Sister in a knapsack.
"Sister, you look like a soldier!"
"Look at the cup!"
"What do you put in the bottle?"
"He forgot the rifles!"
It is 4 p.m., Monday, February 24th.

Three black-robed figures, wearing military accessories and surrounded by sorrowful, wondering natives, leave their mission home and are carried away in the Administrator's car to the boat harbour. There nearly four hundred Chinese are lined up prior to being taken out in small boats to the waiting rescue ship. The "Tern", which is to carry the Sisters out, is chugging away impatiently at the bottom of the steps.

"Good afternoon, Sisters. This way —"
It is all over very quickly.
"Goodbye. God bless you. Pray for me."

There is no time for more. In any case, hearts are too full for protracted farewells.

But three travellers carry away a memory. It is of two priests standing on the shore as the launch chugs out. One is old, and his long grey beard is stirred by the breeze. That is Father Kayser. The other is young, and has refused to desert his old companion-missionary. He is Father Clivaz. Another figure, too, stands there — the fine old warrior, Colonel Chalmers, who, with his four volunteers, has elected to remain and care for the natives.

The "Tern" dashes off and cuts the waves in its best style. Far out it goes to meet a destroyer advancing swiftly from the sunset. It cannot come into the harbour. There are no cables. Nippon is not the only one who cannot tie up.

The advancing vessel draws up. Rope ladders are thrown over the sides at regular intervals. The canoes full of Chinese make for these. The "Tern" draws in near a wooden gangway on which stand gesticulating Frenchmen. A rope is thrown over to secure the launch to the larger vessel. Both are being lashed and tossed by the chopping ocean which has been whipped up by a westerly wind.

"Come on! Jump!"

Over a space of surging sea, from the edge of a bobbing launch to the rung of a swaying ladder, each Sister jumps in turn and scales to the deck. What a sight! Chinese are swarming up the sides of the ship. Cargo for Nauru is all over the deck. Small boats come and go. Sailors are leaning over the sides of the ship. The seething, jostling crowd on deck grows and grows as the brief tropical twilight fades.

Flight in a French Destroyer

"Hello, Sister!"

"Hello, Captain!"

"Come down out of this bedlam. Be careful of the shell-rack. You have either to climb over it or under it — under it is better for ladies, I think. Careful of those ropes and guns." Our guide is the cheerful little Australian, Captain Preece, who has been sent to pilot this destroyer. "Here's the stairway." He makes a sweeping bow and indicates a steep iron ladder. "Let me go first. There's an art in going down these things." The Captain keeps up a cheerful chatter and waits for no reply. The guided ones appreciate his humour and his tact and follow him down, down — for the rolling of the ship makes the descent a long drawn-out and difficult one.

"Commander's quarters, ladies! The best on the ship! Get all you can out of your stay here! You'll hardly get another such chance in a lifetime. I'll see you later. Have your complaints ready and I'll do what I can to remedy them. Must give a hand to clear off the cargo now." The jolly little man is gone.

The trio sit down and laugh. Complaints! What have they to complain of? This is a fine compartment indeed. Almost at once they are joined by the two Government nurses and their good friend, the British Phosphate Co.'s nurse.

The ship's engine is stopped and the vessel is tossing madly. All reputations for good seamanship are about to be destroyed, and one and all become seasick. The first dreadful bout over, it is time to complete the interrupted inspection of the apartments.

"What is that door?" It is tried and, joy to relate, it leads to a bathroom. The practical nurses quickly work out a time-table of baths for the morning. But a disappointing notice is discovered: "Out of order. Go upstairs." Upstairs! Everyone remembers coming downstairs, and the idea of a repetition of the performance is disturbing, to say the least.

Two of the party volunteer to try. They are back in ten minutes and declare in unison (of course they've prepared it!): "It's easy. Up the iron staircase till you reach the deck. Then slide your feet along the deck between the prostrate Chinamen. Don't attempt to lift your feet or you are sure to step on a Chinaman. Next grab the shell-rack and crawl under it. Stand up and you'll see a door labelled "Bathroom!"

"Fine!"

"Thanks!"

"We'll try it later. But I don't see why those Chinamen didn't make a path for you."

"That's something you'll understand when you go aloft. The poor fellows are crammed together like sardines and can't move an inch."

By this time the stores for Nauru are off. Some have been loaded into small boats, but most have simply been thrown overboard. Packed in water-tight containers, they will, it is hoped, be tossed up on the beach by the tide.

Suddenly the engines of the ship begin to work and the Nauruan evacuees are racing south from the yellow peril. Over five hundred human beings are stowed on that little ship — a hundred white men, nearly four hundred Chinese, fifty soldiers, three nurses and three missionary Sisters.

At about 8 p.m. the single ship's steward appears. No formal gentleman this — just a friendly, gracious Frenchman.

"Bon soir, mesdames. Voulez-vous accepter du thé?" Nodding heads gratefully accept. It is pale French tea, but all appreciate the thoughtfulness. Frenchmen think in terms of coffee for themselves. Yet now they think of tea for Australians. "Merci, Monsieur." One traveller dares to talk French to a Frenchman. His beaming smile flashes appreciation.

Soon all settle down to sleep as best they can. As the engines increase their speed the heat becomes unbearable. There is only one bed and figures on mattresses on the floor grow more restless. Not a breath of wind penetrates this apartment. There are no portholes. Sleep is impossible in this suffocating, stifling heat. Minutes seem hours, hours days.

Five o'clock comes. It is twelve hours since the ship received its freight of human beings. At about 7 a.m. the ship's Commander calls.

This Commander is a tall Frenchman who speaks a little — a very little — English. "Etes-vous Francaises?" he enquires. "Parlez-vous francais?" The Sister who said the bold French "Thank you" to the steward is ordered by the others to do her best. She obeys hesitantly. The Frenchman is relieved and light begins to be thrown on many things. Here is a summary of the conversation.

"This ship is a French destroyer — 'Le Triomphant' — built for speed. She was badly damaged in the evacuation of Dunkirk. Everyone thinks her sunk. However, we limped over to Scotland and were soon in working order again. The crew of 'Le Triomphant' have declared themselves Free French. Many of our men were killed at Dunkirk, so we are fewer than we should be, but they're a fine lot."

We go upstairs with the pilot's English-speaking assistant. Practice makes the iron ladder less difficult. A few white men are strolling about among the numerous Chinese, but the others are all ill. They are crowded into the tiny ship's hos-

pital. The last few months on the island have unfitted them for such a rough trip. Nevertheless, the deck is not so crowded with Chinese as we had been led to believe.

"Where are all the other Chinese?" is the first question.

"We've had to send about two hundred of them down to the engine-room. The crush up here was beyond endurance. Don't know how long they'll be able to be kept there though. It's too hot. Even the engineers wear rubber gloves when going down or they'd burn their hands on the steel railings. Here's Cude now — looking worried. What's up, old man?"

"Those Chinese will simply have to come up. They'll go mad down there. One poor wretch has just asked me to bring a gun and shoot him." The two men go off to see what is to be done.

The first day at sea has ended at last. Another long night and the second day dawns. At 10 a.m. we are invited to make a tour of the ship. The deck is once more so crowded that the sliding step is the only safe one. A strange medley of bundles adorns the walls. "The Chinese luggage," explains our guide.

"But they were not allowed to bring a thing," comes the puzzled reply.

"That's just it! They weren't allowed to carry any luggage, so they wore it. Now the terrific heat has forced them to peel it off. One Johnny was found to be wearing seven suits. Poor beggars! No one is pretending to notice their trick."

Cannons, anti-aircraft guns, deadly depth charges — all are explained. Back in the cabin the evacuees discuss the tour of the ship. French warships are said to have the worst crews' quarters of any nation in the world. Judging by the first-hand evidence just obtained all are inclined to agree. There are only about three bunks besides the one on which most of the party are now sitting. The chef sleeps on the floor in the pantry and the cook lies in the space between the stove and

table of his kitchen. The engineers sleep handy to the engine-room and the rest of the crew on the deck.

But if the quarters are the worst possible, the spirit is of the best. Each member of this crew of lithe young Frenchmen is loyal, courteous and self-sacrificing. Not one but is smiling or ready to smile. To none does anything seem a trouble, though many things are. Their loyal, happy, united spirit is a challenge to all on board.

Meanwhile the little French destroyer races southwards. The biscuit and water ration is reduced to biscuit only. The drinking water is finished. The great heat and consequent perspiration makes all very thirsty. The party in the captain's cabin fares a little better than the poor men on deck. The former are offered fruit juice, but the thought of those above makes them refuse it.

The night wears on.

The ship is fired to its maximum speed. The heat from the engine seems to burn the very floor under the mattresses. The first night was almost unendurable. This is far worse. It is impossible to be still, yet useless to move. What those poor Chinese must have suffered in the very engine-room itself!

Daylight at length — and what haggard faces it reveals. Strong men stagger with exhaustion, but land is near and the thought helps all to bear up. Soon an island is sighted — one of the New Hebrides. A great cheer rings through the ship, then dies away into silent, eager anticipation.

Past the first islands of the group and into Port Sandwich sails "Le Triomphant". A great, deep, sheltered harbour welcomes the weary little destroyer. Like a relieved quarry that has barely escaped the hound, it slackens speed and draws up beside the waiting "Trienza". A heartening cheer goes up from the crew of the expectant merchant vessel and the evacuees are quickly transhipped. Great tables laden with cool salads are waiting for all.

Some three hours later all are lined up on deck to watch the departure of "Le Triomphant" with its gallant, smiling

crew. A solemn hush follows the shouted farewells as the tiny destroyer grows smaller and smaller in the distance. It has gone to evacuate Ocean Island this time. Will it be in time? Will it return? The unspoken questions draw a prayer from every heart.

While the "Trienza" awaits the return of the rescue ship, shore excursions are arranged. The Nauruan Sisters are invited to the French Marist Mission Station. Thus in the early afternoon of one Friday a launch is chugging contentedly shorewards through the deep, calm waters of Port Sandwich.

Mountains rise almost sheer from the bay and are mysterious with their purple hue. As the launch draws into the shore the purple fades. Rich foliage appears — drooping tropical trees, enchanting ferns and vines. A canoe slips noiselessly out from the bank and the laughing missionaries from Nauru are quickly transhipped by its fuzzy native crew. In a few seconds the beach is touched and the visitors are at the Convent being overwhelmed with gracious French hospitality.

The next trip ashore is arranged for Sunday Mass. Nothing is a trouble to the Second Mate who makes all the arrangements. Thus Sunday sees a party of Catholics aboard the little launch and heading for the shore. Curious natives watch the strangers approach the church. Who are these mysterious people in their island home? Why are they here? Discretion denies an answer. The mystery deepens. Black eyes grow rounder with wonder.

Mass over, the Sisters are once more taken to the Convent for the day. Back aboard the "Trienza" excitement runs high. Where is "Le Triomphant"? When will it come? Whom will it bring? Thirty Sisters from the Gilberts are supposed to be on board. Fancy thirty in the Captain's cabin!

Monday passes and tension grows. When? When? When? Is she safe? Has she got through? It is raining and a dull cloud hovers over the waiting "Trienza". The nervous, restless steps of those on board betray pent-up emotion. All at once —

"She's coming!"

Round the corner speeds the swift little destroyer. "Hip, hip, hooray!" A wild cheer bursts from the waiting ship and is answered from the crowd on the French deck.

Without the least delay the Ocean Islanders pour out of "Le Triomphant" — two nurses, European men, a priest, some two hundred Chinese, but — not a nun! The Sisters did not leave the Gilberts in time. The Japanese have landed. Nauru and Ocean Island will be next. "Le Triomphant" has been none too soon.

Tuesday afternoon sees the "Trienza" following its gallant little protector on a winding, southward course. The crew is uneasy. Raiders and mines are about and the ship carries eight hundred evacuees. The eerie grey of the destroyer ahead, scarcely distinguishable from the choppy green ocean, inspires an uncanny dread of lurking evils. Sideways and backwards she bobs as though to make sure no mine has been left unswept. Then onward hopefully.

Friday evening.

Land!

The Barrier Reef!

Home! To-morrow evening or Sunday morning at Brisbane!

A lovely Sunday morning and an impertinent-looking little tug is preparing to take the "Trienza" up the Brisbane River. "Le Triomphant" has already gone up and berthed. A flood of soft sunshine strangely subdued when compared to the dazzling rays of the tropics bathes the fresh green river banks. Friendly Queenslanders wave from windows, cars, and bicycles, from roads and pavements.

Ships of all descriptions are on the river. The Stars and Stripes predominate, but the grateful eyes of home-coming evacuees see only the blue, white and red of a little French destroyer. A great cheer goes up as the "Trienza" passes her.

The wharf is reached and the evacuees are walking down the gangway. Porters look for luggage and turn away disheartened.

While waiting on the wharf the Sisters are addressed by friendly but curious passers-by. But curiosity must remain unsatisfied, for just before the evacuees are disembarked they have been given serious warnings. No one is to mention the means by which Nauru and Ocean Island have been evacuated. The name "Le Triomphant" is to be kept secret. Any mention of it may mean death to its gallant crew.

"Many fine ships about at present, aren't there?" remarks one gentleman, settling down on a seat near the nuns.

"Yes! It was surprising to see so many as we came up the river."

"Oh! Now that the Americans have taken over, their ships are everywhere. But what's puzzling everyone to-day is the mysterious appearance of a little destroyer flying Free French colours. Did you notice it as you came up?"

"Yes, with a blue, white and red flag?"

"That's the one. Seems to have come from nowhere. Been on private business, I guess."

How those three nuns chuckled inwardly. They knew where it had come from and much of its private business. They knew also that no other ship and no other crew was ever likely to supply them so many grateful memories as had done that little French destroyer

4.30 p.m. and the long train journey south begins. The crowd on the station stares at the line of oriental faces. Suddenly they behold three nuns and a nurse. Who? What? Why? The train moves off. Through beautiful country it passes. Recent rains have made the landscape fresh and lovely. Night falls and the ladies retire to comfortable sleepers. Morning! The North Coast of New South Wales presents a continuation of Queensland's sub-tropical scenery. Breakfast! A crowd gathers to watch Chinamen eating rice. The Sisters,

too, are the centre of interest. "Do you come from China?" "Have you converted all these?" "Do you speak Chinese?"

Sydney!

A taxi!

Kensington Convent and the glorious welcome!

The Convent Chapel! Three full hearts overflow as The Magnificat peals forth. "He that is mighty hath done great things."

* * * *

Three years later.

The voice of the announcer from Station 2FC. "It has been announced in the Australian Parliament that on March 26th, 1943, the Japanese murdered the following Europeans who had voluntarily stayed on Nauru to care for the natives:—

Lieut.-Colonel F. R. Chalmers, Administrator.
Dr. B. H. Quin, Government Medical Officer.
Mr. W. H. Shugg, Medical Assistant.
Mr. F. Harmer (Engineer), and
Mr. W. H. Doyle (Overseer), of the British Phosphate Commission's staff.

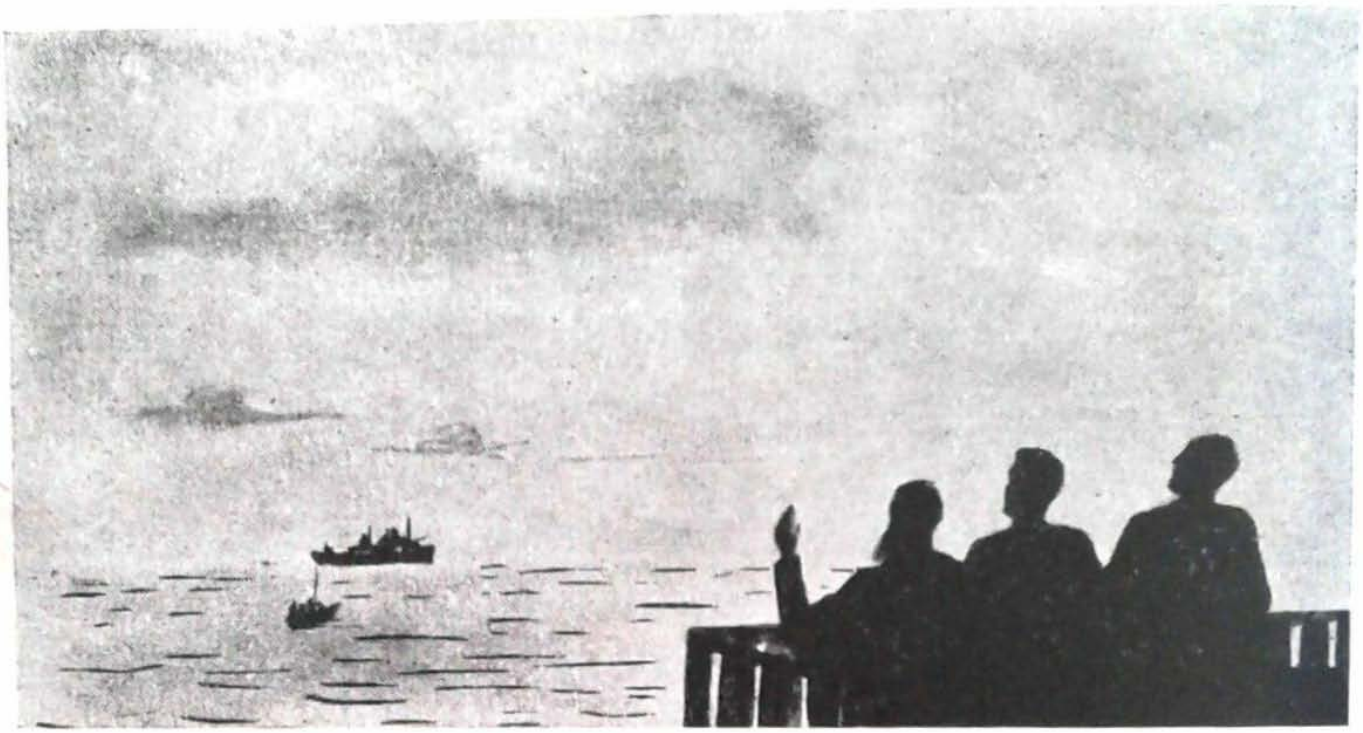
Two Roman Catholic missionaries, Father Kayser and Father Clivaz, who also remained on the island, were transferred by the Japanese in 1943 to the Caroline Islands."*

The evacuated Nauruan missionary is horror-stricken. She had not expected this. She had been listening, listening day in and day out for news of the whereabouts of untraced missionaries in Rabaul. But this —!

Her mind runs back to three years ago. She is again in Nauru. Colonel Chalmers is speaking. "Yes, you must go. Everyone is going this time except Dr. Quin, Mr. Shugg, Mr. Harmer, Mr. Doyle and myself."

* Rev. Father Kayser, M.S.C., died in captivity on October 21st, 1944. His death was due to harsh treatment on the part of his captors.

Then the scene at the harbour. As the launch chugs out to the destroyer two priests on the wharf. With them the gallant old Colonel Chalmers.



"Good-bye. God bless you. Pray for me."

Truly the veil that hides the future was woven by the Angel of Mercy.

Bombs on Australia

Bombs on Australia

The first bombs on Australia fell on Darwin at 10 a.m., February 19th, 1942. We of the Port Keats Mission were to learn this startling news in a most dramatic way. You see, at the time it happened, we three missionary Sisters had just evacuated the mission and were actually on board the mission lugger "St. Francis" heading for the ill-fated township. But to begin at the beginning.

Our mission station is situated alongside an alligator-infested creek about ten miles up from the entrance to Port Keats. We had been there only ten months when we heard that Australia was in danger from the Japanese. We thought that the isolation of our lonely outpost — we were one hundred and fifty miles around the coast in the direction of Wyndham — would prove our safety, so took no measures to evacuate. Nevertheless, we received orders to pack up and come round to Darwin.

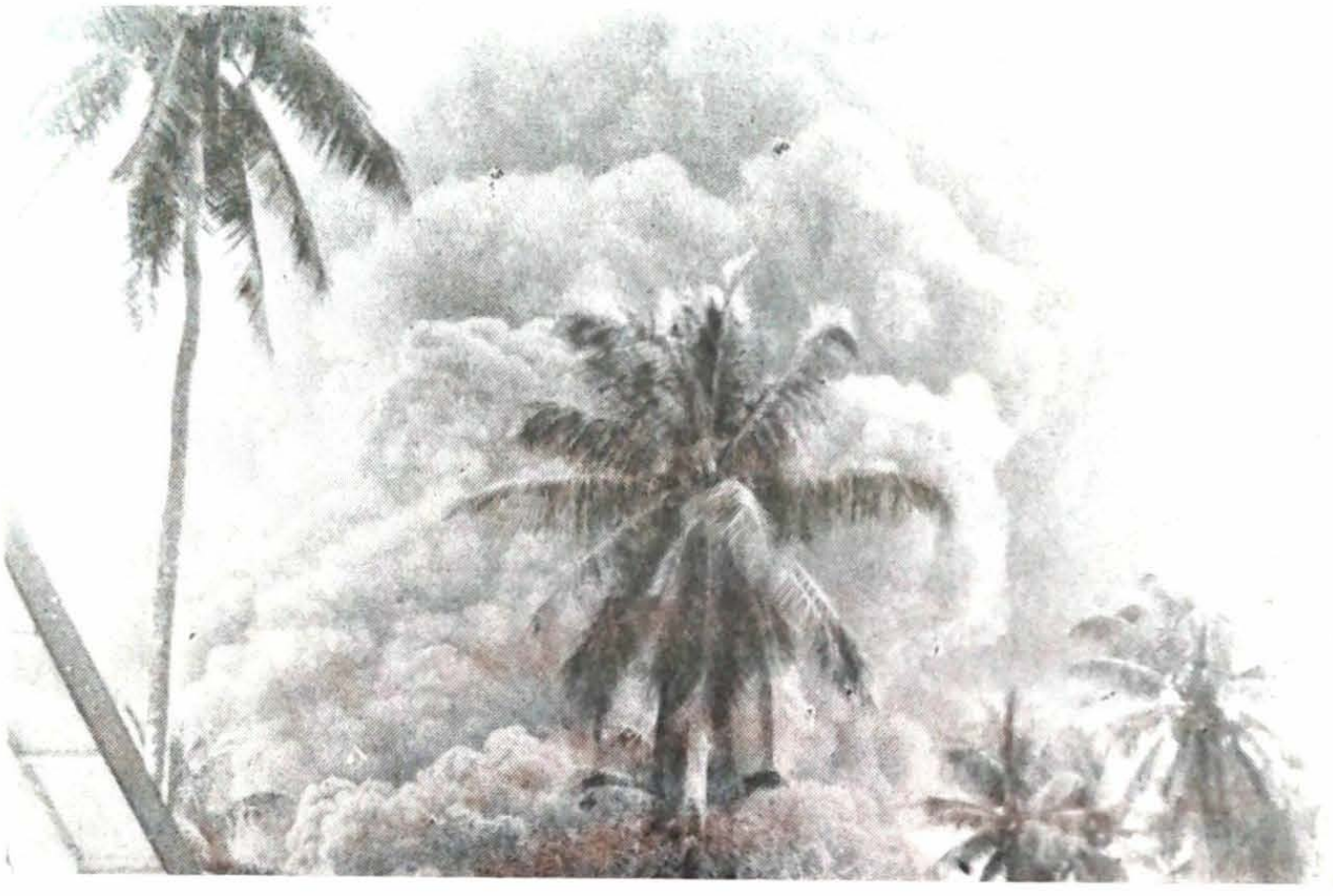
Not that there was much to pack up. It was a long time since a boat had been able to get to us with supplies and we were beginning to be in dire want of many things — including necessary articles of food. We had neither milk, butter nor jam — nothing but sweet potatoes and pumpkin which

appeared for breakfast, dinner and tea. At the last the children clung to us and would not let us go. They implored us to "go bush" with them and let them protect us.

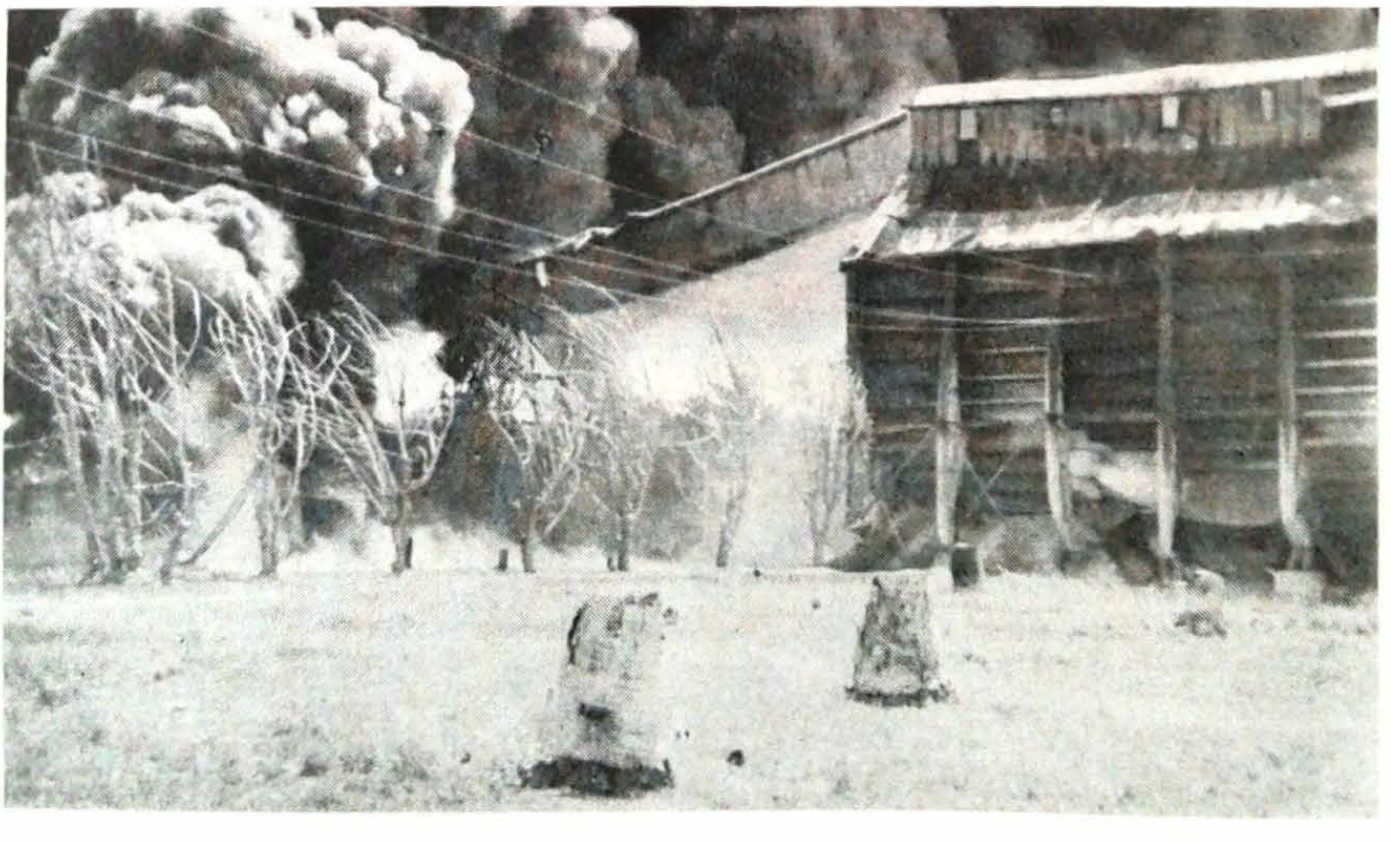
5.20 p.m. on Ash Wednesday saw us on board the "St. Francis" and sailing down the creek. The Brother skipper wanted to put in at a little place called Wallaby Island where he hoped to shoot some wallabies before sunset to provide food for the crew boys. But things did not go according to schedule and by the time we arrived it was too dark to shoot. So we anchored there for the night — and what a night! The "St. Francis" boasts of no cabin and we just had to lie on the hatch. The boat tossed in the tail of a cyclone. The rain poured down periodically and wet us through which, nevertheless, was not very harmful since the wind was such as to dry us as soon as we got wet.

With the dawn we were able to set off on the one hundred and fifty mile voyage to Darwin. But the weather was still bad and the sea was whipped up by the storm. We were blown completely out of our course and just floated around all day not knowing where we were. We had nothing to eat as there had been nothing to bring, and we had not expected to be long in getting around to Darwin. We could not even have a drink since before leaving, the black boys had chosen a tank which Brother had freshly tarred from which to fill our water buckets! All through Thursday night we tossed around feeling sick and miserable. Not till after dinner on Friday did we find ourselves heading for Darwin Harbour.

But the sea now began to look very strange. First, thin little dribbles of oil. Then a whole sea of oil — black and evil-smelling. Said we to one another, "Darwin has been bombed!" We were still outside the harbour but by this time the weather had changed to the boiling heat of a tropical afternoon. All of a sudden a shot was fired across our bows. Most of us thought the Japs had us, but Brother interpreted the shot as a warning from the dock that we were to stop. So we



Taken on the day the Germans shelled the British Phosphate Works.



(See page 92)

sailed round and round in circles waiting for the inspection boat.

In the end a corvette came out to us. Who were on board? Had we seen any Japs? After this curt interrogation we were told to follow the boat in. Off it shot at a high speed leaving us to crawl in through the black shiny sea, thicker than ever with oil. The men on the corvette had volunteered no information but by this time we were surer than ever that Darwin had been bombed.

All kinds of things now began to float by — ships' doors, men's clothing, brooms, blankets, windows, pillows — everything imaginable.

Then we saw the harbour —!

The whole wharf was still burning and smoking. The hospital ship, "Manunda", had been hit but was not seriously damaged. A big ammunition ship had been cut in half and one part was upside down. Everywhere boats had gone down, leaving their masts or funnels sticking out of the water. We made our way across to where the seaplanes land. We could see the wounded being brought down on stretchers to be taken across to the damaged hospital ship. It was a dreadful sight. Some of the poor soldiers had lost an arm or a leg. Others were just a mass of bandages. Some were unconscious, others suffering shockingly.

Darwin had been smashed to pieces. Everyone was in a panic and looked ready to die with fright. At the little restaurant at the top of the jetty were sixteen or seventeen dead bodies which had been washed up on the shore from the sunken ships.

We gradually learned that it had all happened on the previous day. At 10 a.m. a deadly wave of nine Jap bombers had come over in close formation. This was followed by seven other waves. For a whole hour the bombs were hurled on the little town which guards the northern shores of the Continent. Then at noon over came another twenty-one planes. The Post

Office had received a direct hit which killed the Post Master, his wife and daughter, together with several of the staff. All the windows in the houses were broken, some buildings were down and there was wreckage everywhere. The dead could be counted in hundreds.

Poor little Darwin had been taken unawares. For long she had been sleeping lazily in her hot tropical sunshine. Now she was tragically awake and in the grip of a great fear. Her blue skies had been darkened with a fleet of bombers which had burst upon her with the swiftness of her own tropic storms. Deadly bomb blast had lashed her green palm fronds, had cruelly showered to the earth her brilliant bougainvillea and poinciana blossoms. Out on her wide harbour could be seen small boats, no longer rising and falling to the quiet lap of the tide, but engaged in agitated search for the bodies of the dead. For many civilians, soldiers and natives had been blown off the wharf where they were working into the sea, or had leaped from the blazing jetty into the water, which had soon become a sheet of burning oil. Her three hospitals had been bombed and machine-gunned. Planes had flown back and forth, swooping down and machine-gunning all whom they saw. They had gone away but any minute they might come back. Yes, defenceless little Darwin had reason to be afraid.

Rev. Father Cosgrove, M.S.C., met us at the jetty and took us in his truck to the Presbytery for a cup of tea. There was no time to go to the Convent, by now, of course, evacuated. We had to be out of Darwin in ten minutes. We were to go to the Adelaide River about eighty miles into the interior and thence to Pine Creek, still another eighty miles further on. Here we would find the Darwin Sisters, and the Melville Island Sisters with their thirty or so little half-caste evacuees.

As the Japs were expected back at any minute, we bundled into the Presbytery truck and with Fathers Hensckhe and Cosgrove started off along the road for Adelaide River. We were the last white women to leave Darwin. When we reached our destination we found about four hundred men camped

there — mostly foreigners from the different islands around the coast. They were proving a big problem for the soldiers who feared a riot among them. In addition, the whole place had to be kept in pitch darkness as bombs were still expected, since Adelaide River was the site of a big military camp.

So we spent the night encamped in the long, high grass with nothing to cover us from the heavy dew. All night long, soldiers, thinking we were the foreigners, came along asking if we had any guns. These foreigners were panic stricken and, fearful of being made stop and fight, were determined to get away on the train next day. The danger was that many were armed and in a position to cause trouble if thwarted.

Morning came and we were taken to the train which was simply a line of open trucks into which the men climbed. We were huddled into a little guard's van in company with some women and a few shell-shocked people. Then off we started. Progress was slow since the poor old Mosquito (or was it the Sandfly?) had never before in all his engine days had to pull such a load. As we went along we would periodically stop dead and then start to go backwards. The speed left ample time for the men in the open trucks to jump off and gather leaves with which to protect themselves from the burning sun. After travelling all day from 11 a.m. we reached Pine Creek as darkness was closing in.

Here we found His Lorship Bishop Gsell, M.S.C., the Darwin Sisters, and the evacuated Melville Island mission. Here, too, we learned more details of the bombing of Darwin, since all these had been through the nerve-shattering ordeal. About 10 a.m., we were told, the children had been found out in the yard, all excitement at an approaching formation of "lovely planes with little white things falling out of them." It was instantly realised that the "little white things" were clouds of smoke from anti-aircraft shells being fired at the planes which were quite obviously Japanese. In a few seconds the children were bundled inside and lying flat under the beds with machine-gun bullets rattling all around. There was no

panic. They made acts of Contrition and of Acceptance of Death after Sister, whilst Father Cosgrove, who had rushed from the Presbytery, gave a General Absolution.

A house near the Convent suddenly rose in a cloud of dust and tumbled down — a mass of wreckage. Then in the harbour a terrifying explosion, an awful cloud of black smoke with falling debris. It was an ammunition ship. Eight other ships went down. Not only the children had been deceived as to the identity of the planes. The enemy had entered Darwin from the south and everyone thought the planes were reinforcements for our own 'drome. Hundreds of Government officials at the R.A.A.F. were gazing skywards in admiration when someone recognised an enemy formation. But for many this recognition came too late.

The Sisters and children had been brought by American soldiers to Adelaide River. Like ourselves they had had to spend the night in the open and had awakened drenched with dew. In the very, very early hours of the morning the Bishop had been giving Holy Communion to the Sisters at the side of a truck when the alert had sounded. The torch was switched off, Holy Communion received in the darkness, and all dispersed to shelter. The planes turned out to be our own.

Like ourselves, the little party had been brought by train to Pine Creek. But there had been no guard's van for them. They had had to settle themselves in open coal trucks with a tarpaulin, so low that it touched their heads as they sat, for a protection against the sun. Just as the train had been ready to start planes were heard again. A voice shouted, "Run for your lives!" Until now the children had shown no panic, but this time, finding themselves hemmed in by the side of the truck, they took fright. They flew over the side of the truck, heedless as to whom or what they trampled on. Fortunately it was again a false alarm. Eventually the train had moved off to Pine Creek where we now arrived in our turn.

We found a shelter in an old shop, whilst the Melville Island children were housed in a dilapidated police station.

Food was scarce and the position pretty hopeless. After about a week the authorities said we would have to move inland to Alice Springs. If we did not hurry the Katherine River Bridge would be bombed and we would be cut off from safety. So we divided into parties and set off again, according as we could find room on the train.

What a trip! The trucks were full of screaming shell-shocked men. We left at 7 p.m. and would not reach Katherine till midnight. Four of us had to ride on the tiny platform at the back of the guard's van with nothing between ourselves and the open line but three iron posts and a narrow railing. It was bitterly cold and we had no warm clothes. Though we talked and tried to see humour in it all, we got colder and colder and sleepier and sleepier. We had to watch one another in case we nodded off to sleep. If we fell off no one in the long line of trucks ahead would know anything about it.

Eventually we pulled up at Katherine Station, but this was not the end of our train journey. We were to go on to the railhead and be picked up by a military convoy bound for Alice Springs. However, we were saved the rest of the trip on our precarious platform, for a kind officer who had found out about it gave us into the care of three airmen, who insisted on room being made for us in the guard's van. So we spent the rest of the dreadful night huddled up with a most cosmopolitan crowd of evacuees.

Late next morning we arrived at the military station where the convoy was to pick us up. Soon the rest of our party arrived and, after an army tea of stew, beans and bully beef, we took our place at 5 p.m. in the great convoy of ninety lorries, four of which were assigned to us. Then began the long journey of six hundred and fifty or so miles into the interior. The road was very rough and the poor babies simply bounced from one side of the truck to the other. We travelled for about ninety miles and at 2 a.m. next morning put in at a military camp. The children were all sick as they had had to drink bore water. The military were very very kind,

gave us beds and told us to rest till 9 o'clock next morning. Many soldiers asked us for Rosaries and medals.

After breakfast, into the lorries and off again. Sitting on the floor of our trucks we got covered with red dust, whilst the brown babies looked like newly-dug potatoes. At dinner time the convoy halted, the long line of trucks closed up end to end and kerosene tins of tea were passed along, together with bully beef, bread and jam. Dinner over, we were on the road again till 6 p.m. Then a night at another camp — a very poor one. We were given a pannikin, plate, knife and fork, and told to line up for rations. The soldiers cheered us and showed us a little room where we could dine and then came along with extra rations. They gave us a few tents between us, but there were no beds or blankets here. We simply had to lie on the bare earth. This was our last camp.

Next morning saw us off again on the last stage of the journey to Alice Springs. Far away to the north now were the big brilliantly coloured gum trees with their tropical undergrowth. Gone, too, were the stumpy gums and mulga with their background of saltbush and spinifex, which had marked our progress into the interior. We had rumbled over the vast stony downs with their mirage-filled distances, and then over the flat red sand country that stretched for miles upon miles, for hours after hours. We had slowly climbed up into the higher land beyond Tennant Creek and then passed down again into more sand. On and on, past mulga and ant hills, past ant hills and mulga. At last there appeared on the horizon the rugged blue outline of the Macdonnell Ranges. Soon our convoy was winding its way through their passes into the very heart of Australia — not the dead heart that some people would have us imagine, but the beautiful "Alice" with its neat bungalows, nestling in the shadow of the colourful mountains.

Here we were at home — no longer dwellers in tents — for we had a fine little Convent to go to whilst a gentleman lent a home to the children. This was only for a week, how-

ever, for their temporary home was to be Victoria, where the Loreto Sisters, with Christlike charity, had offered them hospitality at Mandeville Hall.

That never-to-be-forgotten journey through Adelaide to Melbourne! What a sensation we caused! White-clad nuns, black children — a crowd of them in the very heart of civilisation! People lined up at every station. Everyone wanted to see us — to have a look at us. We put the windows and blinds down but they would force themselves into our carriages to give the little darkies — alas! — chocolate and watermelon, just when we were at our wits' end to keep them clean. But what kindness we experienced from the clergy, the nuns of little country towns and the good Catholic laity.

And who shall ever speak with sufficient gratitude of the concern for our well-being shown by the soldiers in whose care we were. Many a laugh they unwittingly gave us. There was the incident in which some lorry drivers on the way to Alice Springs were asked to take Sisters in the front with them. They had never come into contact with nuns and were so overcome with panic that their officer said he nearly had to hold a gun at their heads to make them obey. Evidently they soon lost their fears for next day he was mobbed with volunteers, and had to promise the privilege of taking nuns to the cleanest-looking drivers.

On March 19th the last three Sisters left Alice Springs bound for New South Wales. They were evacuees still, so were as yet under the care of the military. When they arrived at the station the Captain led them to their compartment on which was chalked up in large letters the notice: "Nuns!" The train also carried about fifty American sailors whose ship had been sunk in Darwin harbour. There was open rivalry among them as to who would do the most for the Sisters. Typical sailors, they told us "to knock on the bulkhead" (the partition between our compartments) if we wanted anything.

It was touching to see the way in which all tried to make our trip as comfortable as possible. One non-Catholic lad

owned to having been surprised to see us laugh. He said he had always regarded nuns with superstition and had gone out of his way to nudge them in the street to avert bad luck! At the stopping places we were deluged with biscuits, grapes and lemonade by both Australians and Americans.

The Americans evidently thought that everyone regarded us as they did. At one station where a very large concourse had gathered we were coming along the platform with some Sisters of St. Joseph. One of our friends from the States saw us and shouted, "Here, make way for the Sisters! Let the Sisters pass!" It was like the dividing of the waters. We found ourselves walking down the platform with a wall of khaki on either side. A farewell salute in Melbourne was the last we saw of our soldier protectors. May God bless them.

And what happened to the little darkies who so dramatically made their entrance into two of Australia's southern cities, during those ominous days when she was experiencing her first taste of war?* After a short stay in Melbourne, at Mandeville Hall, a tiny mission station away from the missions was set up for them in quiet Carrieton in South Australia. There they remained for the duration of the war and the exceptional kindness they received from Bishop McCabe and Father Conway softened the days of exile. Early in 1945 they were taken back to Melville, their island home . . . but they have not been forgotten among their Australian friends, for certain fairy godmothers still maintain an eminently practical interest in them.

* In all, the Japanese made ninety-six attacks on the north-west and eastern coasts of Australia. Darwin received most of their attention, though Broome, Wyndham and Derby in the north-west came in for small-scale attacks. A tragic loss of life occurred at Broome when civilian flying boats which were disembarking Dutch refugees were pitilessly attacked and destroyed. This happened on March 3rd, 1942. Sydney received a big shock on May 31st when four midget submarines got into the harbour and blew up an old ferry steamer, killing twenty-two naval men who were aboard. The submarines were quickly detected and destroyed. Little over a week later Sydney and Newcastle were both shelled from the sea, though with relatively small material damage.

REV. FATHER KAYSER, M.S.C., who died in captivity in the Caroline Islands.

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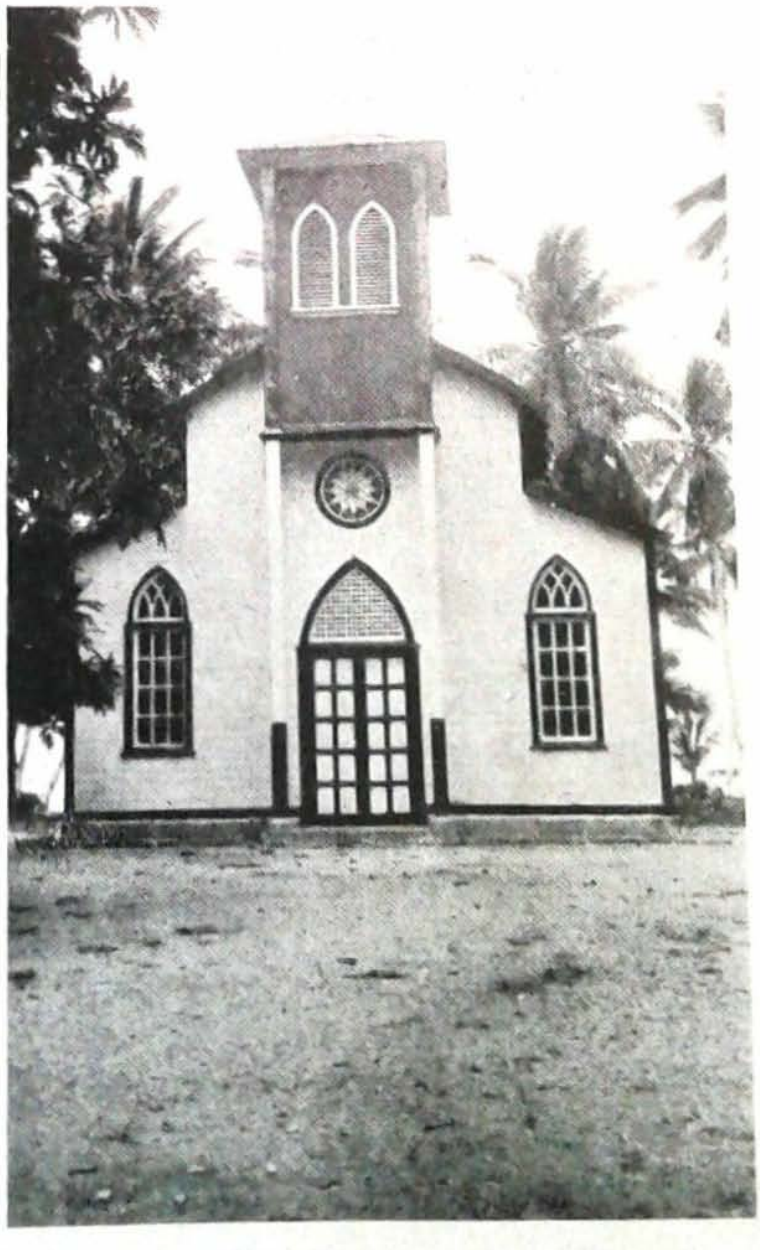

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SACRED HEART MISSION CHURCH

Completely destroyed by bombing.

(See page 113)

The Rising Sun over the Gilbert Islands

Into War Came Peace

Far out in the mid-Pacific, flung like a broken string of jewels across the Equator, lie the sixteen or so Gilbert Islands. To understand this story it is necessary to know something about its setting — these strange, low, white coral islands.

Picture a ring-shaped reef, enclosing a blue peaceful lagoon. The eastern side of the lagoon is bounded by a chain of tiny palm and pandanus-crowned islets, separated at high tide by very shallow passages. The western side is merely reef against which the tumultuous swell of the ocean dashes ceaselessly. The reef is broken here and there by a natural ship's passageway. The whole unit goes by the name of an atoll.

Within the lagoon all is peace. The graceful islets, with their dazzlingly white sandy beaches, look like garlands of foliage floating upon sparkling waters of turquoise blue. The fury of the ocean has spent itself on the reef and the faraway roar of the waves is heard as a subdued melancholy monotone.

To the Gilbertese people, in 1888 came the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, and into the lives of these peace-loving brown children of the Pacific came the peace of Christ. The Missionaries were soon joined by the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and before long the Gilbert Islands were a centre of flourishing Catholic life.

There was much happiness in this land of the coral, which, except for a small copra trade, did not matter much to a commercial-minded world. Around the mission stations

the natives went about their simple tasks of fishing and getting the day's food. Bright-eyed brown children swam happily in the warm waters of the lagoon. At evening as the sun dropped swiftly below the tropical horizon, the natives climbed their coconut trees and sang. Far out over the waters, in the sweet Gilbertese tongue floated the melody of "Holy God, we praise Thy Name," or of "Hail, Queen of Heaven." Over all was a deep, deep sense of peace. Into this peace burst war!

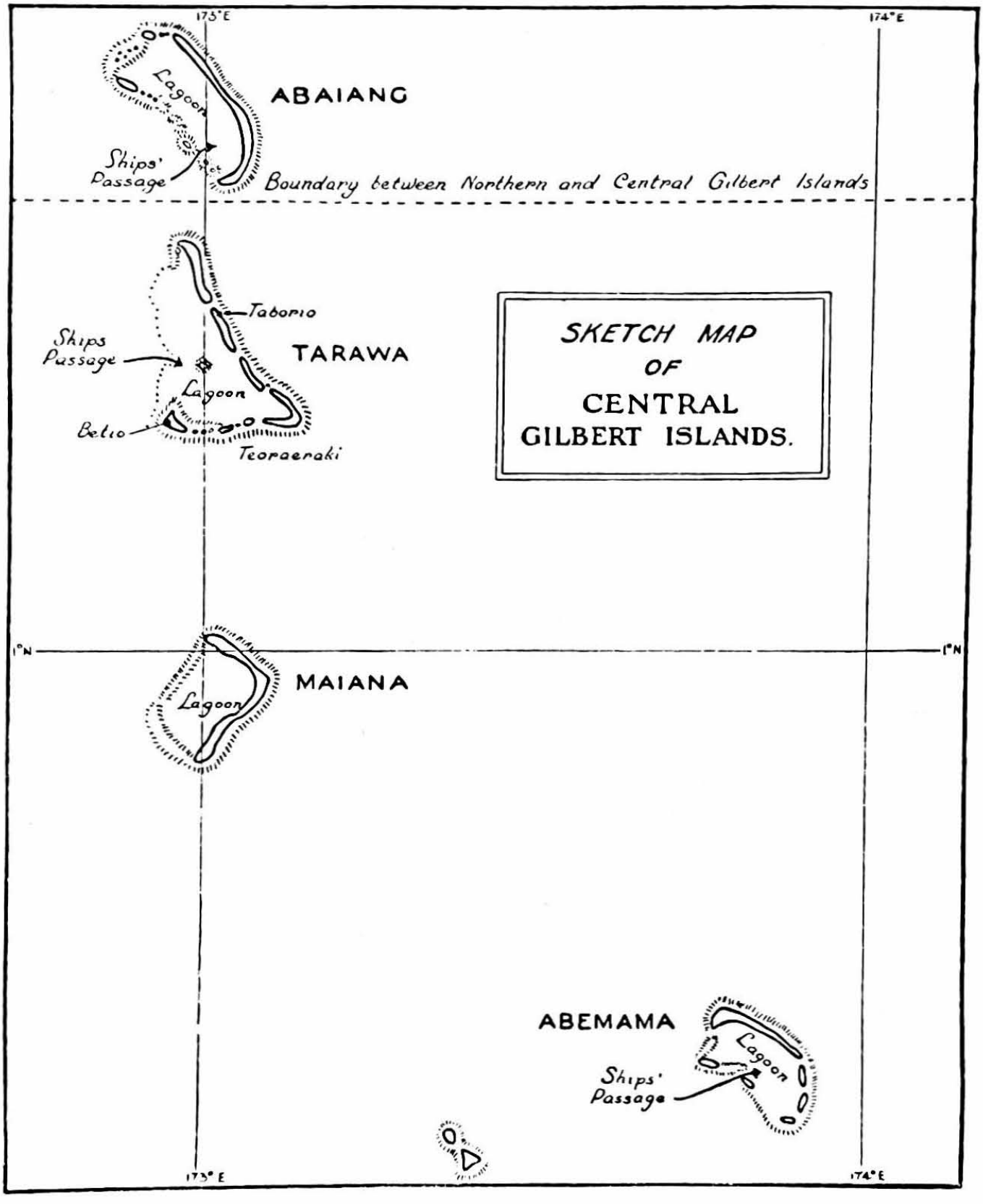
Here begins our story.

We were thirty-two Sisters scattered over different stations throughout the group. Apart from the islands of Tarawa, Abaiang and Abemama, which are situated in the Central Gilberts, and will enter largely into this story, the names of the other stations do not matter.

For a long time there had been rumours in the Pacific of threatened trouble from the Japanese. Then one day we got a radio message to be ready to evacuate at a moment's notice. Wireless operators had picked up communications passing between Japanese ships. Certain it was that these ships could not be far from the Gilbert Islands.

On November 28th, 1941, came an order from the Government at Tarawa to the effect that all European women were to evacuate at once. The Mission schooner, Santa Teresia, flew around the various islands gathering up the Sisters and bringing them to Betio on Tarawa to await transport to Australia. Betio at the extreme south end of the island is one of the eighteen tiny islets composing Tarawa. It is both the Government and the Mission Headquarters.

By December 7th the only Sisters left to be collected were those of Abaiang, Maiana and Abemama. The mission schooner went off to get them. But it was too late. On December 9th a radio was picked up that the Japs were bombing Nauru and Ocean Island.



All hope of escape was gone.

There was nothing to do but wait for the enemy's arrival.

The night was dark and boisterous and thick clouds gathered overhead. We felt helpless and uneasy. The Japs were so close. Would it be our turn to-morrow? At midnight

lightning began to flash, followed by peal after peal of thunder. Rain fell in torrents.

Suddenly the silence was broken.

A native down the road began calling out to someone in tones just loud enough for us to hear. "There are two warships out in the east." I jumped up and dressed at once.

Time dragged on.

Then another voice. "The Japanese have landed out near the Post Office and are heading for the hospital." That was enough. Soon everyone was up and waiting on the Convent verandah.

The clock struck 3 a.m.

Down in the settlement could be heard all kinds of noises, glass windows crashing, doors being blown open, chopping of wood as the radio was put out of action. The occasional firing of a gun made the sounds even more sinister.

Soon dark figures were seen running around in the presbytery yard. Then out the gate were marched the Bishop, Father Superior and two Brothers. They were guarded by Jap soldiers with rifles and drawn bayonets. Passing by our place, the Bishop called out to us, "We are going down to the Post Office."

A few minutes after a torch was seen circling our property outside first, then inside. Tension grew. At last the climax. A miserable-looking little Jap came up the steps on to the Convent verandah. Introducing himself as a Japanese naval officer, he unfurled the Japanese flag. "What nationality?" he snapped. "We are French, Irish and Australian." At once — "Get out that way, Australian! Get out this way, French. Get out this way, etc., etc." He had forgotten how to say "Irish!" So he marshalled "etc., etc." the same way as the French had gone. Again — "Australian get out that way! Get out all of you!"

"It's raining," objected a Sister. "Can we bring umbrellas?" He was a bit nonplussed at first. Then he got the gist of what she wanted. "Yes, yes. Bring umbrella." Sr. M. St. Pierre was over seventy years old and found it difficult to walk. The Jap was asked if she might remain at home. "Yes, stay at home." She was left by herself sitting in a big chair downstairs.

Soldiers by the dozen, thinking that we were not going quickly enough, pushed us out on to the road. It was now raining in torrents and the water was over our ankles. Off we were marched down the road — Japanese soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets behind and in front, to right and to left of us. Those of us who did not go quickly enough for them were just pushed along the slippery footpath.

We were brought into the Government store and lined up before the Admiral. Beside him stood Bishop Terrienne. I was asked my nationality and guards were called to take me away. My companion, an old French Sister, was then asked hers. The guards were told to take her in one direction and me to the Custom's Office.

How changed I found the room — windows broken, perforated zinc mosquito-proof ceiling torn and cut to pieces. Not an atom of furniture left. There on the wet cement floor strewn with broken glass, in their white clothes, sat in silence the European civilian male personnel of Betio. Sitting in a row in front of them were the Australian Sisters much to the embarrassment of the good doctors and officials who could do nothing for them in this predicament.

Finally, it got too much for one of the officials. He asked and obtained leave of one of the guards to go out. He returned presently with the Admiral who began tossing the broken furniture about in an attempt to make a passage through. Behind the Admiral marched four Japs carrying a long piece of white muslin. This ridiculous carpet they spread

out on the dirty wet stone floor and invited the Sisters to sit on it.

Here we had to sit in silence from soon after 3 a.m. in the morning until 5 o'clock in the evening. From time to time the soldiers would poke their bayonets lightly in our faces, and even into our ears — probably to see if we were afraid. One even gave me his bayonet to feel how sharp it was.

Just after daylight we noticed soldiers marching a Sister along the road. Our first thought was that the Sisters from Abemama and Maiana had arrived. To our disgust we discovered that it was poor old Sister M. St. Pierre who could walk only with difficulty and had been left at home. Other soldiers had found her and asked her why she was not with the rest of us. She said her legs were bad and she could not walk. She was promptly told to rub them and to get up and come along with the soldiers.

As the day wore on the destruction became greater. Drums of kerosene were poured over the boats and launches which were then set on fire. The big wooden boat sheds were burnt to the ground. Often we feared the flames would reach our prison. Guns were fired off to bring the natives to order.

The Customs Officer came in for some rough treatment. The Japs wanted the keys of the safe which however he said he had handed over immediately after the landing. Nevertheless he was searched very roughly and then slapped in the face. Within a few minutes two natives appeared through the doorway carrying big axes. We were alarmed. But they were only going to break open the iron safe.

In the early afternoon when they were quite sure that they were going to find no opposition on Tarawa, they set about giving us something to eat from Burns Philp's store. They took heaps of canned foodstuffs and biscuits and invited

us to eat in the presence of an interested Japanese audience. We dined native fashion. Picture us chasing green peas round a tin of water with our fingers, with a Jap guard meanwhile poking into our faces and saying, "Eat — eat!" A bucket of water and a tin pannikin came in at the close of the last course.

At the end of the meal the Admiral appeared. To the men — "If you no obey me — me shoot you. You see?" The men said, "I see." Then — "If you obey me, I no shoot you. You see?" The men did "see." His Lordship and the Sisters then had to promise that they would neither leave the island nor do anything against the Japanese Empire.

More Japs then began to gather round the Post Office. The little yellow men commenced to dig a big hole in a vacant square. A large pole was planted in it. At a call from a bugle soldiers came running from all directions and assembled on the green. The Rising Sun was hoisted on the flagstaff. The Admiral yelled and screamed and waved his sword around to show us how he could use it. Then all sang a song in Japanese, gave themselves three cheers and marched off to do on another island the same piece of work as we had witnessed on that day.

We were alone. The Rising Sun now floated over our land. On the flagstaff was written in English and Japanese: "The Navy of Nippon occupied this island December 10th, 1941, in the morning. Tekinebutai."

Under the Rising Sun

On arriving back at the Convent the first thing to catch our eye was a big notice on the window of the Girls' School to the effect that the Empire of Japan had occupied the Gilbert Islands but would not interfere with the peaceful life of the people if they obeyed its laws. If these laws were disobeyed there would be severe penalties.

Downstairs the community room had been turned into a Jap mess hall for the day. The smell of oriental chow was enough to cause mal-de-mer. Our trunks had been opened and articles carried off. Supplies of cotton materials had been brought down from upstairs and torn into strips to polish Nipponese guns. At the presbytery the destruction was even greater. Up to £1,000 worth of mission goods had gone up in smoke that day. Across the road in the native asylum one patient had been bayoneted, the other shot.

The next day we decided to move away from Betio. Reaction had set in and we felt frightened at every sound. We would move on to Teaoraereki, an islet further round the atoll. It would be safer there. We would have good land and a sure food supply.

We climbed into an outrigger canoe, but not without some anxiety, for a glance at the horizon showed that a westerly storm was brewing. All of a sudden the wind sprang up. We were hit by the full force of the storm. Out into the water sprang the three natives to try and hold the canoe

from drifting out to sea. They were not strong enough so three Sisters plunged in to help them. Then a tremendous wave crashed over the tiny boat and filled it with water. Down it sank with two of us still aboard! Fortunately the water was shallow and we were able to wade through the angry surf to a place of safety.

When the storm abated we continued our journey. It was quite dark when we reached Teaoraereke where two Sisters were already stationed. There were no beds, so native women spread mats for us on the floor. Our pillows were bundles of something or other wrapped up in paper. Then we turned in (on the floor) for the night and the next day as well, since we had to wait for our clothes to dry. Such is mission life. This ended our second day under the Rising Sun.

Christmas Day brought the Japs back again to Tarawa. They used to fly their planes low down over us to see what we were doing. One day a lifeboat with eight men aboard drifted into the lagoon. On December 9th, 1941, their ship, on its way to Vancouver, had been attacked by a submarine hundreds of miles away. Only 8 of the 45 passengers were saved. Except for a case of condensed milk the poor men had been 38 days without food. They were mostly Norwegians and Danes, but one hailed from Sydney.

We were living under very primitive conditions. We had a table or two, and kerosene boxes did duty for seats. We had bananas, breadfruit and paw-paws. Our biggest problem was how to feed our 250 fowls, our ducks and the eight or ten pigs. We had a fish trap, but fish only allowed themselves to be trapped when the moon was full. Even then we did not get many. How often our thoughts turned wistfully to the story of the miraculous draught of fishes. Nevertheless we trusted to God to provide for His missionaries.

Then one full moon it happened — not by the Lake of Genesareth this time, but inside Tarawa reef.

Call it what you will. We like to call it a miraculous draught of fishes. The fish trap was found to be holding 10,000 fish. We had enough fish to last us as long as we were at Teaoraereki and even some to bring away when forced to evacuate that station. Natives came from nearby villages to help us count and dry the splendid haul which was then stored away. Every morning a measure of dried fish was ground up and boiled for the fowls. Each pig, too, received his share.

Our next difficulty. The coconuts failed. This time a native came to our rescue and invited us to supply our needs from his land. You may be astonished to hear of animals living on fish and coconuts. Well, in these distant outposts you have to find local methods to meet the situation. The trouble is that everything in the Gilberts has the same taste. Poultry, eggs and pork either smell or taste fishy. Even when you plant melons or pumpkins you begin by giving the soil a good dressing of fish. So much for the miracle of the fish.

There was also the strange story of the breadfruit trees. These trees bear fruit twice a year — each time over an interval of a few weeks only. During all the period of the Japanese occupation fruit was to be found almost every day the whole year round. Again — call it what you will. We missionaries have our own ideas on the matter.

August 31st, 1942, was the last day on which we were able to have bread on the table. For months we had had only enough flour to bake one loaf per week. This had allowed us a small slice of bread each once a day. Now we had to go without even this.

The Japanese seemed to be getting increasingly busy. We were simply terrified at the way in which they circled their planes low over us. On September 3rd nine warships anchored in the lagoon and soldiers poured into Betio or Little Tokio, as they called it, to begin strengthening the fortifications.

There was reason for all this activity had we only known it. In mid-August the Americans had landed on the atoll of Butaritari and wiped out the Jap garrison.

Two warships were going around the group gathering up all the English-speaking men they could find. They were also going to gather up all the Australian Sisters, many of whom by this time were scattered over the different stations. This was a terrible anxiety, since it meant that a French or an Irish Sister might be left alone on an island. How we prayed to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, our dear Heavenly Mother, while the warships were away. When they returned they had no Sisters on board. How full our hearts were of gratitude and joy. Lt.-Commander Danure was surely a very gentlemanly Japanese. The Australian Sisters, he had decided, could stay where they were. There was no suitable ship on which to take us away. He must have a proper passenger ship for Sisters!

On October 7th the Americans fired their first shot from a submarine on the Jap convoy in Tarawa lagoon. On October 15th, at 2 p.m., Betio was shelled from the sea whilst the ships were bombed from the air. For the first time in our lives we heard the roar of the cannon. It came without warning. As the shells whizzed through the air the heads of the palm trees swayed as they would do in a westerly gale. The tops fell from them as though they had been struck by lightning.

That afternoon, as soon as the raid was over, all the white men of the island were brutally massacred by the Japs as a reprisal. We heard the shots from our place. When the awful news reached us we were terror-stricken, and for days we suffered an agony of fear.

A tragic gloom at the murder of those twenty-two helpless young men settled heavily upon us. Though the Bishop

had previously asked the Japanese Commander to be allowed, as a clergyman, visit them, he met with an unqualified refusal.

From then on we expected to meet a like fate. Whenever we saw a Jap after that we almost withered up with fright. We simply dreaded their coming to our place, especially as at this time they were all armed and often came with a big sword in hand. Not far from us a surveyor and his men had put up their camp. They were a crowd of real outlaws — prisoners, it seems, from the jails of Japan. Often they came over to loot from our place.

One day one of them asked a French Sister her nationality. He was quite satisfied when she said she was a French woman. "Franscha and Japan are allied together," he declared, "and we will pop-pop at America." The French Sisters were not so sure about this, especially when the Japs walked off with Sister M. Jullien's two frying-pans, saying they wanted them for frying eggs. There was that time, too, when a Jap tried to take Sister M. Arsene's bucket. He took no notice when she told him it was the only one she had. Nevertheless, she was not going to lose her bucket. "No! No! The only one I have." While the Jap tugged at one side of the handle she held on to the other. Seeing how persistent she was he let her keep her bucket.

After the massacre of the white men the Bishop, Father Viallon and Brother Conrad were interned at Betio, guarded night and day by soldiers with drawn bayonets. Very early in the morning of October 23rd, 1942, they were put on a ship and taken away from Tarawa.

One day a native policeman brought a letter from the Commander. The document wanted to know our names, our ages, what prayers we said, how long we spent in prayer each day. It appears that a few months before at Butaritari one of the London Missionary Society's native pastors had asked his congregation to pray that England would win the

war. On being reported to the Japs he was lashed by them to a tree for three days and nights. Fortunately for him the U.S.A. submarines landed marines, who wiped out the Jap garrison and freed the pastor. Perhaps the Japs thought we were praying for the same intention.

Many a "social" call we had from individual Japs. One Sunday morning an officer came to the church. He began to read the Our Father and the Creed in English. He said he was an Episcopalian. He was quite communicative. Next day he came back again and asked for the Sister who spoke English. Taking advantage of his friendliness, Sister asked him how long it would be till the end of the war. "When England puts up her hands," said he, turning his back as if to say, "Don't ask me any more questions."

At New Year the chief doctor came along with several tins of condensed milk for a sick Sister. Another afternoon a short, slim, little man came along with several officers. One of his men passed around the lid of a box which held six pieces of snow-white soap. We were each asked to take a piece with which to wash our "beautiful robes." Another wanted to know the difference between a Catholic and a Christian. He confessed to being homesick.

Day after day we had to sit in our workroom, which was full of Japs. Often not a word would be spoken. They were always respectful and properly dressed. Try as you might you could not see the least expression in those little yellow faces with the gold-filled teeth. The officers wore a moustache like the bristles of a scrubbing brush. One of them once sang in English for us "Just Before the Battle Mother." One Sunday morning a plane flew over and there was a loud explosion. A Sister started up with fright and knocked over a seat. The soldiers, quite concerned, all stood up. "Christa Ona Christa (i.e., Christian lady), don't be afraid. It's not America. The Nips are killing fish."

One Sunday, heartily tired of them, we took a walk down as far as our flagstaff. We planted a few medals there, at the same time asking Our Lady to let the Allies soon come along and uproot it.

During all this time we had not many spiritual helps. We had Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, but had Mass only four or five times a month. We found it a real nightmare trying to keep the flour and altar wine concealed. It was the Catholic Women's Social Guild (Christus Rex) of Melbourne, who, by their donation of flour in sealed tins, made it possible for us to have Mass and Holy Communion throughout the last year of our captivity. Would that they could understand what this meant to us when we never knew which day would be our last.

Our sojourn at Teaoraereki was drawing to a close. The Jap Commander advised us to leave there and go further up the atoll to safety at Taborio, a place famous among missionaries for its emaciated porkers and its "shadow" fowls. We had nothing to live on there, so we asked and obtained permisssion to go up to the island of Abaiang. We left on Tuesday in Holy Week.

The adventures that befell us there and the exciting circumstances which brought us back to Tarawa and rescue will form the subject of the next chapter.

Into Peace Came War

(a) FINALE ON TARAWA.

After our arrival in Abaiang at Easter, 1943, we saw very little of the Japs. One Sunday morning before the end of August, however, the Japanese Admiral arrived in a submarine chaser. With him was his staff of eleven officers. His dinner was cooked in our kitchen and a share was set aside for us. It consisted of rice and beans boiled together in small tins. Other tins contained what I suppose you could call Japanese Irish stew — a kind of coarse meat with gravy, beans and seaweed all mixed up together. Our visitors dined out on the shore. The Admiral paid the native teacher the great honour of an invitation to share his dinner with him, the motive, of course, being to question him as to our doings. In particular he wanted to know if we had a radio. Then apologising for disturbing our Sunday recollection, off he went.

By September things were getting very lively down round Tarawa. From the early hours of the morning of September 19th till midday American planes came over and opened fire on the Japs. When they had finished the whole garrison lay in ruins. Jap planes came to the rescue from the Marshalls, and there was a great hurry-skurry in the sky as they flew around looking for submarines. For the next week we knew no peace day or night.

With the dawn of September 23rd came two sampans loaded with soldiers and field artillery. They claimed to have shot down an American plane and the crew was supposed to have landed on our island of Abaiang. They had come to search for the Americans. They scoured the island from top to bottom, but to no avail. Then they began to give their attention to us. Together with Father Jolivel we were called over to the roadside. "What humanity are you?" an officer asked the first Sister.

"Australian."

She was deemed worthy of a soldier plus rifle and drawn bayonet all to herself. And so the interrogation went on. My turn came. "I am from Tasmania." They thought that was Roumania!

By this time all the cannons and machine-guns had been wheeled up before us. There were rifles with drawn bayonets, swords and spades. A big Japanese flag stood up beside a bicycle. All the officers, with heads together, were examining papers.

At that moment, which was certainly a decisive one for us, a tall soldier rode up on a bicycle. He alighted and gave us a most gracious bow. He said: "Danure, Tokio." We did not understand. Making motions with his two hands as though curling a moustache, he repeated, "Danure, Tokio."

At last we understood. Danure, the officer who had allowed us to go free in the early part of the Jap occupation had gone to Tokio. Immediately the officers began to question this soldier. He kept pointing to our place and repeating the name "Danure." It turned out that this soldier had once accompanied Danure on a visit to our place. He convinced our captors that we really were missionaries and not Americans masquerading as nuns. We were saved.

It was now dinner time. But fear had taken the place of appetite. The afternoon brought another interrogation — from the doctor this time. Right glad we were when the bugle rang out and all the little Jappies had to hurry back to Tarawa.

But we were still under suspicion. The next move was to send five guards over in a sampan. They set up their headquarters next door to us, saying that they had brought a wireless to look out for Americans. The truth was they were there to watch us. Night after night we could hear them walking up and down outside our place while we were supposed to be asleep. Who could sleep?

In themselves they were rather nice men — particularly the chief guard. Every morning he came to the church, saluted the Tabernacle, stood at attention for a short space, and then was off again. For a whole month until five new guards came he repeated this devotion. As he passed out near the presbytery from his last visit, he called out to the Father, "Goodbye, Christo. Goodbye to all of you." The five new guards were rather a rough lot.

Came the climax.

On Saturday evening at 6.30 p.m. an American task force made a landing in Tarawa. We were just finishing tea. We heard explosion after explosion. Though we were in fear and trembling, yet our hearts beat fast with joy. Long after dark crash upon crash could be heard in the distance.

Next morning, before daylight, I turned out and went over to the church. But it was impossible to remain there for the very ground was trembling under my feet. Looking across to Tarawa I could see nothing but big clouds of smoke. The very ocean seemed to have turned to smoke.

Back at the Convent, with the explosions growing louder and louder, we prayed as we had never prayed before for

the human lives that we knew were being sacrificed that day. From the top of a tree a half-caste said he could see ships in all directions. Some had entered Tarawa lagoon. All guns were turned on Betio.

The chief guard dressed himself up as a native woman. In a grass skirt and with a wreath of flowers on his head, he ordered some of the natives to take him over to the Jap watch-tower on the north of Tarawa. He provided himself with a fishing line, so that when a plane came over he could pretend to be hauling up fish!

We went about our work as usual, never trusting our yellow neighbours. Little did we dream what good reason we had for our fears.

It was Friday, November 26th. The Jap guards put out a notice that no natives were to visit them that day. The notice, however, did not apply to Joseph, their native interpreter. He was a Catholic and we had at times expressed regret that he was so much with the Japs.

Well for us that he was.

The guards' first job that morning was to gather up all the spades, picks and shovels that they could get in the village. They polished up their guns, swords and bayonets and sharpened the shovels. This completed, they sat around the table. A discussion arose and there seemed to be disagreement. Joseph, pottering about lighting their cigarettes and so forth, pricked up his ears. This is what he heard. "Right. We'll kill all the missionaries at 9 o'clock to-morrow morning. German, French or Australian, they'll all have to be killed. They've given signals to the American planes."

That was enough for Joseph. He had to wait till his day's work was done, but then he asked and obtained permission to go to a native dance. The Japs never saw Joseph again.

He borrowed a bicycle and flew off to warn the missionaries. Father came to us after night prayers and told us to get natives to take us on canoes across to Tarawa, where we might contact the Americans. He would go straight off to tell the eight Sisters and three Brothers at the other station to do the same. We would all try to meet at the south of the island and get off secretly in the early hours of the next morning. We were running into terrible danger, since it had been forbidden by the Japs to cross the ocean between Abaiang and Tarawa.

As soon as Father left us we sat down in silence and waited. The Japs were not far away so we had to be extremely cautious in order not to attract attention. At 9.30 p.m. a cough was heard outside the door. It was the native teacher. Between his sobs he told us that he could not get canoes, but that he had the little launch in which we should all have to go.

Then the escape began.

Each of us turned up her habit and covered herself completely with a dark rug. We went out two by two leaving the door open behind us. Keeping as much as possible in the shadow of the breadfruit trees we reached the road, and after a careful survey to see that no one was about, made a dash across to the jetty. We thought that, since the tide was low we would attract less attention if we boarded the boat at a distance from the shore. We lost no time in wading out and clambering into it.

So far so good.

But even when the sails were up we were not out of reach of danger. Once the Japs missed us we would be pursued in canoes.

The odds were overwhelmingly against us.

Strong wind coming in the wrong direction.

Rough sea.

Squalls.

Even the engine refused to work.

Would we be washed over the reef and drift out to sea? Even so, it was better to be lost at sea than to be brutally murdered by Japs.

But we were not alone in the awful danger of that never-to-be-forgotten night. God was with us. How we prayed. How our voices quivered with fear as we repeated over and over again, "Mary, hope of the hopeless, pray for us." The next day was the Feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. She would surely save us in our hour of danger.

A sudden squall blew up followed by a shower of rain. One Sister became very sick and was suffering intensely. Another squall and the sail rope broke. A native sprang to his feet and caught it just in time to prevent us from being thrown into the sea.

Morning seemed as if it would never come. Those few short hours were an eternity. How many times we prayed our Memorare to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. At day break, to our dismay, we found ourselves only four miles from where we had set out the previous evening. When finally we did reach the place where we were to meet the other missionaries we found no one.

Where were they?

What to do?

We told the natives to take us out of the lagoon into the ocean. It would be less dangerous. We found a passage through the reef and got our boat's nose pointing seawards.

Then came the query. Where were we going? Whom would we meet? The passage across to Tarawa was guarded by land, sea and air. A Sister was given the pilot's white lava-lava and told to sit at the nose of the boat and wave it in case American planes should try to attack us thinking we were Japs. We were in God's Hands and would trust in Him.

It was 9 a.m. The wind had dropped. The current was taking us the wrong way. We were eight persons cramped up in the space of four.

All of a sudden everything changed.

The engine began to work. The sun shone out and dried our clothes. Soon we were out on the mighty deep. After midday we approached the shore of Tarawa. A native shouted to us to get away. The Japs were still in their fox-holes. He had heard that the Americans had landed but had seen no one. The people of his village had all run bush. After thirteen hours cramped up in that tiny boat we were compelled to turn off in another direction.

The pilot changed the sails and steering gear and we trusted ourselves once more to the mercy of the waves. We were exhausted and weak. The bottle of water had been spilt when the sail rope had broken.

Soon the pilot broke the silence. He had spied two Sisters and some natives in a canoe. They turned out to be two of the group who should have met us at the south of Abaiang. We were overcrowded so just towed them along behind us.

Somewhere about 3 p.m. we saw a soldier in uniform coming towards us across the seashore. We were sure he was a Jap. We watched him fearfully as he came across the dry beach. He reached the water's edge and waded out through the in-going tide. Seeing that there was no way of escape we asked the two Sisters in the canoe to go and see what he wanted.

We were too far gone now to care much what happened. Before they could reach him he called out in a stern military voice, "Get away from here as quickly as you can. The Japs can still fire on you. Go back to Taborio and stay there."

What a relief was the sound of that voice. He was a British Officer. We had reached safety.

We were full of thanks to God Who had overshadowed us with His mighty protection. We were thankful, too, that the officer had kept at a reasonable distance from us. Our clothes were dirty and rusty. Each looked at the other as if to say, "I wonder if I look anything like you."

After 5 p.m. we reached Taborio. While standing there on the shore we suddenly heard a great noise. A huge black thing came rushing towards us out of the sea. Hands began to wave from it. In an instant the big strange object was up on the shore beside us. It was an amphibious tank. It halted and there was a rattling of chains. Then an iron door opened and down a ladder climbed a tall officer of the 2nd Division of the U.S.A. Marines. Was it an apparition? No, it was reality. We were standing on the shore of Tarawa with the palm leaves moving gently in the breeze and the equatorial sun low in the west.

"Are you Americans?"

"No, we are Australians."

"Well we're all the same. I'm a Catholic and I've heard why you are coming here." To his men, "Open up the ration box and give the Sisters some rations." Soon he excused himself and went off to get ready to fight the last battle next day. We never saw him again.

We found that the rest of the missing party in the care of the faithful Joseph had already arrived.

From tropical island home, via Australia's vast sandy centre, to the safety of kindly Carrieton, S.A.

(See page 124)

It was the evening of the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal — the day on which we were to have all been massacred.

On December 1st we had a visit from the American General who had taken upon himself the responsibility of our material needs. The Chaplain was with him. We heard that the Americans on guard were to be courtmartialled for not seeing us getting across from Abaiang to Tarawa. We pleaded for them. "If *you* could get across, so could the Japs," said the General. Then he added laughingly, "Did you use a smoke-screen?" The priest patted him on the back. "General, leave them alone, those glorified creatures!" That was the end of it.

* * * *

(b) What of the Other Mission Stations?

The Japanese did not occupy all the Gilbert Islands. They thought it sufficed, no doubt, that the Rising Sun should float over the principal ones. Away in the north in Butaritari they made a fine display of strength and activity and judged it a good secure place for the Bishop, maybe because, with the exception of two priests and two brothers, who were his companions, he would be well away from the other missionaries. But three cheers for Bishop Terrienne. He gave the Japs the slip, and in the midst of the confusion and commotion of the Americans' attack in November, 1943, he led his companions in their escape. They jumped into the water and, under fire made their way to one of the U.S.A. ships. It was a daring feat, for the shell-fire and bombs were enough to lay low the new cement church and other buildings of any size.

Away down near the Equator is Abemama. Here we have a training school for native teachers, who, during their

training period, live on this island together with their wives and families. Had King Richard III been there in the war days it would not have been "My kingdom for a horse." Oh, no! The steed would not have helped him. "My kingdom for a sack of flour or a tin of biscuits," would have been more to the point. He might even have added "or for a doctor or a nurse or a chemist's shop." For no sooner had the Japs installed themselves on Abemama than people of all ages and states began to get sick. First to die was the missionary nurse, young Sister Mary Juliana, the very one whose services would have been invaluable in the following months. Some incidents that happened at this time prove the truth of the old adage, "There is good as well as bad everywhere." We have been so shocked at the barbarous cruelty shown by the Japanese war hordes that it is hard to admit that *all* were not brutal villains. But they were not. When Sister was ill a Japanese doctor did visit her and try to improve her condition. He even sent a tin of butter and of condensed milk for the sick Sister, because, as he said, "She must eat." Of course you can draw your own conclusions as to how much weight a pound of tinned butter and the contents of a small tin of milk would cause an invalid to put on! Despite these attentions, Sister died on 6th October, 1942.

As though this death was the signal, the dreary business began in earnest. An epidemic among the babies, carrying many to their graves, alarmed the Japs. They brought a spray and disinfectant and went on a tour to chase the germ which they themselves very probably had brought into the island. There is no point in listing the number of those who became ill and seriously so at this period. Nevertheless, it is amusing in retrospect to see what is done when medical practitioners are not available. When the harassed Sister has to depend on native boys to watch over the poor invalid the latter becomes at least a victim of circumstance. One of the patients, running a high temperature in the early hours of the morn-

ing, began moaning and groaning. "He's too hot, poor Father," mused his native attendants. Away went his bed clothes in an attempt to give him all possible coolness. Next day, of course, "Sister, Father's very bad."

A nurse must pay great attention to the diet of her charges, and in this Sister was very careful. Every night the broken biscuits that had been begged from the ruling powers would be soaked in cold water. The weevils afloat by morning would be lifted off the now bloated but softened mass, and some thick condensed milk sparingly added. A dish, indeed, but not overcharged with vitamins!

At dinner poultry was served. A chicken, or a bird that had once been one, was killed daily. These were plentiful enough, though hereby hangs a tale. The Gilbertese natives are tobacco fiends and fortunately the missionaries had a good supply of coarse twist tobacco in stock when the dark days came. Every Saturday was market day. From all parts of the islands came representatives of all classes. Some had half-a-dozen or more eggs rolled up in a singlet or handkerchief, or — it really didn't matter what. Others would be holding squawking birds that all the boiling and simmering in the world could not reduce to the chicken stage. These were to be exchanged for tobacco. So the missionaries always had fresh eggs and "poultry!"

Occupied with the sick and dying, trying to keep the Nips in at least a tolerably good humour, running from bombs, teaching Catechists when they were not being conscripted by the invaders, the months slipped by. At last dawned the 22nd of November, 1943.

Some native women were doing the mission washing and they heard a rumour. Down went the soap (what there was of it) and away sped the dusky laundresses. "The Americans are here! The Americans are here!" they shouted. Their hus-

bands in class, hearing the thrilling news, were over the desks and out, almost before the open-mouthed Sister-teacher could draw breath. The first idea was that a good company of U.S. planes had been sighted. No. What the women said they meant. In the early morning American marines had landed on Abemama some miles south of the training school. Word of their arrival spread like wildfire through the island. The little green-uniformed Japs got panicky and ran in all directions. Some ran too far south and got an American bullet. Hearing the report of the rifle the rest rushed together and, under the leadership of their officer, went to their dugout to stay there. The missionaries (two Fathers, two Sisters and one Brother) discussed the situation, not quite sure whether they should stay put or take to flight. Meantime someone of a practical turn of mind had hung out all the wet washing which the laundresses had abandoned. More of this anon.

A report that bombers would be coming ended the indecision, and the missionaries and their folk went hurrying along towards their liberators. No need to describe the caravan. Enough to say that its like is not seen every day. There is a bridge on this route that will go down in Abemama's history as the "Meeting Place." Yes, there the nerve-wracked, weary but not downhearted missionaries met the brave, generous U.S.A. Marines and their friendly Australian guide, Captain Hard, former Government Inspector. After a great deal of happy laughing and chatting, the C.O. told us to go on a little further and there would be nothing to fear. On went the procession till we came to a clearing which served as camping ground. Some thatch and a few uprights and, behold — a convent and a presbytery! The natives erected huts for themselves and there was St. Michael's Training School on a new site.

We had met the lads of U.S.A. and they had been friendly, but we little suspected how far-reaching their friendliness was to be. Next day there was a commotion in the camp. It

was Captain Jones with a couple of his boys, one being a Medical Corps man. He wanted to see if anything could be done for the sick priest whom, the day before, he had seen being carried bushwards, bed and all. The missionaries liked the Captain, but they liked, too, the K rations he brought with him.

The first work that Uncle Sam had to do was, of course, to rid the island of its oppressors. The fight would be in the vicinity of our station, so it was only with special permission and at stated times that native boys were allowed to go back to cut their toddy. On the first evening that they did so one bright specimen of a native student had a brainwave. Seeing the washing — piles of it — still on the lines, he deliberated and then decided. Yes, he would take the whole lot out to the camp. That would be the safest place for it, and maybe the missionaries would want it. It never occurred to him that there was nowhere to store it! That night the said student was very late back. This kind of thing was not only displeasing to the Father-Director, but also distressing under the circumstances: What mischief could such a fellow be up to? Why didn't he think of the anxiety of his young wife and children, etc., etc? If only the Director could have glimpsed a poor student trudging along under the burden of a week's wash. Sheets enveloped him. Every type of thing that had gone through the tubs weighed him down as he tried to make his way campwards. A wide-eyed Marine met and questioned him. Oh, he was taking the missionaries' things to them. Well, he, too, would help. About midnight, to the consternation of all the disturbed, great white packages were dumped into the Sisters' quarters. Next morning the devoted and thoughtful act had to be duly praised, though perhaps if Christian charity had not had its way the student of the brainwave would have got scant gratitude. For where, oh where, was that more than ample week's washing to be housed?

The work of cleaning out the twenty-three Japs was much tougher than might have been expected. They had two machine-guns turned towards approaching foes and were themselves in well-prepared trenches by the edge of a sea passage. They had tunnelled from one trench to another so that they could move about without coming out. Thus the U.S. Marines, lying in the grass at the other side of the channel, could make no impression with rifle fire. They had the advantage of numbers certainly, but not of position.

On Thursday a submarine tried what shells would do. They went over or near the trenches, but did not reach the enemy inside. On Friday morning there was a strange quietness about the dug-outs, so a native was sent to see what it meant. The stark corpses of twenty-three Japanese were there, all erect with their guns beside them. The officer was apart, his broken sword near him. While each man had a pistol shot in the throat, the chief was shot in the temple. Was an order given for the pistol to be passed from man to man that each might kill himself? Or did the commanding officer shoot his men first and then himself? The mystery remains.

The gruesome sight told that the fight was over. The Americans had Abemama in their hands, and they intended to make good use of it.

The Marines who had landed on Monday, the 22nd, went away at the end of the week and others came and stayed till Christmas Eve. We had very friendly relations with them. Each Sunday there was a church parade, and great was the excitement of the natives to see about sixty Americans coming along to our chapel. To provide refreshments for all was an easier matter than to provide seats. The natives always sit on mats, but we could hardly ask our visitors to do so. We managed somehow, and we were more than happy to be able to do anything that could give a little comfort to those poor boys so far from home and loved ones. We learnt soon what appre-

ciative, good-hearted people the Americans are. It was always "Thanks a lot", for a little something done to please, as for instance, when some of the boys came along with a Christmas cake, candy and newspapers that had just come in their mail. We shall never forget the Sixth Marines.

At the north of the island the forces were literally swarming in. The natives were stunned, not only by the numbers of men, but at seeing what they brought. One old man said to me, "It is not the Americans who have come — it's America!" The story goes that one of the first natives to see an amphibious jeep approaching was up a coconut tree. Seeing the mysterious thing coming across the waves he decided the best thing to do was to get down and be off. Down he got, but to his amazement the creature left the water and was after him. Not being able to outrun it he tried appeasement and held out his coconuts to it. Its amused occupants did not refuse a cool drink, and gave the poor man cigarettes. His fears left him. The magic worked. Off to the village he went and told his good fortune. Soon every villager was running with whatever might be at hand, be it a fowl or a few eggs or a papaia — no matter, anything, to get a smoke.

Many natives had seen only one motor truck — the small one the Japs had had. Now the place teemed with jeeps, trucks and bulldozers. The Gilbertese natives are sharp-witted and in no time they adjusted themselves to the new order of things. Yankee ways, words, and even clothes were adopted till we, who had known these people in pre-war days, were forced to smile. Walking from one village to another as had been done for generations suddenly went out of fashion. They must "truck it", and the good-natured drivers were hailed incessantly. Babies in arms gave the salute and "O-Kay" got right into the language. A poor, mentally-deranged woman adopted it as a kind of vocal accompaniment to certain rhythmic movements of the arms, which she would repeat hundreds of times.

At the end of twelve months drowsy, tropical Abemama was no longer in the front line and the laughing, friendly Americans moved on, leaving behind many tangible demonstrations of their generosity, as much in doing things as in providing them. There is the screen in the living-room, and the electric light to commemorate the thoughtfulness of the Construction Battalion. There is a radio and a refrigerator, a statue of St. Joseph in the little church, a lovely image of Mary Immaculate in the grotto to remind us of the Forces' personnel, who had adopted the lonely missionaries as their own particular charges. We are conscious of a mighty debt of gratitude, and we rejoice that Heaven has its imperishable records. To Major Holland, of His Majesty's Government, and to the missionaries, was left the rather formidable task of getting the natives down to earth again after their year of glorious and unwonted excitement.

In "Escape from Nauru" the wireless announcer is represented as making the following statement with reference to the missionary Fathers caught on Nauru at the time of the Japanese invasion. "Two Roman Catholic missionaries, Fathers Kayser and Clivaz, who also remained on the island, were transferred by the Japanese in 1943 to the Caroline Islands." True. But this was no transfer to bliss and glory. It was merely the beginning of a fresh phase of the life of misery which had been their lot ever since the Japs had hoisted their colours over Nauru. Whilst still on their own island isolation and separation from their flocks had been the hardest trial. Forbidden to carry on their ministry, they must surely have remembered the days of Nero and his satellites. The faithful natives would be notified by secret means to assemble stealthily in a certain house and the Holy Sacrifice would be offered somewhere in the early hours.

With the transfer to Truk in the Carolines, however, matters went from bad to worse. Suspicion lead to flogging

FLOWERS FOR THE BRAVE DEAD OF TARAWA.

Close by the graves of U.S. Marines who died in the fighting on Tarawa, a member of the U.S. Navy Seabees (Construction Battalion) trims a few of the flowers he grows for the thirty-seven cemeteries on the islands. Note crosses in the background.

(See page 142)

and imprisonment and the usual Japanese treatment. Father Kayser succumbed; his young fellow-missionary could pronounce a last absolution over his departing soul, but he could neither anoint him nor give him Holy Viaticum, a supreme trial surely. Then was Father Clivaz alone indeed. He could not say Mass. His bodily strength was ebbing. Fortunately, however, he was sent to another island, and there to his great consolation he found himself with Jesuit Missionaries — Spaniards with whom he conversed at first in Latin. There he stayed till the hour of his deliverance.

Meanwhile in nearby Ocean Island dark tragedy had been enacted. Reverend Father Pujebet, M.S.C., who had been its pastor for many years, died in the Japanese hospital after having been systematically starved and then given, by way of experiment, a deadly injection. His companion, Brother Brummel, had a like experience. He did not, however, succumb. He left the hospital but was never heard of again. The remains of neither missionary have been able to be traced. Father's residence was destroyed, but not the church that he had just completed. Little did the good priest dream as he worked with Brother Brummel, designing the building and even fashioning the material, that the gem under construction was to be his memorial monument.

When the missionaries and the other Europeans (1), whom a sense of duty to the natives had kept on Ocean Island, were all dead, there remained about one hundred and fifty native and Chinese boys, retained to work for the Japanese. All the others had been shipped off when the food question was becoming a problem that defied solution. These boys literally slaved, fishing, digging, planting until the fatal August 9th dawned. Were guilty consciences determined to leave no

(1) These heroes were Mr. Lindsay Cole of the British Phosphate Commission; Mr. C. Cartwright, Secretary to the Government of Ocean Island, and Mr. Third the wireless operator. Young Mr. Arthur Mercer of the British Phosphate Commission was ordered to join the evacuation ship but managed to be missing when it sailed. So he stayed, too.

witnesses to their deeds of barbarity? Or did the first atomic bomb that befell far off on fair Japan rouse a sense of filial revenge? Perhaps it was just a question of "sour grapes." They could not win and so . . .! Whatever the instigation, it was diabolical, for it led to the cold-blooded murder of all but one of those natives.

On that gloomy 9th of August they were led in parties to rocks that dropped some fifteen or more feet to the sea. There, blindfolded and with hands bound, the helpless victims were bayoneted in the back. The result was obvious. The poor fellows would drop dead into the sea and there would be an end. So reckoned Nippon, but he miscalculated. One Gilbertese lad fell when he was stabbed at. With presence of mind that any white might envy he kept still till the Japs, satisfied and satiated, betook themselves elsewhere. Then off he crept, rubbed his bound hands on a sharp rock till the cords gave way, pulled the bandage from his eyes and found a friendly cave in which to hide. On the third night, however, he decided that he must find a better shelter and get some food. Dieting is all right maybe when a man can sleep in comfort and forget his hunger, or if he knows that the pantry is well stocked and there is something to be had. But crouched in a little bare hole in a rock, Moneketi found it "no good."

So in the moonlight, while the Japs laughed and talked, the "ghost" of one of the murdered made his way right across the island. Natives know places thoroughly, and there was unusual intelligence in the wise dark head that night as its owner made for a good shelter. What odds that he had to shin up a coconut tree to miss some greencoats walking along the road. He did it and kept quiet. Then down and on again. Finally the very place was found — a cave in the phosphate rock where he could stretch his body and sleep in comfort, but which had such a tiny opening that he would never be detected. This was home till December. Each night he would

go out furtively to gather his supply of nuts. During the day he slept, shaved himself with broken glass and played with lizards to keep himself sane. When Ocean Island was again in British hands he came forth as though from the tombs, startling everyone. He was a chief witness at the Rabaul trials.

Another incredible adventure story is that of the lad who was seven months at sea in a canoe. In brief the story is this: Seven Gilbertese at Ocean Island, anticipating a tragic death, slipped off one night on three canoes. It was a frightful venture, and one of the craft disappeared the second night. The remaining two set themselves adrift in the current in the hope that they would arrive somewhere — it didn't really matter where, as long as Hirohito was not its lord! Provisions and fresh water were soon finished, but when it rained there was a little water for the catching, and the Pacific abounds in sharks, so why starve? Nevertheless:

"There passed a weary time.
Each throat was parched, and glazed each eye.

A weary time! A weary time!
How glazed each weary eye!"

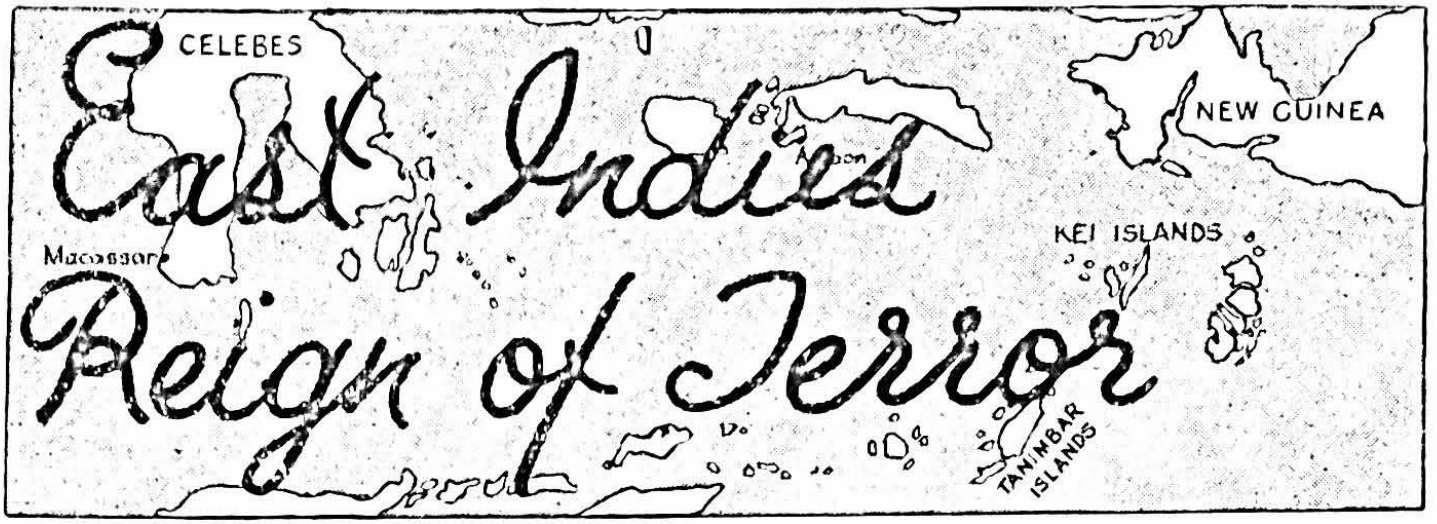
Then suddenly one day they "beheld a something" not "in the sky", but in the sea. It was part of a ship's cargo of canned food bouncing on the waves. Evidently some vessel had met its doom and hence the surprising find. New food, new zest. The travellers drifted on, ever on, but never a sight of land could they see. Troubles multiplied apace. The canoes overturned. A shark bit one poor fellow in the shoulder. At last there remained one solitary figure still drifting and ever drifting, till after a cruise of seven weary months he happened upon Manus in the Admiralty Islands. Too weak to walk ashore or call for help, he half crawled through the low water to the beach. No sooner seen than helped. The story finishes brightly, for he found himself in the hands of friendly natives,

who all exhibit the lovely trait of tenderness for the sick and distressed.

* * * *

The war is over and once again the old peace broods over the Gilbert Islands. Our roll call is not what it was in pre-war days. Two of our fine young priests, Fathers Durand and Marquis, died a lonely death at the hands of the Japanese. Other sorely-missed helpers sleep peacefully in the mission cemetery, when normal conditions with good food and medical care would have saved their precious lives. But the Master Reaper, Who by a strange paradox takes away the harvesters even as he pleads with urgency for more, knows what is best. In the meantime we, His missionaries, await His Will — in peace.

East Indies Reign of Terror



East Indies Reign of Terror

This is a story of tragedy, of tears and of terror. It has for setting the Dutch East Indies; in particular, the Tanimbar Islands, the Kei Islands, Ambon in the Banda Sea and Macassar in the Celebes.

Until the outbreak of the Pacific War, Australia was for the most part unaware that such places existed, practically at her own back door. Then suddenly they flashed into the news — these forgotten islands, washed by jewelled tropical seas. But the missionary had known them for long years. To many a missionary Father, Brother and Sister, they were home. Langgoer in the Kei Islands was the head mission station of the flourishing Dutch Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart which, as well as the above-mentioned and numerous other islands, included Dutch New Guinea.

For the sake of clarity, we shall divide this drama into five acts. In the first, the Sisters from the Tanimbar Islands will tell their story, in the second, those from the Kei Islands; in the third, the missionaries of Ambon will narrate theirs. Act four will describe what took place at Ambon after the Japanese concentrated there all the missionaries who had been gathered up from the other islands. Act five will be the story of the transfer of this camp to Macassar in the Celebes.

1. THE TANIMBAR ISLANDS.

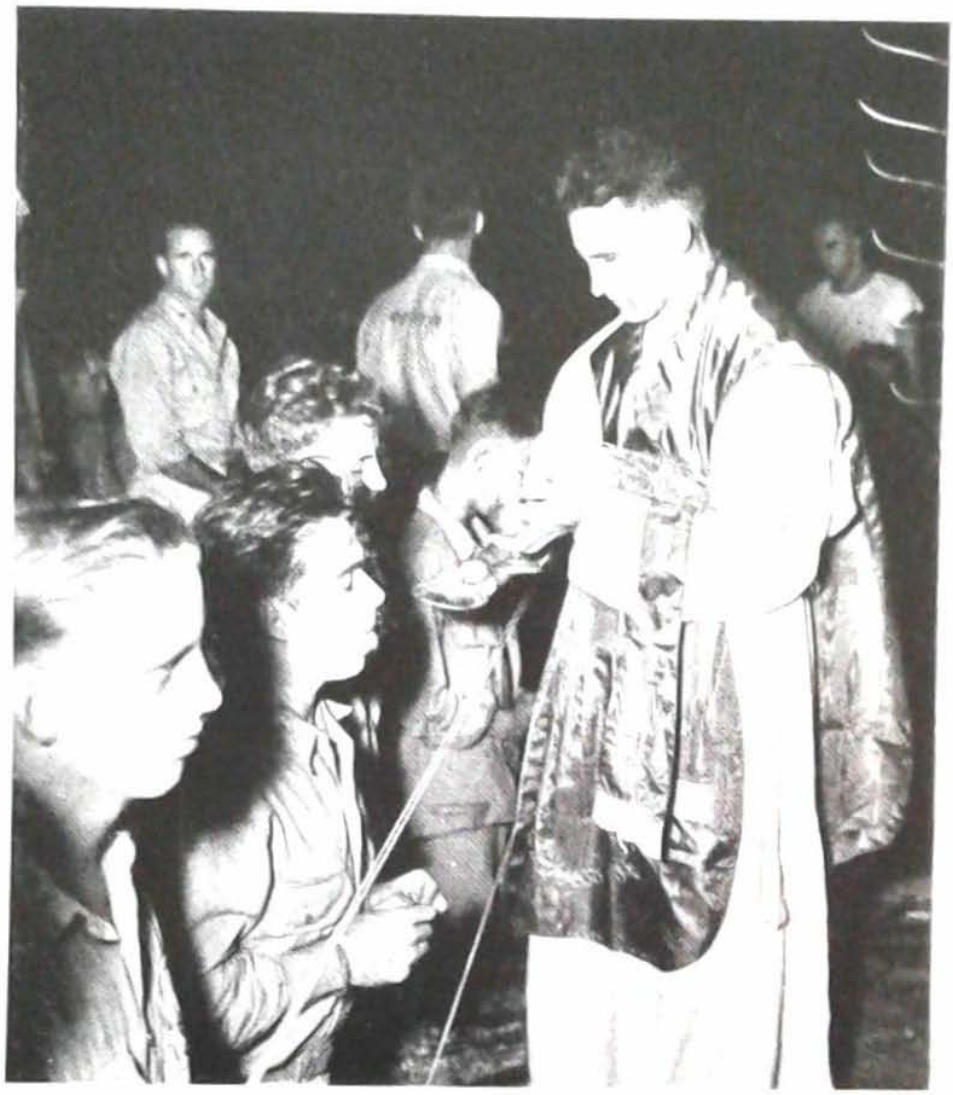
We were three Sisters at Suamlaki in the Tanimbar Islands. On February 6th, 1942, we made our first contact with war. At 1.30 p.m. two Japanese fighter planes came over and gave us a lively machine-gunning. Thank God there were no casualties though some of the mission buildings were damaged. But before sunset most of the parents came and took away their children from our boarding school. They wanted them home for safety.

The Japs now began to come over every day and we were kept busy running away to the trenches to escape machine-gun bullets. At last we could stand this no longer so went off to a village further removed from the danger zone. Here Father de Byl made a little home for us under the trees.

One day twelve soldiers, Australians and Dutch, who had got away from the Jap camp in Ambon, came to us. They wanted to escape to Australia in a pinnace that was lying off the beach. The boat's crew thought the journey too dangerous and refused to take them. So the soldiers decided to manage the business for themselves. But they had no success for when they had gone only a short distance they got stuck on a reef. They had to be rescued in small boats sent out from the shore, whilst the pinnace was left to its fate on the reef.

What was to be done? It was impossible to signal Australia as the radio was out of action. Then along came a little boat bringing refugees from Toeal. You can imagine the enthusiasm with which the soldiers received them and especially their boat. Its crew would have liked to refuse to undertake the voyage to Australia, but they did not get the chance. They were simply forced to go. Next morning, however, over came three Australian planes. They saw the little boat below, and supposing it was Japanese, attacked it with bombs and machine guns, severely damaging it. Nevertheless, the soldiers, who were desperate, persevered in their determination to make their escape in it. We heard later of their safe arrival in Australia.

CHRISTMAS MORNING 1943



Rev. Chaplain Thomas Glynn of Connecticut, U.S.A., gives Holy Communion to his boys.

1943

Bob Klingler

Christmas Greetings to the Missionaries from the U.S.A. 48th Bombers.

(See page 150.

A warship was expected to come soon and evacuate all the Europeans. But Bishop Aerts preferred the missionaries to stay. Excitement grew daily. Half-way through July the last boat came from Australia with food supplies. A force of two hundred Australians was reported coming to our aid. The enemy, however, got in first. On July 30th, 1942, four Japanese warships arrived and after a very little shooting the island was in their hands.

A Father had just enough time to get the Blessed Sacrament from the church. Even then the Japanese caught him and handcuffed him on his way back into his house. A quarter of an hour later we saw him being marched past our place between two Japs.

Suddenly there was heavy shooting. The Japs and Father went flat down in the gutter. The latter, although handcuffed, managed in that lowly position to consume the Sacred Hosts. The Japs did not notice him doing this, as it was still dark. When the shooting stopped Father was allowed to get his money and some clothes and was then taken on board the ship bound for Ambon.

The next day this ship called in at Larat where Father Helmer and Brother Kamerbeek were brought on board. These latter had seen warships approaching and feeling quite sure that here at last was the expected force of two hundred Australian soldiers, they had gone down to the beach and waved and waved. To their horror and amazement they found they were waving to Japanese invaders. It was too late to run back for they had been seen. In no time the Japs were ashore and had them prisoners.

In all, the Japs gathered up six missionaries and took them to Ambon where they were tortured, being beaten terribly, bound together in twos and locked up like that for two days. Two old Brothers, Bro. Clement and Bro. Jeansen, who were purple and blue from the beating, could hardly move their

legs. They later died in Pare Pare camp in the Celebes, Brother Jeansen on Christmas Eve, 1944, and Brother Clement in June, 1945.

In the meantime, we three missionary Sisters were still with the people of the village to which we had evacuated. But it was deemed safer to retire further into the bush where a native chief had found a hut for us under some sago trees. For miles around we had no neighbours. The chief had arranged to send a native to us every day with food, but all other natives were forbidden to come near us for fear of treachery. So there we were, very lonely and feeling as if there were no one else in the world but ourselves.

But the next day, to our surprise, we got a message from Father de Byl to come back. He had been away when the Japs arrived and we were delighted to learn that he had not been taken to Ambon. So back we went.

This was Sunday. On Monday, word came from the Japanese that all the missionaries had to report at headquarters in Suamlaki early in the morning of August 4th. Last instructions were given by Father to his native parishioners and we all set off. Since all the people came crying after us as we left, the whole thing was like a funeral.

When we arrived back in Suamlaki how changed we found everything. Japs and their cannons were everywhere. We were told to stand outside in the sun. After enduring this for a long time we were told to get a form and sit down, still in the sun, however. Then came the usual interrogation as to nationality, the whereabouts of the Dutch Controller, the reason for our flight, etc. Father de Byl was searched all over. After that we were put into the house of the Protestant Minister. No one was allowed any communication with us except the Fathers' cook-boy who could bring us food twice a week.

Two other Fathers who had been away on distant stations did not arrive at the Jap headquarters till three days after and

got a fine scolding for coming so late. Thank God they brought more money and food than we did, and even an oven for baking bread. For a time we had firewood, so could go ahead. Then it gave out. I could not cook without fire, so used to steal out into the other houses and help myself to what I could lay hands on. The Fathers were afraid I would get a beating, but I risked it.

The priests had to work for the Japanese. They were obliged to move stones and pull the cart themselves under the supervision of a Mohammedan chief. Soon Australian bombers and fighters began to come over. Sometimes the bombs exploded in the sea, affording us a good meal of fish. Then one morning three planes came over during Mass, just after the Communion, and began machine-gunning. "All ye holy Angels, help us!" cried out the priest as the bullets began to fly around the church. Off we dashed to our dug-out and after that we had no more morning Mass. Our Australian friends were not to be trusted. One day the Nips got one of their planes on fire and it was with sad hearts that we saw it fall in a mass of flame far out to sea.

We were just living from day to day. The Fathers, after their day's work lined up among the natives for their wages, which consisted of rice, flour or meat. Humiliating though this was, they were glad to get the food to bring home. Nor was Our Lord forgetting us. At times He would inspire some kindly-disposed Jap to smuggle butter or some other such food in to us.

The First Friday of September was a sad day. At 8.30 in the evening the Fathers were told that a boat was coming and that they were to be ready to go on board in ten minutes. We had hardly finished helping them pack up their belongings — even to their wet washing — when a Jap came to bring them to the beach.

We Sisters were in a terrible state. We implored the Japs to let us go with the priests. How could three solitary Sisters

remain behind among hundreds of Japanese soldiers? But no, we had to stay and help the Jap doctor, which up to this time we had been doing. So we knelt down and the three Fathers gave us their blessing — a touching moment which impressed even the Japanese.

It was a very wet night and the poor priests had to stand out in the pouring rain and await the arrival of the boat, which did not come till 2 a.m. in the morning. All next day they were given no food and in the evening were taken ashore at Ambon. They were not ill-treated as were the first six missionaries. Nevertheless, they received a slap in the face and were locked up for two days before being taken to the camp where the other missioners were.

After the departure of the priests we went to bed, sick at heart and very frightened. At midnight a Jap was in the house. We got him out but had no key to lock the door. Next morning I told the Japanese doctor and asked him to protect us. "Yes, Sister," he said, "you call me at any time. I'll look after you." He was a good friend to us, that poor pagan doctor. If anyone who had no right in the house intruded upon us, we simply told the doctor and we could be quite sure there would be no second visit. Sometimes he came without being called to look and see if there were any villains lurking about. He strictly forbade the soldiers to come into our yard. He also took care that we had everything we wanted in the line of food.

On the Feast of Christ the King, 1943, we were given permission to go to the Church for two hours. Previously we had not been allowed to look at the Sanctuary, which had been screened off. To-day we were let inspect the Altar. The pictures and statues belonging to the mission buildings had all been placed upon it. The flowers which had been there before the invasion were still in the vases. You can imagine what they looked like! We were about to throw them out when up came two soldiers who tried to stop us. In a trice, the doctor was on the scene. He sent the soldiers flying and wanted

to help us put fresh flowers in the vases, but we declined the offer as there would be no one to look after them.

We put the altar in order and then went to the back of the Church to say some prayers. Before leaving we sang some hymns in the native language. In came a troop of Japanese soldiers to hear the singing. One asked for a copy of the hymn and sang with us, whilst the others listened reverently. As we left the church, these pagan soldiers asked us to come back again. The next day one came to tell us that if ever he got back to Japan he was going to become a Catholic. His wife had been converted and died in a Catholic hospital when their first child had been born.

On October 20th, the doctor told us he had sad news for us. The Army was coming to replace the Navy. That meant that we Navy prisoners had to be sent to the others in Ambon. He was grieved because he knew that the conditions there were bad. We told him how pleased we were to be going to the other Sisters. But he only shook his head. He could not understand. His friend, the interpreter, came to see what things we needed before we left. He provided us each with a pair of shoes, two towels and some clothes. In addition, we were given five loaves of bread, two cooked fowls, tinned foods, potatoes and bananas to take with us.

At midnight on the first Friday we went aboard the ship which was to take us to our destination. The doctor led us to a nice cabin and at 2 a.m. the boat left. We were very comfortable until 4 a.m. when a knock came on the door. It was the doctor who told us that it was the Captain's cabin we were occupying, meaning that we would have to leave it. We could see he felt it intensely to have to tell us this news. He went off and left us alone. Then another officer, who had previously been very good to us, came and took us down to the ship's hold among the common soldiers. They were told to make room for us. Fortunately we had met many of them before, so they were very good to us and gave us a share of their own food.

At eight o'clock next morning we arrived in Ambon. We were taken to Fort Victoria and locked in till 10 a.m. the following morning. Then we were told to go for our luggage and load it ourselves on to the motor truck. That done we had to clamber up on to the truck — no easy task since there were no steps to afford us a footing.

In no time we were out at the camp and saw the Fathers hurrying to help us with our luggage. And what a meeting with the Sisters from whom we had been parted so long! What questions we had to answer! The food we had brought with us meant only a mouthful each when divided among twelve priests, five Brothers and twenty nuns. Nevertheless, they were as pleased as if we had brought them a banquet. They had had a hard time and now we were to share it.

But of this, more later on. Another group of missionaries must assemble with us here in Ambon before the tragic drama of the Dutch East Indian Sacred Heart Missions will reach its climax. The next chapter will tell of their terrifying experiences prior to their transfer to this main internment camp.

2. MASSACRE IN THE KEI ISLANDS.

On July 30th, 1942, the same day on which they landed at Suamlaki in the Tanimbar Islands, the Japanese landed at Langgoer in the Kei Islands. As previously stated, Langgoer is the headquarters of the Dutch Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. It was night time when the Japanese came. The Sisters were made get up out of bed, and though some were only half-dressed, follow the Japs out to the front of the Chapel. Already Bishop Aerts and the 13 missionary Fathers and Brothers were assembled there. They had all been ordered to squat Japanese fashion. Sitting before them in an easy chair was a Japanese officer. An interrogation began.

Without any agitation, and in a most non-committal manner, the Bishop replied to all the Japanese questions. He

said that he did not know anything about soldiers, that the missionaries were there to teach the people their religion, and did not mix themselves with politics. But he failed to placate his interlocuter. He had an interpreter standing by, and through the medium of this individual he read out a document to the effect that priests were liars who deceived the people and stirred them up against authority. Things were looking pretty black. Even so, this was just a beginning.

At this moment a Mohammedan, who used to sell fish to the Sisters, appeared on the scene. He held out a letter to the officer in the easy chair. The latter had it read to him. Then turning to the Bishop: "If what is written here is true, you all merit the death penalty. You stir up the children. You maltreat and exploit them."

"Pray, Sisters, pray," whispered Father Superior.

The priests were not allowed to defend themselves. They had to listen in silence to a diatribe against priests in general and their influence upon native peoples. Meanwhile the Mohammedan had a diabolical leer upon his face. He was sure what the outcome would be. The interpreter kept repeating in Malay, "No pardon. We are to cut the throats of the lot of them."

Poor Bishop, Fathers and Brothers! Their Calvary came quickly. Hardly had the Sisters been taken back to the Convent by the soldiers than they heard sixteen shots.

A native house-boy later reported that the Fathers and Brothers had been taken home to their house and blindfolded. Then they were marched down to the beach, lined up with their faces to the sea and shot in the back. Native boys were forced to drag the bodies into the sea. On the morning of this massacre the Sisters and three other Fathers, who had escaped the fate of their confreres, were brought to Ambon.

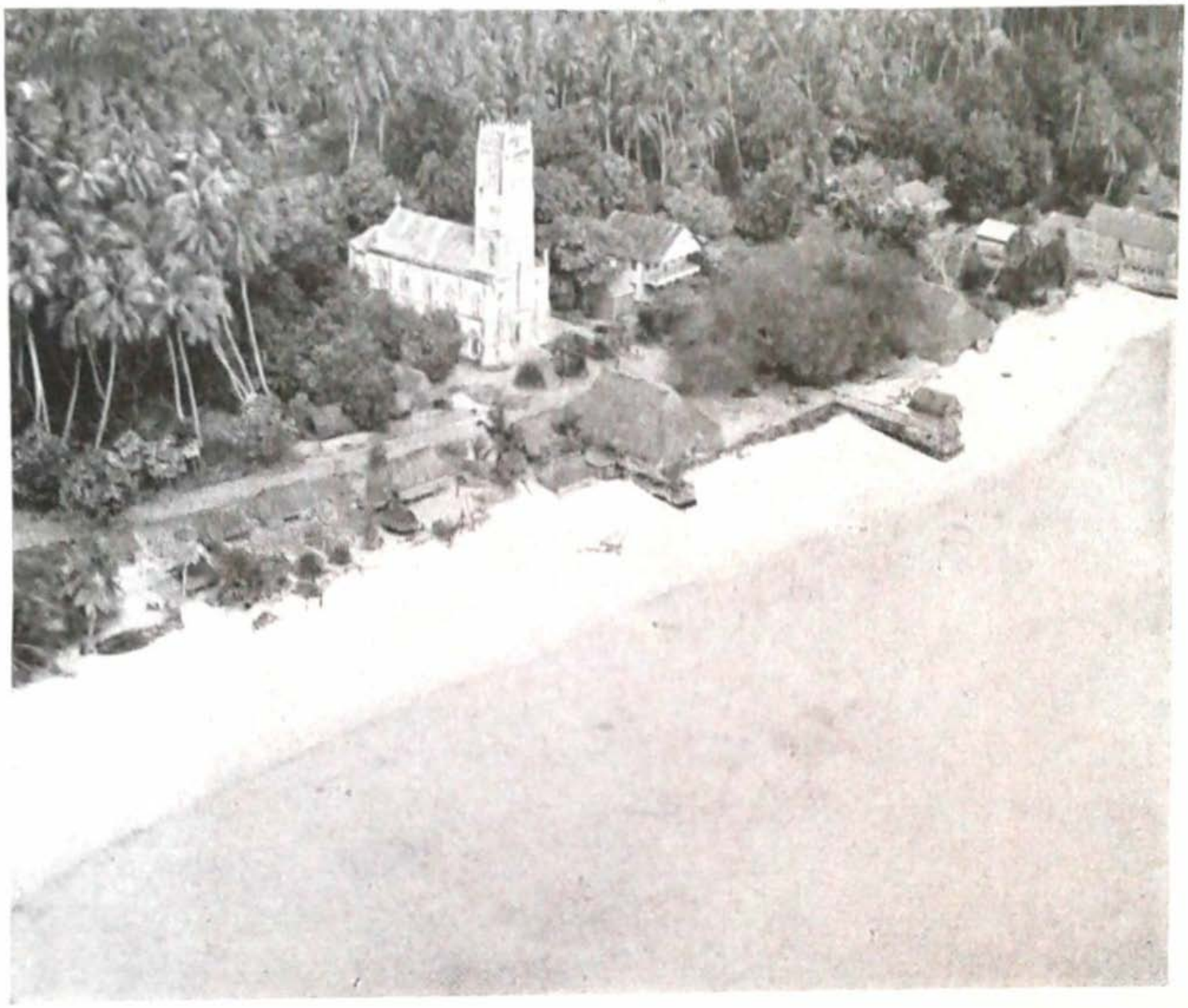
Concentrated now at Ambon we find the missionaries from Tanimbar Islands, whose story was told in the last chapter, the survivors from the Kei Islands, and the missionaries who were already stationed at Ambon when the Japanese invasion came. These latter will now tell us their experiences, finishing up with the account of the last grim days which preluded peace in the Pacific.

3. THE JAPANESE COME TO AMBON.

The bombing of Ambon began on January 7th, 1942, after which it went on day and night. In the meantime the enemy was approaching nearer and nearer. Two weeks later we were called up in the middle of the night. A convoy of ships was approaching. All women and children had to leave the town and go to an evacuation camp some miles distant. What a sad procession it was that prepared to leave Ambon that dark night. Everywhere women and children stood waiting with bundles. Then as we had to pass by military objectives and every minute the planes were coming overhead, the journey was a terrifying one.

Our evacuation camp was rather a shelter against bombs than a place fit for human habitation. It consisted of a number of buildings minus floors. The roof and walls were made of palm leaves. Of windows there were none and there was only one door. All night long new groups of refugees kept arriving. Next day the alarm sounded unceasingly — no "All-clear" at all. Then at 12 o'clock large-scale destruction commenced. Everything was blown up — oil dumps, harbour works, etc. Close by our trench a big oil installation caught fire. The smoke plunged everything into the blackness of a dark night. The air was full of thunder-like rumblings. Fortunately, towards evening a rainstorm extinguished the fire.

That night the Japs landed at a point where they were not expected. From out the darkness we could hear sounds of



P E A C E.

The Church and Mission Station at Abaiang, Gilbert Islands.

(See Gilbert Islands section)

heavy fighting. Three miles away a terrific air battle was in progress. Many women in the camp cried for their husbands and sons who were out putting up a hopeless fight to stem the tide of invasion. It was useless. By morning the enemy had effected a successful landing and Australians and Dutch had to retire to the bush. Two days later they were forced to surrender as the Japs came across the mountains and attacked them in the rear. Ambon was taken.

Nevertheless, we felt safer as the fearful bombardments were presumably over. We hoped to be able to return home soon. But it was not to be. The Japs would not allow us to leave the camp. We were short of food and dysentery broke out. The Mayor of Ambon was the first to die. Six children died in quick succession. We were located in a valley and the rain simply flooded out our camp. What we suffered during the four weeks we were kept there is beyond human description.

Our next move was to a place at the other side of the town. Here in a training school for Protestant Ministers, which normally housed seventy-five boys, five hundred of us had to live. The doors and windows were covered over with barbed wire in case we should try to escape. We all slept on the floor, Sisters, women and children. Many who survived the dystentery died for lack of good food during their convalescence. All they could have was porridge without milk or sugar.

The healthy among us suffered from hunger too. Little children cried for food. Often we had only one meal a day. It was in good earnest during those days that we prayed for our daily bread. In all our miseries we had one consolation — two holy Masses every Sunday. Gradually the missionary element in the camp grew larger. In May, Franciscan Fathers were brought from New Guinea. August saw the arrival of eight Sisters and a Father from the Kei Islands. The Sisters possessed only the clothes they had on them. Two of their number had been left behind. One had been wounded by a Jap bayonet and

the other was let stay to nurse her. On the same day, two Fathers and four Brothers were also brought from Suamlaki.

November saw the arrival of the Tanimbar Sisters and another group from the Kei Islands. With the latter was Father Thien who had been ill after having been hit on the head with a rifle butt. For four months he had been kept, not in a hospital, but in a dark prison cell, which he had not been allowed to leave for a single instant. Then he was taken out and brought to join the Sisters leaving for Ambon. On the way he kept ejaculating, "Deo Gratias."

"Father, do be prudent. Keep quiet. We are not allowed to talk," remonstrated a Sister. But it was no use. The good priest kept up his "Deo Gratias" so happy was he at going to join his confreres.

At the end of November most of the men were taken away from our camp. This separation was, for many civilians, a heartrending one. The men were lined up and the women driven back. One of the men turned and looked in the direction of his wife and children. For this he was shockingly beaten in front of everybody. The Dutch and Australian P.O.Ws., we later heard, were taken to Hainan, where many died.

The few men who were left with us had just finished trying to make our shelter a little more comfortable when once more we got an order to move.

This new camp was in a fearful spot. In spite of all that international law has to say against such procedure, we were encamped beside an ammunition dump containing about 140,000 tons of bombs and grenades. Here we were, Sisters, women and children, civilian men and a few P.O.W. soldiers, housed in buildings in a fenced-in space between an ammunition store and the sea. Stately and dignified-looking allied planes passed over every day, contemptuously disregarding the Jap fighters which went firing and spluttering around them.

How proud we were of them and how totally unsuspecting of the bitter suffering they were unwittingly to bring upon us.

4. TERROR OVER AMBON.

On February 15th, 1943, came the terrible day.

It is said that we were warned beforehand. Maybe! But the warning never reached us. It was towards midday. We were all at our usual work. Some Sisters were sitting around doing hand sewing. I was at the machine. All of a sudden there was shooting and anti-aircraft fire. Everyone knew what was the matter. The allied planes were about. Sister M. Prisca was always very afraid, but this time she went outside with a few others to look. All were sure nothing would happen to us. I closed my sewing machine, and other Sisters who had not bothered to go outside prepared to have a rest on their mattresses on the floor. Sister M. Norberta, who was ill with malaria, raised herself in her chair and said, "We'll soon be rescued."

Then a terrific explosion. "That one went home," I remarked and turned round — to see the whole side of the building collapse! Then as Mother Angelina was protecting her head with a cushion a lump of shrapnel tore away a piece of flesh from her arm. Another lump of shrapnel went through Sister M. Norberta's right lung and she collapsed. I rushed outside. There was Sister M. Clotilde, to all appearances, dead. Sister M. Prisca, though unconscious, was still breathing. Sister M. Felicitas had an artery in her neck severed.

In one moment the scene had changed to mad confusion. People were shouting and screaming, "Go outside! Run to the sea!" Everyone rushed towards the shore crying and calling out. Some had grabbed suitcases. Others were struggling along with the wounded. The Australian P.O.Ws. were helping everywhere at the risk of their lives. Mr. Duncan, the

Protestant Minister, was helping a dying woman. He was hit himself and died beside her.

By this time I was back in the building helping Sister M. Norberta, having left the apparently dying Sisters outside to the care of Mother Superior. I was on my knees supporting her head on my arm and calling her to try and bring her to. She was still breathing but was motionless, with a pool of blood under her. I heard a voice outside. It was Father de Byl giving absolution to the wounded Sisters.

"Quickly, Father, there is another Sister dying in here."

There was fire everywhere and the conflagration was coming nearer. "I cannot stay here," I thought, "but what shall I do with Sister M. Norberta?" She was bigger than myself and it was impossible to carry her. Father came to anoint her and we were discussing ways of moving her when frightful explosions began.

It was the ammunition dump! Flames and explosions everywhere!

Father was flung several yards away. I dived under the sewing machine which was covered with a heavy cloth.

What then followed is indescribable. Noise as of hell let loose. The world itself seemed to be perishing. I was sure I would not come out of it alive. I had no time to make an act of contrition. I just called out, "My Jesus have mercy on me. You must take me just as I am. Have pity on the people. Nobody can escape. Be merciful, dear Jesus." I was screaming my prayers in a terrified voice, but in that infernal noise no one could hear me except the good Lord and, after all, He was the one meant to. It was getting worse and worse and I imagined everyone else except myself must be dead. The bomb blast was fearful and there seemed to be a violent wind right inside my head. I did not have the presence of mind to stop up my ears with my fingers, but just sat there, stiff and motionless.

After ten minutes the explosions died down. Only the crackling of the fire could be heard. I jumped up from my shelter, stopped to look at nothing and in a few seconds was at the beach. One of the men looked very astonished to see me and shouted out, "Sister, run into the sea on this side." I was there in a moment. Then I saw Father de Byl.

"Sister! *You* alive!"

"Yes, Father. But look how you are bleeding."

There was a big cut in his foot from heel to toe. This I bandaged with my handkerchief. Then I noticed that his shorts were soaked with blood. He said it was from his thigh which was paining greatly.

But at that moment people began screaming out again. "Go on! Keep going!" Another bomb exploded. We dived under a rock. There I examined Father's wounds. He had a very big, deep one in his thigh where he had been hit by a piece of shrapnel.

"Father, I have nothing to bandage it with."

"How about your veil?"

I did not hesitate, but pulled the veil from my head and tied up his wound. Then another scream from the people. "Go on! Keep going!" Again a frightful explosion.

Further along the beach we came upon Sister M. Xaveria lying on the ground with a wound in her foot. "Oh, Sister, do help me." I was quite wet from wading into the sea but had no time to care. I took off my head band, washed it in sea water and cleaned her wound. Then using both mine and her own, I bandaged up the wounded foot. Her veil had been torn away by the heavy bomb blast.

I shall never forget the sight of that confused crowd of people, with wild expressions of terror and despair, making

their way further and further along the rocks. Blood was dripping from many of them. All along the route were pools of blood. Here was a human body covered over with rags; there someone dying in agony. I saw a lady whom we knew and who was wounded in the back, dragging herself along with her three children, one of whom was also seriously wounded. Blood was dripping along the ground after them. Saddest of all was the sight of a mother carrying her dead child.

By this time the explosions had stopped. "Bring all the wounded to the front," the authorities were calling out. Being a nurse I was needed there to help. Then the sad procession of victims started off up to a store formerly owned by the Australian soldiers. Four of our doctors and three Japanese doctors were in attendance. One poor Australian had both his legs nearly cut off. He was, of course, unconscious. The doctors had to cut them right off.

A young girl had had flesh torn from her arm and her neck and was having her wounds attended to. As this, like every other operation, had to be done without anaesthetic, four doctors could not keep her quiet. Her screams only served to make the other patients, who were waiting, all the more nervous.

The casualties among the missionaries were pitiful. When the doctors came to start on Mother Clotilde they found that her clothes pulled away pieces of flesh from her body. They were startled and shook their heads. It seemed impossible to do anything — her wounds were so filthy dirty. No wonder! She was among three wounded Sisters to whom Father Thien was giving absolution when fresh bombs fell on top of the ammunition dump. When she came to after the subsequent explosions she found Father Thien dead. Of her two companions, Sister Josepha soon died from skull injuries. The other, Mother M. Adriana, was badly hurt but together with herself was helped up to the doctors by some Australians.

The Father Superior of the Franciscans was terribly hurt, and quite unconscious. He had broken limbs, pieces of shrapnel in his head, and hardly a sound spot on his body. It is incredible that he still lived. Lying beside him was a Catholic lady who was dying. Kneeling between the two of them was a Sister. Noticing Father suddenly open his eyes she asked him to give absolution to the dying woman. "Help me," he whispered. Sister lifted up his wounded arm and he gave the absolution. Straightaway he lapsed into unconsciousness again.

We went around outside looking for more wounded and dying. It was dangerous because spasmodic explosions were still going on. Suddenly I came across a woman, purple and blue all over, hanging on a barbed wire fence. Her breast and arm were missing. I got a dreadful shock to see her in that condition. She was still alive and looked at me with a pleading glance. I went to her assistance and then called the priest (we had to take shelter from an explosion first) and told him how she had not been to the Sacraments since she was sixteen. It happened that the previous week this woman and myself had both been on night duty with the sick and then she had told me the sad story of her life. Father knelt beside her and I saw him giving her absolution. I felt very happy. There were too many such incidents to relate them all.

Suddenly I came face to face with our Japanese doctor from Suamlaki. I asked him to get permission for Sister Wilhelma, who had been working with me among the wounded, and myself to go back to the scene of the disaster and find the bodies of Sister M. Norberta and the other Sisters who must be there. Yes, we could go.

Everything was buried in rubbish, which was still burning, so the place where we had been at the time of the explosions was hard to find. Also the ashes on the ground were very hot. After a time we discovered the elevation which had separated our building from the ammunition store. There we found the poor charred bodies of Sisters M. Prisca and Felicitas. Near

Sister M. Prisca lay her watch, a gift from her mother. The silver had melted so we threw it away. Then we found Sister M. Felicitas' big medal and a piece of white tape with blood stains on it. That was all.

When I saw them last both Sisters had been dying. At present they were lying one on top of the other, which fact clearly proved that they had been thrown in a second explosion and killed in this manner — thus escaping the horrible fate of being burnt to death.

Then we went to look for Sr. M. Norberta. Of the sewing machine which had sheltered me, only the twisted iron remained. Among the burning debris of our house we saw Sister's body but could not get near it. So we went back again to where the refugees were. By this time the Japs were beginning to take them away. When one of our doctors asked for volunteers to stay and put the bodies into coffins, five nurses and I remained.

Two Fathers and a Brother said they would come and help me get the Sisters' bodies if permission could be obtained. We got it through our Japanese doctor. Some Jap soldiers also came with us, bringing a fire pump. They spouted water towards the spot where we wanted to go but got frightened and went away back. We rescued the bodies of Sisters M. Felicitas and Prisca but could now find no trace of Sister M. Norberta.

As it was getting late we went back with the two Sisters whom we had found. When we arrived at the place where the other dead bodies were, we found only three coffins, two large and one small one. The dead were wrapped in a white sheet. I looked at them one by one. The first was Father Klerks, almost unrecognisable; the second, Father Thien, recognisable; the third was Sister M. Josepha, nearly unrecognisable. The lady whom I had found lying on the barbed-wire fence was there, too. As I looked at her, a doctor gave me

Other sorely-missed helpers sleep peacefully in the Mission Cemetery.

(See page 158)

something wrapped up in paper. "Put this with her," he said. It was her arm. Then there was a little boy, the last remaining child of a Protestant Minister, whose other two children had died in the camp and whose wife was seriously injured. Many others, too, lay there awaiting burial.

A Japanese soldier came up and said that the two coffins were to be kept for two Sisters. All the others would have to be buried in a sheet or a blanket. And so we finished our sorrowful task.

Then two Jap officers sent us off and said they would see to the burial of the bodies. This they did, taking them the same evening to the cemetery at Ambon.

That night we were all brought by truck to a Protestant church into which three hundred and fifty women and children had been crowded. The Japs were compassionate and distributed rice, blankets and mosquito nets. The next day six more bodies were found by a Brother and some Japanese soldiers. One was Sister M. Norberta, shockingly mutilated.

As there were not enough nurses in the hospital, I was taken there to help. It was a terrible time as every day the allies came over to bomb and the patients had to be carried out to dug-outs. You can imagine the terror of the poor patients with broken legs. The Father Superior of the Franciscans was unconscious for five days and had to be carried backwards and forwards in this condition. Sister M. Xaveria was there, too — unconscious most of the time. Once she came to herself and asked for a priest. She said she was very happy but that her head ached much. On March 15th she died quietly.

In all, ten Australians, twenty-three Dutch and many natives were killed in this ghastly tragedy. Many were seriously wounded. We missionaries who survived, thanked God for His miraculous protection.

The story of our transfer to Macassar will be told in the next chapter.

5. MOVE TO MACASSAR.

After our frightful experiences during the bombing of Ambon we received word that we were to be moved to Macassar in the Celebes Islands. We left by boat on March 19th. We had not gone far when the alarm was sounded. What a shock for us in our already nerve-racked condition. Everything was closed and we were locked, to the number of three hundred in the ship's hold. Adults were stricken with terror and children were crying. Up on deck the crew were pouring water on everything.

But the planes did not take any notice of us. They were heading straight for Ambon. Two more false alarms were sounded before arriving at our journey's end, by which time adults were crying like children.

With the women and children we were taken to Kampili, some miles from Macassar. There in the bush, twelve buildings were erected for us. We had hardly any clothes when we arrived and some of the Sisters were barefooted. The Japanese camp commander took pity on us and tried to get us some clothes — of a kind! Some of the Sisters were wearing white doctors' coats, but that only on Sundays! The old rags were worn for working.

At the beginning of May many more people, including nearly sixty nuns, were brought to our camp, which now comprised about 1,700 people. A priest was allowed to come and say Mass every Sunday and when the Japanese commander was in a good humour, we could have a sermon at night.

The camp kitchen was very large. Two hundred people, divided into shifts, worked there. Everyone in the camp was put to work. Two Sisters, helped by a lady, had charge of the cows. Fortunately we Sisters were exempted from work in

the pig sty. Two of us were in charge of the women's and children's hospitals respectively. We also had a sewing room, nearly as big as a factory, with one hundred sewing machines. Here we had to make Japanese army uniforms. After six months we organised a school, which the Jap commander tolerated. Nevertheless, when high officials from Macassar paid us a visit we had to hide everything away, take a spade and go to work in the garden.

The food in Kampili was good in the beginning. Then it became worse. There was only rice, and that of an inferior quality. Once a day we had a little vegetable. The pigs that we reared were killed and taken to Macassar for the Japs, together with the best products from our gardens. Once a week we received sugar and coffee or tea, but very little. During December twelve children died in a fortnight — but mainly as a result of lack of vitamins. The Jap commander, let it be said, did put himself out to save us from going hungry.

Several women began to make a vegetable garden. When the commander saw this he gave them a big piece of bush land and got coolies to cut down the trees. Then, too, near our camp there were some fine gardens which were eventually given to us. Seventy women were sent to work in these and food supplies gradually increased. As time went on our buildings were beginning to fall into ruin and new ones had to be built. We took this opportunity of asking that all the nuns be put together in one place. This was permitted.

During these months the allies were showing an ever-increasing interest in Macassar. There were heavy bombardments. From May till November, we were without Mass. Then on November 26th a priest was sent to us — not for the sake of our spiritual needs, but to be our butcher! He was allowed to say Mass, but immediately after, had to go off and kill pigs.

Our camp commander had previously been in the men's camp at Pare Pare. There he was dreaded because of his

cruelty. Some prisoners died as a consequence of his beatings. He was also hard and brutal to the natives who had anything to do with him. He beat them till they fell, kicked them till they got up, when he began to flog them again, tied them up to a tree for the night, and in the morning threw them half-conscious on a truck to be taken to Macassar, where, if still alive, they received their death blow.

Nevertheless, towards the women, he was not so bad, provided his orders were obeyed. If anyone were disobedient he used his stick. Discipline was certainly needed in a camp of 1,700 women and children, but not of the kind which he used. He did not consider the person he was going to flog. To him the flogging was the thing. A certain Mrs. Y— had some kind of an influence on him — the only one in the camp who had. When he was in a furious mood and wanted to beat someone, she would throw herself between him and his victim to ward off the blows. It is due to her courage that many of the women are alive to-day. In the end he became her friend. He actually reached the stage when he told us to let him know when we needed anything, since we were all children of God. He distributed dresses among the women and gave the Sisters black material.

Dysentery was growing very troublesome. So he made everyone in the camp catch one hundred flies a week. He demanded that these flies be delivered to himself in person. And there was trouble, too, if they fell short of the specified number.

One day he was very cross and at the hospital kicked two nursing Sisters of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph to the ground. A third came to their aid and was likewise kicked to the ground. The three of them were then beaten. They had to go home then and stand in the sun. It had been raining that morning and they were filthy dirty. As a final punishment he said they had to work in the kitchen and must start immediately. In the evening their Mother Superior went to him to ask pardon if

the Sisters had done wrong. He was pleased with this. "All day long I have not been master of myself," he said, "but now I am sorry." Then he burst out laughing.

Another time he became annoyed with our priest. First he made him stand for an hour in the sun. Then we saw him prepare to beat him. Fortunately another of those courageous Dutch women braved his fury. Mrs. de H—, who had charge of the kitchen, threw herself between him and the priest. "The blows will fall on me first," she said. "Clear off to the kitchen!" he roared. "Give me that stick!" she ordered and grabbed it out of his hand.

To everyone's astonishment he left her with it. "I won't beat him," he said, "but he'll stand all night in that place!" "All right," said Mrs. de H—, "a couple of us will keep him company until to-morrow morning." Then he burst out laughing and went off, letting the Father go too.

As time went on he became more and more kindly. He once got two Japanese doctors to come and perform a serious operation for a lady. On another occasion he asked us to pray for rain. Two days later the rain came. "Your God is stronger than ours," he declared. On March 31st, 1944, we were allowed a visit from a Japanese Bishop, who gave us his blessing but was not allowed to speak to us.

This same commander used to get very worried when the bombers came over. Everyone had to go to the trenches under penalty of severe punishment. At one particular time we had an epidemic of mad dogs — quite a common thing in the Celebes. One frightful night they were running through the camp in the darkness and seven people were bitten. The bombers came across but we did not dare go into the trenches because the mad dogs were there. "Everyone go to the trenches!" roared the commander. "I have medicine for a mad dog's bite, but nothing for bombs!" At last, in desperation, two women ran after one dog and killed it. Not before they

were both bitten though. The commander had, after all, some spark of kindness in him, for in the midst of all the danger, he ran to get injections. It was no use. They both died.

The bombing grew worse and worse. At last on 17th July, 1945, twenty-three Liberators came over. When they had finished their work the whole camp except the commander's house, the two hospitals and the kitchen were burnt to the ground. Five of the eight wounded died. We then had to go to another camp at ten minutes' distance into the bush.

Nearly every night there was an alarm. The life in that bush camp was unbearable. At last the Jap commander let one of the women go to Macassar and see if she could send a message to the allied powers not to drop any more bombs on our camp. But nothing resulted.

A few days later, the town of Macassar was heavily bombed with disastrous results for the Japanese. As a result our commander was in a very nasty humour. He had given orders that we could go no further than fifty yards beyond our buildings. He kept women on guard at this boundary to see that no one went too far. One of these, a Mrs. V—, was talking to another woman on the boundary when the commander passed by. He looked at her but said nothing.

Soon after this incident she received orders to present herself before him. He made her stand in the sun, even though she was an elderly lady, declaring that she had disobeyed orders, since during her time of guard she had been sitting on the outside of the boundary. Then the devil seemed to take possession of him.

Coolies were sent to the cemetery to dig a grave for the unfortunate woman. The Protestant Minister was forced to make a coffin and put it in the sun near her. All this time she was standing motionless, not knowing what was going to happen.

When his preparations had been made, the commander rushed up, swinging his sword and yelling like a being possessed: "Her head has to come off! Her head has to come off!" Then he put the sword against her neck. He asked her if she had any last wish, because he was going to kill her. "No," she said, "my husband has died in camp and my children are in Holland. I am a defenceless woman. Do whatever you want to do." Tears rolled down her cheeks as she said this.

Those of us watching the scene from the distance had not the courage to approach him. All of a sudden he took it into his head to go over to the cemetery and see if her grave was ready. During this short interval Mrs. de H—, who had some influence over him, was told what was going on. Together with some other women she followed him to where the grave was.

"For whom is this grave?" she asked him. "There is no one dead, is there?"

"Not yet," he said, "but soon. Come with me and you will see who this grave is for."

He led them back with him to Mrs. V—. Then yelling and screaming he drew his sword as though he were about to cut off her head in one stroke. Mrs. de H— rushed up to him. "What are you doing? Are you quite mad?"

"Get away! I must see blood. I must see blood flowing!"

"Then go to the pigsty and kill a pig. You will see all the blood you want there."

"Get out of the way," he yelled, swinging his sword around again towards his victim and holding it at her neck.

Mrs. de H— saw that things were getting serious and that he was not going to give into her this time. She grasped his arm and held it fast. "You have always been good to us," she pleaded. "You showed us sympathy when we were in

distress. Will you now commit a crime which you will regret forever?"

He stopped for a moment. Then the fiendish spirit seemed to retire from him as suddenly as it had come. "No," he said, "I won't kill her! But she must go away from here. I will not see her any more. She must go to Macassar to prison." He gave orders for a truck to come and take her away.

"No," said Mrs. de H—. "Not that either. She must stay here with us." After some argument he gave orders for the lorry to be taken away again. The coffin likewise was removed, and Mrs. de H— took the poor woman, who was as white as a corpse, back to the camp. Ever after that she was kept out of the commander's sight.

Suddenly into the midst of all this bitter suffering came peace — glorious peace.

None of us had any suspicion that it was at hand. On the morning of August the 16th the commander gave orders for everyone to come to the open space in front of his house. He had some news for us. We were desperately curious. Then he announced that an armistice had been signed.

What cheers! What laughter! The people went mad with joy. It was incredible. It had come so suddenly! Was it really true? Even the Japanese commander joined in the celebrations! The next day we had Mass in thanksgiving and a solemn "Te Deum."

There, prostrate in thanksgiving in the presence of God, Almighty and Eternal, Whose protecting love had brought us safely through the ghastly reign of terror, we missionaries shall make an end to this story.

THE MISSIONARY AND HIS BOYS.

Though the work is very great and the labourers fewer than before — yet new reapers there will be — splendid Missionary reapers.

(See page 185)

Epilogue

The red glow — sinister and menacing — has gone from the harvest fields. For the war which hurled death from the skies, blasted the golden-green palms, silenced the mission bells and burned the little churches, is gone.

And the red of blood — the blood of the slain missionary reapers, caught up into the Passion of the Mystic Christ, no longer stains the white harvest fields.

For white they have grown once again. Over all is a great peace.

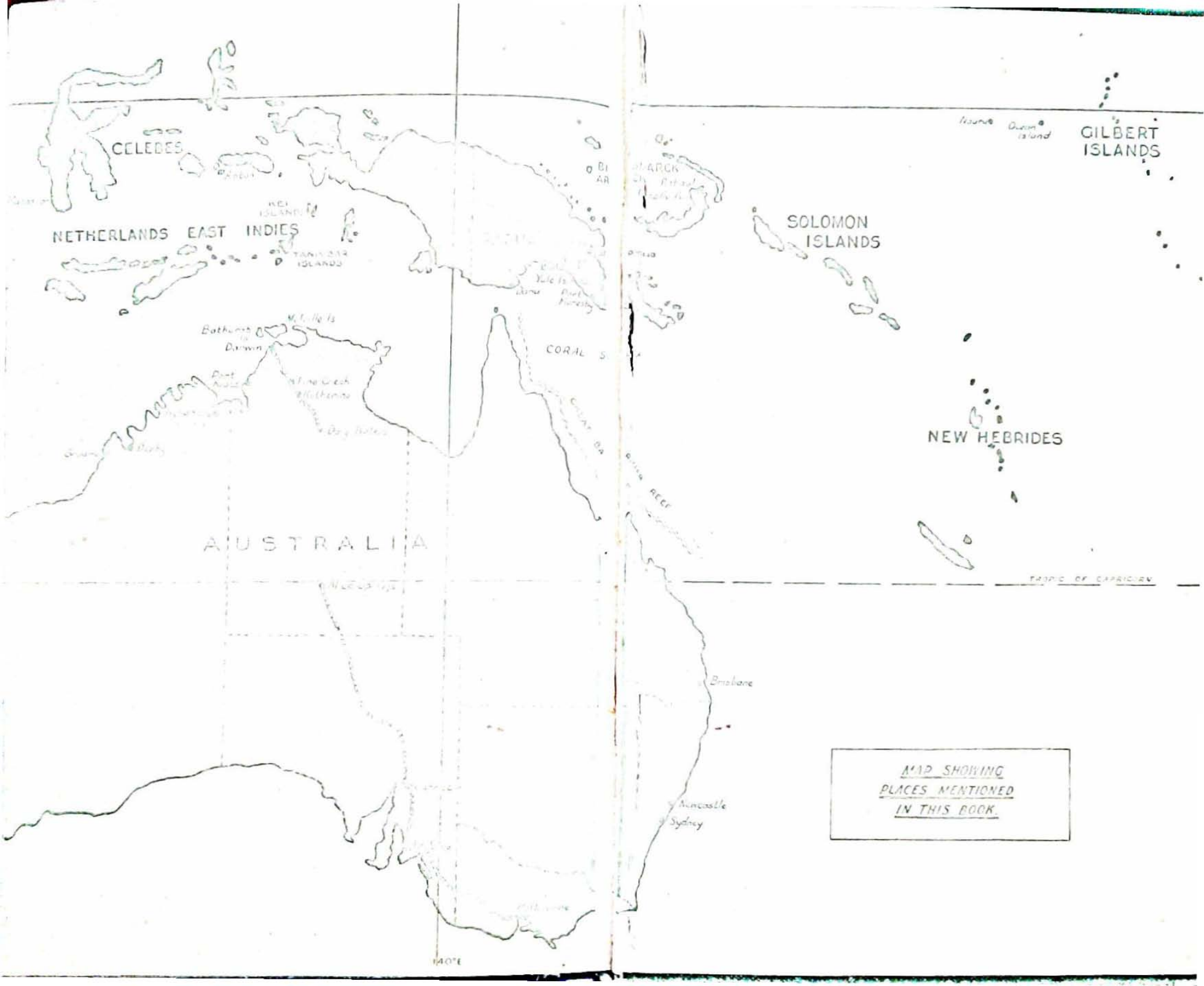
It is more than peace after war.

It is the peace of the Resurrection after Calvary.

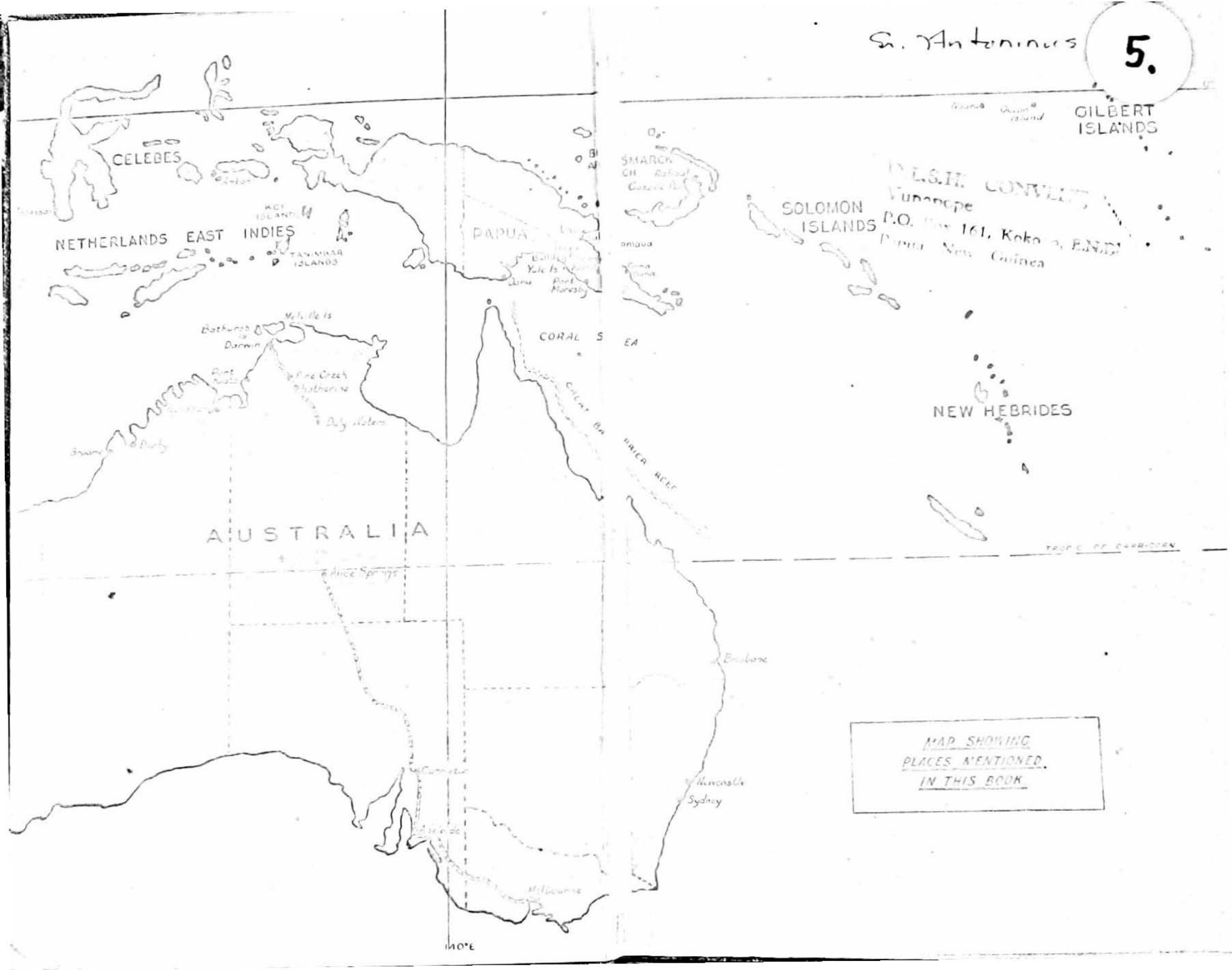
And the wind of the Pentecostal Spirit is stirring through these harvest fields in the Ocean called Pacific. It is making them grow richer — with the riches of the life of grace. Though the work is very great and the labourers fewer than before — yet new reapers there will be — splendid missionary reapers.

Alongside palm-fringed beaches, washed by tropical seas, new little churches housing Life Eternal are springing up. The bell of the Angelus once more rings out the Incarnation over mountain and jungle, and dusky, dark-eyed children kneel to hail Mary, full of grace.

And the missionary reapers, new and old, are glad, for the harvest fields are white — very white.


CELEBES
NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES
AUSTRALIA
CORAL S.
GILBERT ISLANDS
SOLOMON ISLANDS
NEW HEBRIDES
Brisbane
Sydney
Newcastle
TROPIC OF CAPRICORN
MAP SHOWING PLACES MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK.

Sr. Antonines



MAP SHOWING PLACES MENTIONED IN THIS BOOK