

our church should increase its staff in the South Seas, that a fourth man should be appointed to go out with Mr. Annand, and if they wish, and the Synod approve, pass by these places and go on to Santo.

One more question must be looked at in considering the matter at the present time, viz.: French occupation. The French own the neighboring group of the Loyalty islands and have long been trying to get a footing in the New Hebrides, chiefly by seeking to purchase land from the natives. The latter knowing the treatment that their neighbors of the Loyalties had received were unwilling to sell, and small progress was made. During the past summer, however, the French have taken an entirely new step. They have taken virtual possession of the group by military occupation, as the following extract from the minutes of the Mission Synod will show:

"The Synod having received from one of its members a copy of a proclamation by the commander of a French man-of-war *Dives*, to the residents of all nationalities in the New Hebrides, to the effect that by order of the Governor of New Caledonia a French military post has been established in Havannah Harbor;

"It was resolved, in view of the above and of the possibility that at an early date, the French may annex the group if they have not already done so, that, in the event of their interfering with our work,—which, however, we trust will not be the case,—we seek the advice of our respective Boards as to the course we should follow. We are well aware of the treatment Protestant missionaries in other fields have received at their hands, and we anticipate the possibility of our being treated in a similar manner. And furthermore resolved, that in view of the changed circumstances in which we will now be placed, and the additional obstacles with which we shall have to contend, we would humbly ask the prayers and sympathies of the various churches represented in the field."

The proclamation referred to is as follows:—

ADVICE-BOAT-TRANSPORT, "DIVES."

We, Legrand, commander of the *Advice-ship, Dives*, make known to the residents of all the nationalities settled in the New Hebrides, that;

By order of the Governor of New Caledonia, a French military post has been established at Havannah Harbor, isle of Sand-

wich, (Efate) on Tuesday, June 1st, 1886, at seven o'clock in the morning.

Commander of the *Dives*.

(Signed.)

L. LEGRAND.

(Stamped.)

If that proclamation means anything, it means that they look upon the New Hebrides as now in their possession. Britain and the Colonies have protested but the French have paid no attention to the protest. They disown annexation but their actions speak differently. Dr. Smith, the Secretary of the F. M. Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, writes: "I fear the unrighteousness and lying of the French will prevail in the long run." Mr. Robertson writes "I fear that annexation by the French is what our beautiful New Hebridean isles are coming to." Mr. McKenzie writes: "We are drifting to annexation." Mr. McDonald, of Havannah Harbor, where the post has been established, writes: "They have been hard at work Sunday and week day ever since they landed; they have gone on building with all their might as if for permanent possession. Allowing these soldiers to remain here means allowing them to get possession of the New Hebrides."

French annexation does not imply any bodily injury to the missionaries, but if they do as they have done in the Loyalty Islands, and Tahiti, and other places where they have taken possession after Protestant missionaries have been established, they will after a time so effectually hamper the work that progress will be almost impossible.

Such are the main points to be considered in the matter of the increase of our mission staff in the New Hebrides.

At the last meeting of the F. M. Committee, while some favored an immediate appointment, others felt that in view of all the circumstances; the expense of working a mission field on the other side of the globe which is the natural work of other churches and they overtaking it, while other fields near home for which we are responsible call for help; in view of their being no necessity for Mr. Annand going to Santo, in view of the Fund going steadily into debt under existing burdens, and in view of French occupation, they could not assume the responsibility of appointing another missionary to the New Hebrides, and the appointment has not been made.