

LOST MISSIONARY.

ECHO OF 1943 SINKING.

An Amazing Coincidence.

A little over three years ago a small naval supply ship, H.M.A.S. Patricia Cam, was sunk off Wessel Island in the Northern Territory by a Japanese reconnaissance float plane. The ship sank almost immediately and the Japanese continued to bomb and strafe the survivors as they struggled in the water.

The pilot then brought down his plane on the sea, taxi-ed to the edge of the floating wreckage and, covering the nearest swimmers with a revolver, ordered him to climb aboard. The plane then took off with its prisoner, who happened to be the Rev. Leonard Kentish, a Methodist missionary who was taking passage in the ship.

This week a letter was received by "The West Australian" from the wife of the missionary, Mrs. Violet M. Kentish, of Toowong, Brisbane, asking that the facts of her husband's disappearance be published in the hope that some reader might be able to provide a clue to his fate.

The letter was passed for inquiry to a member of "The West Australian" staff, who, by an extraordinary coincidence, was a survivor from the Patricia Cam and was only

a matter of yards from the Rev. Kentish when he was taken pri-

Kentish which he was taken prisoner.

Mrs. Kentish's letter is as follows:—"Dear Sir,—I am writing to solicit your help in regard to my husband, Rev. Leonard Kentish, a Methodist missionary, late of Goulburn Island, Northern Territory, who was taken prisoner on January 22, 1943, by the Japanese. The facts as I know them are as follows: The Rev. Kentish, who was chairman of his district, left his home at Goulburn Island 250 miles north-east of Darwin to make an itinerary of his circuit, travelling by a naval vessel. When in the vicinity of Wessel Island a Japanese seaplane came down, as it were out of the blue, and bombed the vessel which sank immediately. It continued bombing the struggling men in the water, and then machine-gunned them for half an hour. Later the pilot came down on the water and took one prisoner, my husband, the only padre on board amongst 18 men. The last the men saw of my husband was when the pilot gave him a drink from a flask as the plane took off in a northerly direction. Since that time no news whatever has reached us of him. Should any of your readers have either seen or heard of my husband I would appreciate very much if they could contact me. The Rev. Kentish was 6ft. in height, had dark eyes and hair and was hard of hearing.—Yours, etc., Violet M. Kentish, 76 Jephson-street, Toowong, Brisbane."

The attack on the Patricia Cam was only one of a number of attacks made on shipping between Darwin and Thursday Island by Japanese float planes. It was established that these planes were operating from Taberfane in the Aru Islands, and it is a reasonable assumption that the Rev. Kentish was taken in the first

Rev. Kentish was taken in the first instance to Taberfane. As the main prisoner-of-war camp for this area was at Ambon, it is also probable that he was taken there from Taberfane. Any returned prisoner of war who was in the Ambon camp in 1943 may be able to throw some light on the Rev. Kentish's fate.
