

Project Canterbury

Twenty-One Years in Papua
A History of the English Church Mission in New Guinea (1891-1912)

By Arthur Kent Chignell
Priest of the New Guinea Mission

Milwaukee: The Young Churchman, 1913.

[Chapter I.](#) Foundations (August 10-December 27, 1891)

[Chapter II.](#) Goodenough Bay (1892-1897)

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An Open Letter.

"My dear King,

"It is one-and-twenty years to-day since you and Albert Maclaren left Sydney on the first stage of your journey to New Guinea.

"Any one who knows anything at all about New Guinea knows that you are the man who ought to have written this book for the coming of age of the New Guinea Mission: and that your name should stand by rights as prominently on the title-page as it does in the first paragraph of the text: and that though I now make what amends I can by dedicating it more or less to you, the book is half yours already in the sense that very many of the earlier pages are mere extracts from the *History of the New Guinea Mission* which you published in 1901.

"And yet, after all, perhaps it is just as well that the story of these one-and-twenty years should be written by a comparative outsider like myself, rather than by you, or Tomlinson, or even by Bishop Stone-Wigg, or Newton. Generals and pioneers and colour-sergeants and captains and engineers and private soldiers and regimental adjutants and drummer-boys and buglers and bandsmen give the orders and blow the trumpets and wave the flags and do the fighting and all the hard work of the campaign, but there is work also for the war correspondent, if the people at home are to be made to understand what their soldiers at the front are doing.

"I have been here long enough to know the ground and the fighters and to understand something of the plan of the campaign, but my own share in things has been so insignificant that I can afford to write quite plainly and dispassionately on matters at which you other fellows, for sheer modesty, could do no more than hint, just because yourselves have been great parts of what is now accomplished--because it is you

yourselves who have been playing the game, and making the blunders, and putting up the splendid scores.

"I have merely sifted and made up my material from Maclaren's letter books in the library at Dogura, and from your writings, and from the *Annual Reports* and magazines like *Missionary Notes* and the *A.B.M. Review*, and from the collection of newspaper cuttings compiled by Bishop Stone-Wigg.

"Even if you are angry with me for using your name, and for criticizing your work, so freely, it really will not matter. We meet so seldom, and you are always so busy discovering improved methods of planting coconuts or digging out some new and impossible native dialect, that you will soon forget my offence. But you will always remember, please, that I am no whit behind the other members of the staff in my love and admiration for the Grand Old Man of the mission (you are only a year or two older than I am, but we may let that pass!).

"You had been but a fortnight at Dogura, when Maclaren wrote home to tell your friends that you were in no danger from natives, and that you were taking four drops of arsenic every morning after breakfast 'to keep off the fever,' and that the only thing he was sorry for was that *you* had 'to rough it so much.' 'For himself,' he added, 'it was a matter of indifference,' as he 'was strong,' while for you 'it was not so.'

"Well, well! Maclaren the strong man, died, as I dare say he wished to die, a martyr in all but the strictly technical sense. You, the weakling, like an up-to-date S. John the Evangelist (you are a more learned man than I, and a better textual critic, but we must let *that* pass, too!)--you, I say, like a modern S. John the Divine, away up there near the German boundary, have had to wait, and to work, for many years; and your work, like his, has been very full of love and patience; and you, also, have endowed the Church with sacred texts, and the example of a completely devoted life.

"I am, my dear King,

"Yours affectionately,

"A. K. CHIGNELL.

"DOGURA.

"BARTLE BAY.

"PAPUA.

"*Visitation of B.V.M.* (July 2), 1912."