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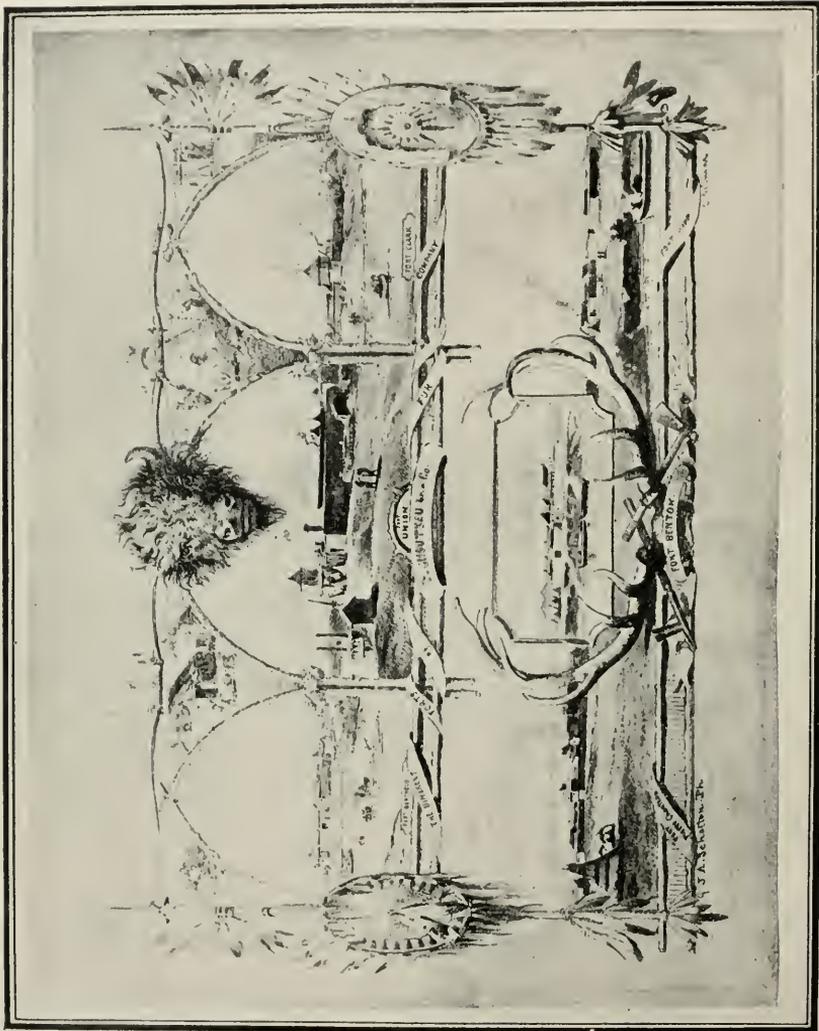


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Life, Letters and Travels of  
Father De Smet among the  
North American Indians.



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LIFE, LETTERS AND TRAVELS  
OF  
FATHER PIERRE-JEAN DE SMET, S. J.  
1801-1873

Missionary Labors and Adventures among the Wild Tribes of the  
North American Indians, Embracing Minute Description of Their  
Manners, Customs, Games, Modes of Warfare and Torture,  
Legends, Tradition, etc., All from Personal Observations  
Made during Many Thousand Miles of Travel,  
with Sketches of the Country from St. Louis  
to Puget Sound and the Altrabasca

*Edited from the original unpublished manuscript Journals  
and Letter Books and from his Printed Works with  
Historical, Geographical, Ethnological and other Notes;  
Also a Life of Father De Smet*

MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY  
HIRAM MARTIN CHITTENDEN  
Major, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.  
AND  
ALFRED TALBOT RICHARDSON

FOUR VOLUMES  
VOL. II

NEW YORK  
FRANCIS P. HARPER  
1905

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## PART III.

### THE OREGON MISSIONS.

*Itinerary from 1843 to 1846, Inclusive.*

1843.

**F**OR the purpose of soliciting funds for the missions, Father De Smet made a journey to New Orleans and back and as far east as Boston and back — He then went to Westport, Mo., with Father De Vos and companions — Then left St. Louis for Europe — Embarked at New York (fourth voyage across the Atlantic) — In twenty-one days landed in Ireland — Visited Cork and Dublin — Crossed to Liverpool and London — Continued on to Antwerp — Visited the principal cities in Belgium, France, Italy and Holland — Embarked at Antwerp with a father and a brother from Belgium, three Italian fathers, and six sisters of Notre Dame de Namur — Descended the Scheld to Flushing, where he was detained twenty-eight days by contrary winds.

No dates given.

Distance traveled, 15,479 miles.

1844.

Sailed January 9th with a favoring breeze (fifth voyage) — Crossed the Equator February 14th — Saw the Falkland Islands on the 16th of March — Rounded Cape Horn on the 20th — Continued north ten days when a terrible tempest was encountered which drove the ship almost upon the coast of Patagonia, but veered south in time to prevent wreck — Ship driven south to the 66th degree south latitude among

the icebergs — A favorable wind then brought the ship back to the coast of Chile in sight of the Cape of Tres Montes April 8th — Entered Valparaiso harbor April 11th — Made a journey to Santiago, arriving there April 25th — Returned and left Valparaiso May 3d — Arrived in Callao May 10th — Visited Lima, the capital of Peru — Sailed from Callao May 27th — Recrossed the Equator in June and sighted the coast of Oregon July 28th — Crossed the bar July 31st and anchored in front of Astoria.

August 2d set out by skiff for Vancouver arriving there on the 4th — Started for the Willamette August 14th; reached St. Paul's on the 17th and commenced the erection of St. Francis Xavier's residence — Was taken quite ill, and before he was entirely recovered, set out on horseback for the upper country — Traveled along the base of Mt. Hood, past the Dalles, and across Des Chutes and John Day rivers to Walla Walla — Crossed the Spokane Desert and went to the Sacred Heart residence among the Cœur d'Alènes west of Cœur d'Alène lake — Thence went to the Kalispel Bay and commenced the Mission of St. Ignatius — Thence to Fort Colville in quest of provisions whence he returned to the Bay and passed the winter among the Pend d'Oreilles.

Distance traveled, 18,828 miles.

1845.

In the beginning of February, five feet of snow on the ground, Father De Smet set out by canoe up Clark's Fork and visited St. Mary's Mission among the Flatheads — Returned to the Bay, fixed on site for the new establishment, felled the first tree for the buildings and then set out for Walla Walla and Vancouver — Thence up the Willamette to St. Francis Xavier — Set out for the upper country with eleven horses laden with implements of various kinds — Traveled via Mt. Hood and Fort Walla Walla — Thence across the desert to the Bay July 15th — Established two

stations: St. Paul at Kettle Falls and St. Francis Regis at Lake De Boey —

August 9th Father De Smet set out for the Blackfoot country via the upper Columbia — He went to Lake Pend d'Oreille by canoe — Thence crossed the country through thick forests to the Kootenai river, called by him Flatbow or McGillivray river — Met the Kootenai Indians — Ascended the Kootenai to where it comes close to the source of the Columbia — Crossed over to the Columbia September 4th — Descended the Columbia past a number of lakes near its source — Recrossed the dividing ridge to the Kootenai near the mouth of the Vermillion river — Ascended this tributary to its source in the Continental Divide — Crossed to the headwaters of the south fork of the Saskatchewan September 15th — Traveled through dense forests and a rugged mountainous country to the Rocky Mountain House on the North Fork October 4th — Met a small band of Blackfeet here — Set out on a long expedition to the south in search of the main Blackfoot band but could not find it, on account of heavy snowfalls which destroyed the trail — After three weeks of intense suffering, returned to Rocky Mountain House, and went thence to Fort Augustus on the Saskatchewan, arriving there December 31st.

Distance traveled, 3,480 miles.

1846.

Father De Smet spent the winter at Fort Augustus making one excursion to Lake St. Anne and St. Anne Mission — March 12th he set out for Fort Assiniboin on the Athabasca on a sled drawn by four dogs — Arrived at Fort Assiniboin on the 18th — Ascended the river on the ice to Fort Jasper — Provisions being scarce, nearly the whole population of the post went to the Lake of Islands where game and fish were more plentiful and remained until April 25th — Father De Smet then started on his return journey — Ascended the Athabasca to a tributary, Trou or Hole

river, and followed this nearly to its source in the pass over the divide at the foot of the Great Glacier — Here (May 1st) they encamped to await the arrival of the annual brigade of the Hudson Bay Company from the Columbia — About May 6th started across the mountains on snowshoes — Descended to the Columbia at the mouth of Canoe river amid the greatest hardship and suffering, to which Father De Smet declares that he would surely have succumbed if it had not been for the aid of a small band of Indians that he encountered.

May 10th left Boat Encampment in a skiff and descended the Columbia — Arrived at Fort Colville “toward the end of the month” of May — Continued his journey in company with a Hudson Bay party and arrived in due time at Vancouver.

Father De Smet visited the establishments in the Willamette valley and then returned to Fort Vancouver where he procured supplies for the missions and started on his return to the mountains — Traveled via Fort Walla Walla and the Cœur d’Alène Mission and arrived at St. Mary’s Mission, probably about August 10th.

“The expenses for the support of all our establishments had been great and it was thought necessary to send a Father to the States to provide for them. The Fathers unanimously expressed their desire that I undertake again this long and hazardous voyage.” Left St. Mary’s August 16th — Crossed the divide to Jefferson river — Traveled by way of the Three Forks and Bozeman Pass to the Yellowstone — Descended the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn about September 7th — Set out with Flatheads in northwest direction to find Blackfeet and conclude peace — Succeeded in accomplishing this in Judith Basin not far from Fort Lewis (later Fort Benton) — Proceeded with all the Indians to the fort.

September 28th Father De Smet set out in a skiff for St. Louis — Arrived at Fort Union October 11th; at Fort

Pierre on the 30th where he remained three days — On the 18th of November passed Cabanne's old trading post near where Omaha now stands and met Brigham Young there — Passed Westport on the 28th of November and reached St. Louis, by steamboat, about December 1st.

After a few days' rest Father De Smet went to New Orleans to see the Father Provincial who had gone thither.

Distance traveled, 6,510 miles.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE VOYAGE AROUND CAPE HORN<sup>1</sup> IN 1844.

#### *Antwerp to Valparaiso.*

They put to sea — They are seasick — They see strange fishes — They fear pirates — Pleasant weather — Neptune visits them and they are all merry — Celestial phenomena — Whales, icebergs and volcanic rocks — Tempest drives them toward coast — Arrival at Valparaiso — They go ashore for rest — The Fathers visit Santiago — Notes on the country — Climate and products.

ON the 9th of January, 1844, two masses were celebrated early in the morning on board the fine brig *Infatigable*, of Antwerp, lying in the mouth of the Schelde. The east wind which we<sup>2</sup> had been awaiting for twenty-eight days

<sup>1</sup> This and the following chapter are here translated for the first time from Father De Smet's manuscript journal. The substance of the sea voyage was published as Letter I, *Western Missions and Missionaries*, in the form of a letter to the Provincial from Lima, May 26, 1844. The entry into the Columbia is described in *Missions de l'Orégon*, Letter I, thence translated as Letter II, *Oregon Missions*: but the manuscript account has been chosen for publication as being somewhat fuller.

<sup>2</sup> Fathers De Smet, John Nobili, Michael Accolti, Anthony Ravalli and Louis Vercreusse, Brother Francis Huybrechts and six sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame of Namur.

John Nobili was born in Rome in 1812. After six years of great hardships in the Oregon missions, he was transferred to California. In 1855 he was made rector of the College of Santa Clara, and he died on March 1st of the following year.

Father Ravalli died at St. Mary's on the Bitter Root, October 2, 1884, in his seventy-third year — "fifty years a Jesuit and forty years a missionary." His fame stands very high in Montana, where a later generation knew more of him than even of Father De Smet.

Louis or Aloys Vercreusse was born at Courtrai, Belgium, in 1806, and died there July 12, 1867. He was stationed for a time at St.

had sprung up the evening before, and invited us to enter the North Sea. We had in fact been waiting since eight in the evening for a Flushing pilot in order to start at two in the morning. He had not, however, come on board until sunrise, and then, to our captain's great displeasure, not in a very fit state to steer the vessel between the bars and the numerous craft that surrounded us. The whole morning we remained on deck, simple and sad spectators of the pleasing sight presented by the other ships, which were all getting under way around us, amid the singing of the sailors, who made the air resound with their sea-songs in various languages. We had the honor of receiving their salutes: the *Infatigable* was hoisting and dipping the national flag until all this floating forest had vacated Rammekens' Roads. By noon two ships were still in our way; one, commanded by De Cock, laden with goods and emigrants for Texas, weighed anchor and was moving favorably, when all at once it was caught by the current and its bow driven forcibly against our stern: this unexpected shock produced such a prolonged cracking that the two ships seemed to be breaking up, and the cries of distress of the Swiss and German emigrants added to the confusion. But after a few awkward moments their fright was lost sight of in the flood of language exchanged between the two crews, with that delicacy usual among sailors. The pilot of the other ship accused ours of being to blame, whereas he, poor innocent, had not so much as raised a sail. It was a rough-and-ready representation of the Wolf and the Lamb, only it turned out differently. A rail of our afterdeck was carried away and the shutter of a window demolished — the other had a plank stove in and his anchor broken. We were glad to have gotten off so easily.

Toward three in the afternoon we put to sea. Like a Ignatius Mission; was transferred to Santa Clara in California in 1863, and returned to his birthplace in 1865, his health having given way. Brother Huybrechts died at the Cœur d'Alène Mission, April 5, 1872, at the age of seventy-four.

spirited steed, released after being long held in check, the *Infatigable* passed down the roads with a swift gait and a majestic air. Opposite Flushing, the Superior-General, Mother Constantine, and the superiors of Notre Dame and of the houses of Namur and Ghent, took the most touching farewells of the other sisters, several of whom melted in tears. At the close of the day the foreign pilot turned the helm over to ours and took his leave.

Thereupon we entered the North Sea, where all soon perceived the first symptoms of sea-sickness. At supper it declared itself positively. The feasters, with Father Louis [Vercruysse] at their head, were seen to rise briskly from the table, as if smitten by some sudden pang.<sup>3</sup> They advanced hesitatingly, the ship being now in full swing — imitating children learning to walk, or as the English *Log-book* puts it, stepping like little green parrots; clawing at benches, chairs and the shoulders of passengers who were better off, until they gained the door and clambered up the stair. Once on deck and feeling more at liberty, they all paid their tribute to Neptune, and each one made efforts to imitate, as far as was in his or her power, the exhaust of a steam-engine. “O misery! misery! who would have thought it?” murmured Father Louis in his anguish — and directly a second explosion took place, and he cried “Good-by to my supper! there go the tea, the biscuits, the cheese —” A third and fourth fit followed swiftly, as if the soul was about to quit this earthly abode — that was the case with poor Father Louis. His dinner, the Bordeaux wine, the beer — all cruelly bad-tasting in a second edition, mingled with bile — potatoes, cabbage, salt meat, chicken, ham and all the

<sup>3</sup> Father Vercruysse, in his journal of this voyage, distinctly puts Father De Smet at the head of those overcome by sea-sickness on this occasion.— Father Vercruysse’s journal is published in volume VI of the third Belgian edition of Father De Smet’s writings. It is identical to a large extent with that here translated from Father De Smet’s manuscript; it would appear that the two Fathers had kept a species of joint journal, or had copied reciprocally from each other.

*etceteras* — the several layers of his contents escaped one after another, like a mountain discharging through a crater, leaving him only a body entirely excavated. We congratulated him, for he was much better afterward.

The first night the wind was against us, so that the captain was on the point of heading for some English port. On the 10th we saw Calais light. We passed the strait on a very stormy night, and came near being thrown upon the coast of France. All this day the deck had the appearance of a hospital. A mournful silence reigned, broken only by occasional groans, or bursts of laughter provoked by the strange attitude taken by some individual, prone on the deck and reduced to extremity. The good sisters, though more or less inconvenienced themselves, displayed an astonishing activity to serve the sick. Their inexhaustible charity sufficed for everything.

Favored by a good breeze, we outstripped all the vessels that had raised anchor ahead of us on the 9th. Toward two in the afternoon an enormous fish appeared in sight — a little sample of the numerous whales, whose spouts were to divert us in the gloomy and dangerous region of the Antarctic Circle. On the 12th we observed the Isle of Wight. On the 13th we found ourselves near Plymouth, and after we had admired at night the lighthouse of the Lizard, the Atlantic Ocean received its guests, on the 14th of the month.

The motion of the ship was too violent to allow us to celebrate holy mass until the 18th. On that day we all had the happiness of receiving communion, and all met at dinner, for the first time since we had left the Schelde. On the 20th the Island of Madeira came in sight. This island was discovered in 1419, and called Madeira because it was covered with forests. The thermometer stood at 75° F. On the 20th a calm came upon us: the sea was like a mirror, and was wrinkled by a prodigious number of fish, among which the *souffleur* [grampus?] especially attracted our notice by the foam he raised in the water and the noise of his blowing. The fishes of Europe indicate by their

forms the peaceable character of the peoples who inhabit those shores. At least so they say, and they offer as proof that the salmon, trout, carp and an infinite number of other finny peoples who visit the neighborhood of mankind, are honorable in their shape and very respectable in their appearance. But if you are fond of the marvelous in this line, go to the tropics: it is there that Nature plays her famous jokes. Every time that one of those marine monsters issued from his element to exhibit himself on deck, the surprised spectators could not but laugh aloud. They were not shaped at all like the fishes of our cold climate. Some seemed to us to be altogether head: turn them about as we would, it was head in front and head behind, head above and head beneath. Others were all tail: others yet, so far as it might depend on their form, had the head, I say it with respect and submission, where one might more reasonably have expected the tail.

But how can I describe their colors, the brilliant luster of those marine monsters? The dolphin is an exception to the rule — it is a fine fish, though very dry eating — several of them were thrown on deck, and the chameleon colors of the fish, of which so many wonderful lies have been sung, appeared in all their splendor: green, blue, gold, silver, each color was revealed in turn, but only for an instant: soon they vanished, and the fish became pale, ash-color, and expired. Toward noon a shark of uncommon size paid us a visit, accompanied by his pilots, (*centronati ductores*) little fishes a foot or two in length, marked with bands of dazzling white, crossed by others of brilliant blue. They piloted the shark to the piece of bacon, attached as bait to a hook of one-inch iron: the shark seized it, and feeling himself caught turned about with such violence that the hook was straightened and pulled out of his mouth. Blood appeared on the surface, but as for the shark, he returned to the abyss. Thanks to the calm, we discovered one day an old timber all covered with shells and pursued by a crowd of fishes of

about six pounds. A great number followed our ship, and we varied our dinner at their expense; such is the stupidity of these little "old women," as the sailors call them, that as soon as one is speared or wounded, all the rest rush blindly on the murderous iron. We stopped after we had taken twenty-seven, because we were tired, and presently the little old ladies went away.

Then we got out our glasses, and perceived a boat leaving a ship, becalmed like our own. At the first view, they seemed to us to be probably pirates, but as they came nearer we saw that there were only five men, and we were reassured. When they came up they were invited to come on board, but they refused, alleging that they were going to Marseilles, where, to escape the quarantine, they would be obliged to swear that they had not set foot in any other ship. Their pilot said he was the captain of a French ship, the *Félicité*, which had been wrecked on the African coast, and the crew taken on board the ship before us, the *Fourmie*. He had come to get his longitude, and after asking a few questions concerning France and taking letters from the captain and the sisters, he went away again.

On the 23d, the sky was clear and beautiful, and an exhibition of our whole wardrobe was held: the deck looked like a second-hand shop. This was repeated from time to time — for sanitary reasons. Sunday, the 28th, though the sky was serene and the wind moderate, there was such a swell that it was impossible to say mass: Wednesday, Thursday and Friday we had that pleasure. In the evening we sang vespers on deck as usual.

On the 1st of February we were in sight of the Island of San Antonio, belonging to the Cape Verde group. Here flying fish began to appear; later we saw clouds of them between the tropics; several flew on deck. On the following day, the feast of the Purification, toward nine p. m., we sang canticles and the litanies of the Holy Virgin. Never, perhaps, have the Atlantic and Pacific oceans resounded

as long and as regularly with the praises of this kind Mother, who is our hope and consolation in the dangers to which we are exposed.

“ We felt how she can calm impart,  
Who, though in heaven’s supremest place,  
Bears — as on earth — a Mother’s heart.  
We hoped that she would guard us — she,  
Bright Mother of Him who walk’d the sea.”

An almost perfect calm prevailed on the 6th and 7th, with the thermometer at 88° F.; it went no higher at any time afterward. On the night of the 8th a school of fish assailed our ship: the sharks were making war upon them. It is a fine sight to see them at night; the phosphorescence makes them shine like silver, and they are distinctly visible fifteen to twenty feet under water. On the 12th we celebrated the 100th mass on board the vessel. There were ten ships in sight. On the 13th, toward eight in the evening, a slight breath of air stirred, by means of which a vessel came toward us, accompanied by music. Dutch soldiers were singing war-songs, which contrasted oddly with the litanies of the Holy Virgin which we were singing at the same time. We hailed each other: “ Where from and whither bound?” “ From Rotterdam to Batavia: from Antwerp to Valparaiso,” were the laconic replies, and they disappeared in the darkness. On the 14th we were insensibly drawing near to the line.

That evening, toward seven o’clock, the sailors gave three cheers for “ Neptune’s fire.” We hurried on deck — a hundred yards from us a column of fire was rising from the sea in the midst of the darkness. It was a barrel of pitch and tar that the sailors had thrown out. Then a gruff voice was heard from the top of the mainmast — “ Captain, have you any passengers on board?” “ I have, twelve.” “ Do they propose to cross the line?” “ They do.” “ To-morrow Neptune in person will come and administer to them the baptism indispensable to whomso-

ever wishes to pass the line." Neptune's envoy was hidden among the sails, but at ten o'clock, the exact time when we crossed the line, he caused a fire to appear on the top of the mainmast, which burned for a quarter of an hour. This was a signal for us to go to bed. One would say that Neptune is still pleased, says Byron, at seeing his name invoked afresh, though in a derisory manner, by his true children, in grotesque sports which were never known in his native Cyclades. The god of the seas seems to rejoice, in the depth of his empire, at seeing some feeble traces of his ancient worship still kept alive.

On the 15th, about ten in the morning, at the shout of "Neptune! Neptune!" we accompanied the captain on deck, where that great personage presented himself with all his court. He looked in truth more like his brother Pluto. He was covered with rags from head to foot: a wig and a terrifying beard of tow covered his face: he had in his hand an enormous wooden compass and a sextant, with which he began to make motions, imitating the captain when he takes the sun. On his right stood his wife, with a doll in her arms representing their son, one as idiotically attired as the other. The most outlandish masquerade rig would give you but a faint idea of theirs. Neptune first promised the captain a fortunate voyage, and then turning to me, requested me to submit to the operation of the razor. I answered that as the chief of the passengers I would gladly treat for all, but begged him to excuse us. Neptune insisted, I continued to make excuses, fearing they would play me some trick. The captain was smiling to himself, but our marine god would not give up: "It is my inalienable right," he said, "to shave, and the bounden duty of every passenger, of whatever rank or condition, to submit." At last he whispered to me that he would do the thing decently, and that it was only an innocent joke and all the fun the sailors had. So I sat down by the mainmast, Neptune put a scrap of sail-cloth over my chest, held up a little tub of soapy water, and

passed his brush dipped in this liquid once or twice, very lightly and gracefully over my chin. Then with the utmost dexterity he scraped all the lather off with his wooden razor. My companions came next, and I was glad to be let off, for to crown the joke, as I had expected, Neptune ordered baptism, and instantly a deluge of water descended. Well soaked, my poor brothers fled to the quarter-deck, where the sisters stood watching the games without having to undergo the inconvenience of them. Neptune and his companions then engaged in a combat with buckets of water. When they were tired and wet through, they all went and put on their best clothes, and then performed a series of dances, each more ridiculous than the rest, and for the remainder of the day they were playing all kinds of pranks on one another, but all good-naturedly.

On the 28th a storm was brewing in the bosom of the calm. It burst on the 29th but was of short duration. Wednesday, March 1st, the north wind brought back a clear sky. At six in the evening we perceived three ships on the horizon, two of which in the north by a peculiar chance seemed to touch the ruddy disk of the setting sun, making a very pretty sight. At about eleven o'clock I observed a phenomenon in the nature of a shooting-star. The north wind was blowing with moderate force, thin white clouds were scattered over the sky, when all at once a disk of fire appeared in the blue part of the sky, about half way up from the horizon, and remained visible for five or six seconds. It was a foot in diameter and as bright as an ordinary meteor. Half of the lower edge resembled a perfect crescent, of a deep violet color. As the meteor slowly advanced, a beard of writhing reddish flames, half an inch wide by a foot and a half long, formed beneath the crescent, while two purple beams shot out from the two sides of the beard to a length of some twelve feet. Having reached this size they faded and were no

longer separated by more than a couple of inches. The space between the beard and these two beams was as brilliant as the disk of the meteor. The trail terminated in a fine pale red fringe, forming a rounded rather than pointed beard.

As we advanced southward the lovely constellation of the Southern Cross and the three nebulae called the Clouds of Magellan became more and more visible, and their height above the southern horizon increased with the latitude. Two of the nebulae are luminous, and are without doubt composed of a great number of stars, so many and so remote that, like the Milky Way, they give only a faint light, forming apparently light clouds, whence their name. The third is dark, and is probably the entire absence of all light. I contemplated them daily with admiration and astonishment. Some writers claim that the constellations of the southern hemisphere are more brilliant than those of the northern: the sight of so many new stars, which one had never dreamed of seeing, and the disappearance of the greater part of those that one has watched since childhood, naturally inspire a variety of strange sensations.

The brilliant phosphorescent light, resembling the tail of a comet, which on dark nights marked the track of our vessel, amused us very often, and we were thrown into astonishment and admiration at the reflection that, as is claimed, it is produced by myriads of tiny insects, possessing the same light-giving power as the glow-worm and fire-fly.

On the 3d of March distant thunder was heard rolling on all sides, and in the evening we had a terrifying hail-storm. On the 11th, a fight between a band of porpoises and some birds of the size of a goose amused us a good deal. The birds persecuted the fish outrageously, darting upon them with the swiftness of lightning whenever they showed themselves on the surface or leaped out of

their element. We were threatened with a tempest on the 14th: the windows were hermetically closed, but this time our fears subsided.

Once we saw a whale, sixty to seventy feet long, sporting on the surface of the water — a truly curious piece of mechanism. On the 16th we came in sight of the Malouine or Falkland Islands, which lie to the east of Patagonia: this is a group of islands, two of which are very large, Several attempts have been made by the Spanish, the French, the English and the Americans to form establishments here, but the severity of the climate has compelled them to abandon the project: latterly the Government of Buenos Aires has taken formal possession of them. On the 17th the wind was very impetuous, and a whale showed himself within thirty feet of the ship. On the 18th we saw the land of Staten Island. On the 19th we were astonished that the Shetland Islands appeared so near at hand. We did not see Cape Horn at all: it is the southernmost point of a group of islands called the Hermits. In the night of the 20th two icebergs, seeming about 100 feet high, floated within a short distance of the ship. The next morning we saw the frightful rocks, wholly volcanic, discovered only a few years ago and which have been named "Greenock." On the 23d we found ourselves very near the volcanic islands of Diego Ramirez and Ildefonso. They are composed of a frightful group of bare rocks, frequented only by ocean birds and sea-lions: and yet I contemplated with pleasure those formless isolated masses, being tired of seeing nothing day after day save the water and the firmament.

The albatross, the bird of those regions, wheeled constantly about our ship, indifferent to winds and waves. They stand four feet tall and measure some ten feet from tip to tip of their wings. It is the largest member of the winged race, and may easily be taken with a hook. The *damier*, or cape-pigeon, and the *fou* are two other birds of the cape that never left us in stormy times. The last

named is easily caught, and once on the ship he will not leave it again. The stormy petrel is found in every sea: they are something the size of a swallow, and as they flit over the surface of the water, sometimes they seem to be running upon it. The inhabitants of the Faroe Islands, where these birds are abundant, run a wick through them from the bill to the tail and use them for candles, thanks to the great quantity of oil they contain.

From the 24th to the 30th we had to withstand furious tempests. Several of our sails were torn to shreds and the vessel became the sport of the winds and floods. Several of these days we should have passed in mortal anguish, had not God been our sole hope of safety. At last we breathed again and thought ourselves out of all danger, when divine Providence was pleased to send us a severer trial: for an impetuous wind arose which drove us before it with such rapidity that in a few hours we saw solid land. The peril was great. The ship, with two sails spread, was obliged to make head against the hurricane. A tempest is truly a sublime spectacle: but the description is infinitely more agreeable than the reality. If there had been less of the frightful about it, probably I should have enjoyed it more. Such were the bellowings of the winds and the waves that the captain's words, even through the trumpet, could hardly be distinguished. The waves rose in pyramids around us, and masses of water torn off by the fury of the wind were hurled upon us in floods and filled the deck with foam. Never in any of my voyages had I had such evidence of the might of the wind and the water, nor of the admirable manner in which the vessel resists such a furious tempest.

It was most fortunate that we had a courageous and experienced captain and officers and a sober, active and obedient crew. All of us, with the exception of the nuns, were on deck, with our eyes fixed on the frightful cliffs which line the wild and barbarous coasts of Patagonia. We awaited in gloomy silence the accomplishment of the

divine will in regard to us. Once I went below to inform the sisters of the danger: I found them also occupied in imploring the protection of heaven by the intercession of the Holy Virgin Mary. I offered them the assistance of my ministry, but they all answered, with a smile upon their lips, and with that tranquillity, that unalterable calm, which only a heart pure and inflamed with the love of God can give, "We are not disturbed about anything. Let the Lord dispose of us as seems good to him." I had hardly reached the deck again when the wind suddenly changed and bore us in an exactly opposite direction.

On the 2d of April we were near land. On the 3d we saw the peninsula of the Tres Montes. The 8th and 9th we were coasting along Chiloe and Chile. On the 10th we saw the Island of Mocha and its dangerous shoals, level with the water. On the 12th we entered the beautiful Bay of Valparaiso, where we anchored about five in the afternoon.

Though we were extremely desirous to get on shore after so long a voyage — it was three months since we had left the Schelde — we were obliged to remain on board until the next day. As we contemplated the city from the middle of the bay it presented a truly enchanting appearance. It lies in crescent shape along the shore for a space of a league. A range of hills form a background, in which it lies as in an amphitheater. The numberless lights, shining from all the windows, presented a beautiful illumination in the evening. We especially, after so long a captivity upon the sea, with nothing to look at but sky and water, frightful rocks and barren coasts, were, it is safe to say, fully capable of appreciating this sight, and very well disposed to do so.

Early the next morning I went on shore to look for suitable lodgings for the sisters and for my companions. I soon returned to the ship with the good news that there were some Jesuits from Buenos Aires at Valparaiso, and that the French nuns of the order of Picpus invited the

Sisters of Notre Dame to stay with them. It would be hard to imagine the joy that we all felt. Each one made up his or her little bundle, and shortly we were on American soil.

Our Fathers received us with a warmth that I could never describe. We found them all together: they had just finished a retreat, to which Reverend Father Verdugo, the Provincial, had called them. Though considerably straitened, and having hardly subsistence for themselves, they forced us to lodge with them and strove to see who could render us the most services. We found in them true brothers and friends — veritable children of St. Ignatius, *corde et animo*.

The Reverend Fathers of the order of Picpus have had a college at Valparaiso for some years past, and are rendering considerable services to religion. The Sisters of Notre Dame will never forget the friendly reception that they met with at the hands of the French nuns. Neither did they leave that abode until they had reanimated themselves with a retreat of some days. They were edified by the good examples, but confused by the excess of kindness and attentions with which they were unceasingly surrounded by these good ladies.

On Tuesday, the 16th of the same month, I set out from Valparaiso for Santiago, the capital of Chile. Fathers Landau and Vercruyse were in one carriage, Father Gomila, Superior of the Missions, and myself, in another. Each carriage was drawn by two horses, one of which, that of the postilion, was attached only by a single rope. A second conductor, likewise on horseback, is to help the first in getting up and down mountains. Four loose relay horses also accompanied us, sometimes ahead and sometimes behind, without once straying in the distance of thirty-two leagues, which we had to travel. The skill and swiftness with which these postilions take you along are really admirable. The whole trip was accomplished in less than twelve hours. Where this road crosses two mountain chains, branches of

the Cordilleras (the Cerro Puerto and the Questa de Zapata), it resembles considerably the Simplon Pass. The road is very much traveled — every moment we met carriages, mules, donkeys and horses loaded with merchandise, and enormous wagons, often in trains of six, eight or ten, each drawn by five or six yoke of oxen, and of the rudest construction imaginable: the wheels making a deafening uproar, like the gates to Milton's Pandemonium — because the Chilean freighters say that "this racket does the oxen for music," and consequently they neglect the use of grease and tar. The yokes are as rude and heavy in proportion as the carts: and for harness they have only cords made of rawhide, strongly braided. Each cart has at least three teamsters. One sits in the wagon, armed with a long pole or whip, and from time to time he makes use of a bamboo, some thirty feet in length, to accelerate the gait of the front pair of oxen. The second sits on the yoke, between the heads of the second pair of oxen, likewise armed with a stick. There was something ridiculous in the appearance and attitude of the latter, with naked muscular legs dangling in the air, sitting only on a folded sheepskin, and still with happiness and contentment imprinted on his tanned face; happier no doubt, between the four horns of his two oxen, than many a rich man in the midst of opulence. The third rides a horse, whip in hand, and does nothing but pass and repass from one side to the other. If such a combination should pass through your streets, in its slow and solemn movement and with its prolonged, harmonious, ear-splitting creaking, I don't doubt that all the inhabitants would be sticking their noses out at the doors and that the team from Chile would attract as much attention as a dancing bear or a dozen elephants.

The Casa Blanca valley, which we traversed, is three or four leagues wide. We lodged in a little village called Cura-cavi. On leaving Valparaiso the road rises, winding along the mountain side for about an hour, until it comes out on a very extensive and lofty plain, from which there

is a fine view of the sea and the Andes. At this time of the year (it is autumn here) there is very little verdure discoverable; everywhere bare hills, covered only with brush and enormous cactuses, with pretty, bright red flowers, and from time to time one may espy in the ravines or on the slopes a solitary palm, seeming to announce itself as the monarch of this desert. Even the valleys that we crossed are covered with bushes and trees of low growth. We saw a few scattered huts or cabins, built of branches of trees or of straw, but one is really tempted to believe that these people live on the dew of heaven, for there is hardly any soil to be seen. The distance from Cura-cavi to the passage of the second range, the *Questa de Zapata*, is about four leagues. We crossed it the next day by the pass called *Prado*, as well as the great torrent that drains it and which we were obliged to ford, there being no bridges. It seldom rains in summer in Chile, and consequently the rivers are usually just about dry: but when they are swollen by the melting of the snows, or by copious rains, communication is broken off for three or four days. Toward noon on the 17th we arrived at the chateau of *Señor Ruiz-Tagle*, one of the richest proprietors of the Republic, who received us with genuine Castilian cordiality and hospitality. As we did not know Spanish Reverend Father Gomila's acquaintance with French was of great service to us. After we had taken a lunch we were shown to an immense enclosure of olive trees, which here grow to a prodigious size. Toward four o'clock *Señor Tagle* took us to the city in his own carriage, which he placed at our disposal for so long a time as we should stay with him.

The city of Santiago lies at the foot of the *Mapocho* Mountains, in a beautiful, delicious and fertile valley  $33^{\circ} 35'$  S. latitude and  $73^{\circ} 4'$  W. longitude from the meridian of Paris. It is 2,400 Spanish feet above sea-level. It was founded in 1541 by *Pedro Valdivia*, contains some 500 squares, and the elegance and richness of its edifices, its commerce, its public works, its population of over 100,000,

which is daily increasing [250,000 in 1890], make it the principal city of the Republic and one of the best in South America. It is surrounded by mountains called the Crown of Santiago. Above their summits appear the snowy peaks of the Great Andes, rising 22,000 feet above sea-level. On the east of the city stands a lofty rock, divided in the middle, which serves as a citadel: a little dilapidated wall is visible, a small and poor chapel, two barracks or rather sheds for shelter to the soldiers — were it not for the four cannon that surmount it one would hardly guess that it is a citadel. The streets of the city are wide and straight, and water circulates abundantly everywhere. The public place is a vast square, in the center of which is a beautiful fountain representing the goddess of liberty crowning Chile. The principal buildings are the Government House, the treasury building, which is very large, the archbishop's palace, a stately cathedral, still unfinished, and a former church and college of the Jesuits: the latter now belongs to the city. There are ten other rather large and good-looking churches. Before the suppression, we had here four houses of the Society. At present there are two convents of Dominicans, two of Augustinians, three of Franciscans, and two of the Order for the Redemption of Captives. There are also eight monasteries of religious ladies, namely, of Barefooted Carmelites, of St. Augustine, of Ste. Claire, of Ste. Rose of Lima, of Capuchinesses and of the French ladies of the order of Picpus. The ladies of Picpus are the only ones that keep a boarding-school, conducted on the same principles as that of Valparaiso. They give a finished education to the young ladies belonging to the first families of the country, and they give gratuitous instruction to about 300 children of the inferior classes. The people seem to be gifted with an excellent character and happy disposition, and are warmly attached to the religion of their forefathers. The Government prospers under the shadow of peace, and the wisdom of a well-conducted administration.

It would be a very fine thing if their neighbors would imitate their example.

We had the honor of being presented to the Prime Minister, and by him to the President of the Republic, General Vulnes. It appears that the Government extends its solicitous care also over the natives, particularly the Araucanians, a savage nation living across the Bio-bio river and down as far as to Patagonia. Preparations are being made to carry the light of faith to those tribes, which have been so long left in darkness, but show the most favorable dispositions to correspond to the zeal of the missionaries whom it will please divine Providence to send to them. The Government has sent an agent to Europe, with power and means to bring back the Jesuits into this vast Republic.

At Santiago, and throughout the Republic, some very edifying religious practices exist. At the Angelus, at the sound of the bell, everybody stops in the streets, uncovers his head and recites the prayers of the angelic salutation very devoutly. When the sound of the cathedral bell announces the elevation of the mass, every one prostrates himself, with his face turned toward the church, and adores the holy sacrament single-mindedly and in silence. When the holy sacrament is carried to a sick person, the priest goes in an open carriage and carries the host conspicuously; at his passage all the families come forth from their houses and all the passers-by prostrate themselves and entone canticles to the praise of God. It is an uninterrupted succession of different choirs until he reaches the sick person's residence. If the priest takes the holy sacrament to several sick persons, it is in procession: he is accompanied by a guard of honor and preceded by a military band. The ancient faith is far from being dead in South America. Some modern travelers seem to wish to claim the contrary: they judge by practices and ceremonies which they do not understand and the purity and grandeur of which are unknown to them: they visit for the most part only the impious and incredulous of their own stamp.

Valparaiso is the second city of Chile in commerce and in population, containing about 40,000 souls. Business is mainly in the hands of Europeans of various nations. It is only in the last few years that the city has made any notable growth: twenty years ago it had no more than four or five thousand inhabitants. The greater part of the houses in Chile are of one story and built of sun-dried or fired bricks. This is a necessary precaution, on account of the frequent earthquakes, caused by sixteen volcanoes at proportionate distances and in constant operation. These earthquakes are considered the great calamity of the Chilians. The dwellings of the poor, who appear to be many, especially in the outskirts of the cities, are only miserable huts of straw or twigs, veritable dens of misery, ignorance and vice. The poor in Chile are in a pitiable state as regards religion; their poverty is only too often caused by their great indolence and laziness. The interiors of the houses of the rich compare favorably with the most splendid mansions of the European nobility.

Chile extends from the confines of the desert of Atacama to Cape Horn. The chain of the Andes separates it from the Argentine Republic. It stretches 620 geographical leagues from north to south and its width varies from fifty-five to twenty-two leagues. Meantime Chile may be considered as a plain, or rather a continuation of the Andes. Its mineralogy is very rich and vast. It may perhaps excel any other part of the globe in metallic products. Mines of gold, silver, copper, tin and lead and all the metals and semi-metals are numerous and abundant. I have obtained a fine collection from the director of the Museum of Santiago, which I have forwarded to the Museum of Brussels through Mr. De Boom, residing in Valparaiso. Captain Hall says that several hundred copper mines are being worked in Chile, with one of gold and three of silver to every fifty of copper. He supposes that the annual production of copper is 60,000 quintals of 100 Spanish pounds each, and that the yearly exportation amounts to more than

20,000 marcs, a marc being eight piastres or dollars. The gold mines are neglected, as much by reason of the great profit derived from the copper mines as because of the difficulty and cost of exploiting the mines of the precious metal.

The climate of Chile seems to be delicious, especially in the central portion — a region which the fertility of its soil renders one of the most agreeable residence places in America. In the northern part sugar-cane, yams, wheat, and corn are raised successfully, and legumes and fruit-bearing plants and trees come to perfection. Never have I eaten anywhere better bananas and melons. Peaches, oranges, lemons, apples, quinces, strawberries, and an infinity of other fruits grow here in the greatest abundance. I have seen thickets of grapevines, which, though they were untended, produced excellent grapes. There are ninety-five varieties of forest trees known, of which only thirteen lose their leaves in winter. Chile abounds in horses, sheep, and pigs of excellent kinds. The rivers are well stocked with fish: the Andes form a nursery for birds of prey, and in general the different species of birds are innumerable in Chile.

Spring begins here about the 21st of September, summer in December, autumn in March and winter in June. In the northern part, between twenty-four and thirty-six degrees of latitude, during spring and until the middle of summer, hardly a drop of rain falls: the sky is always clear: but from about the middle of April to the end of August the rains are abundant. In the southern provinces it often rains for nine or ten days at a stretch. Thunder is seldom heard, except in the neighborhood of the Andes. There are very heavy dews in spring, summer and fall. No venomous reptiles are met with in all Chile, nor any wild beasts dangerous to man.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE VOYAGE AROUND CAPE HORN.

#### *Valparaiso to Fort Vancouver.*

Pleasant voyage to Callao — Observations on Lima and Peru — Enthusiastic reception by the populace — To sea again — Trade-winds and calms — Provisions running low — Coast of Oregon sighted — Confronted by bar of the Columbia — Doubts and fears — The wonderful crossing — Arrival at Astoria and reception by Birnie — Fort Vancouver and Dr. McLoughlin — News from the mountain missions.

**W**E took leave at last of the respectable Tagle family, who entertained us with all the charity and hospitality imaginable for ten days. We reached Valparaiso in time to make all preparations for our second embarkation. On the 1st of May we said farewell to our dear brothers in Valparaiso, and the *Infatigable* weighed anchor on the day following. The distance from Valparaiso to Callao, the port of Lima, is about 500 leagues. I have never seen so calm, smooth and beautiful a sea as that which now passed before our eyes: rightfully do they call it *Mare Pacificum*. We had a constantly favorable breeze, and the same sails that were set at Valparaiso remained untouched, nor did the ship deviate a line from its course, until we arrived in the beautiful bay of Callao, after a navigation of eight days. An almost entire uniformity marked our passage — not the slightest accident nor unpleasantness arose to mar this beautiful run, and save for the usual changes of day and night, sunshine and cloud, nothing interrupted the agreeable monotony of the scene. On the 11th of May I found myself in the capital of Peru.

Since we have coasted along a great part of South America, I will give you my observations and such information as I have gathered concerning those coasts. On the Pacific

side they differ greatly from those on the Atlantic. The latter are in general bold and rocky, and having the advantage of great and navigable rivers, they offer a multitude of the finest harbors in the universe. The coast of Brazil is especially favored in this respect, throughout its extent of about 1,000 leagues. All this coast is very fertile, and capable of supporting a very large population. On the Pacific side, on the contrary, the coasts are with few exceptions sterile and frightful, and as it seldom or never rains over a great extent of country, there are considerable tracts as arid as the desert of Arabia. Communication by land between Chile and Lima is almost impracticable by reason of these arid plains. They form even serious obstacles to traffic between the different States, which is therefore conducted by sea. There is a notable difference between a voyage toward the northwest and one to the southeast: the latter nearly always encounters contrary winds and currents. Though the ports on the Pacific are not so well furnished with harbors as are Brazil and Terra Firma, still there are several that possess considerable advantages. It should be noted that the same difficulties of communication exist between different places on the opposite coasts of the southern continent, but for different reasons. On the Atlantic side it is the extraordinary mass of vegetation that covers the ground, presenting almost insurmountable obstacles to the opening of roads. But navigation is so easy on that delicious coast, where maritime dangers are almost unknown, that there is really no motive for making extraordinary efforts to open highroads. To make up for the difficulty of internal communication by land, there is no country in the world having so great a number of navigable rivers as South America. Those great and beautiful rivers, the Magdalena, the Orinoco, the Amazon, the Plata and their thousands of branches, stretching in every direction through the continent, offer convenient routes between the most distant regions. "Of all parts of the globe," says Humboldt, "America is the best watered." There are a great number

of rivers as large as the Rhine or Danube, the very names of which are hardly known, even to those who may be considered well versed in geography.

I have said that we dropped anchor in the port of Callao on the 11th of May. Callao is a little town of about 5,000 inhabitants, built on a sandy shore and possessing a fine fortress. An omnibus line connects it with Lima, some two leagues away, making the trip in an hour. The capital of Peru, seen from a distance, presents a magnificent appearance. The plain on which it lies rises imperceptibly from the sea. The approach is between a number of rows of trees, which extend a mile and form a handsome and popular promenade on either side of the road, with stone benches. The entry into the city is by a triumphal arch. The streets run in parallels, crossing at right angles. I went thither immediately upon our arrival in Callao, to look for suitable lodgings for my companions and the nuns. I was accompanied by good Father Gomila, who had come with us from Chile to assist us in a land of whose language we were ignorant. The city of Lima is spread over a great deal of ground: the civil wars that have raged there for years past are decreasing the number of inhabitants day by day, and it will not exceed to-day 40,000 souls. The arrival of two Jesuits was soon noised abroad through the city, and we received calls from a great number of citizens, who came to salute and welcome us, begging us in the tenderest and most persuasive words to establish ourselves among them. The ladies were in a marked state of impatience, mingled with joy and curiosity to see the sisters come. We went to spend the night with Rev. Mateo d'Aguiar, a zealous priest, director of a religious house, where a retreat is given each month for the ladies of the city.

On the following day we paid our respects to the bishop, Luna Pizarro, who has been presented to the Roman court as successor to the late archbishop. He received us with great affection, and spoke in terms of praise and esteem of our Society. We also visited the principal churches and estab-

lishments of the city, after which we prepared to return to Callao. The omnibus, with five horses, which I had hired to convey us from the port of Lima, was by some accident detained nearly half an hour. The people came from all quarters to see us, and the carriage was soon surrounded by a numerous crowd. Mothers, and among them ladies of distinction, pressed through the crowd, held up their children, kissed the hands and veils of the sisters, and conjured them to remain and establish themselves in the city. The men, too, showed us the greatest respect. The same regard and affection were manifested along the road. The people were prompted to act in this manner by the conviction that the education of youth is neglected in their country, and they severely feel the want of it. When the sisters arrived in Lima, they took up their lodgings at an old Carmelite convent, now converted into an orphan asylum. The crowd poured into the building after them. For four or five days they received visits from morning till night. The most respectable families came with their interpreters, and vied with each other in showing them marks of kindness and affection. They were obliged to accept three carriages in which, accompanied by the principal ladies of the city, they visited the churches and the other establishments. When they alighted at any place, the people crowded around them, even in the churches, to kiss their hands, their heads, and veils. The humble sisters received these homages with reluctance, but they were to them a heartfelt consolation; and who knows whether they may not prove instrumental in the designs of Providence to obtain the object of this kind-hearted people? There is not a single religious order in this city that devotes its labors to teach the inferior classes. Hence their want and desire of instruction.

I went with my companions to lodge at the former college of the Society, called St. Paul's, where we all occupied the same room. The establishment is very extensive, covering one of the square blocks of the city, and is divided into four square buildings, each having an area in the middle, and

supported by a double colonnade. The roof is flat, as are all the roofs of all the churches and houses in Lima, for here it never rains. Part of the college serves as a residence for several ecclesiastics and for the friars of St. Philip of Neri; some other quarters of the same establishment have been transformed into barracks and stables. There seemed to be but a single voice in the whole city — all demanded the return of the Jesuits. At a distance the city with its numerous domes presents a beautiful prospect, but when we enter it all the buildings, apparently without roofs, give it the appearance of a city of ruins. The streets are wide and paved with little round stones. Little streams of water run in every direction through the streets, and carry away a good share of the filth. One of the greatest curiosities of Lima is the fruit-market, by the abundance and variety of tropical productions. There are seventy-two churches within the precincts of the city, including those of religious orders, which are numerous. The cathedral, whose architecture is of the sixteenth century, is a magnificent pile. It fronts the large public square, on which is also built their archiepiscopal palace. The other sides of the square are adorned with rich stores and colonnades. The main altar of the cathedral is a splendid piece of workmanship. It consists of three rows of columns supporting one another, and plated and ornamented with silver.

The government buildings occupy another side of the great square. In the center there is a beautiful iron fountain, in the center of the vast basin of which rises a column of the same metal surmounted by a bronze statue of Fame.

At the time of my visit to Lima, it was certainly an unhappy city. There was nothing to be seen but preparations for war; a new revolution was expected from day to day, and no one had confidence in either side. Meanwhile the population is dwindling away. "There is nothing to-day," said Mr. Lesson, "to remind one of those times of flattery and opulence when the merchants were rich enough to pave with solid silver the principal street, by which the viceroy,

the duke of La Plata, came in 1682 to take possession of his government."

Peru! Land of gold and silver, with thy fertile and beautiful soil, and temperate and healthy climate, once the terrestrial paradise of South America, now its poorest and most wretched region: thy commerce languishes; the education of thy children is neglected; the officers of thy venal army fly from standard to standard; the ambition and faithlessness of thy leaders have exhausted thy treasury; thy chiefs, destitute of patriotism, seek their own aggrandizement, and oppress thy people; — such is the state of things in Peru at present.

The length of Peru from northwest to southeast is 430 leagues, and its average width 160 leagues. The country is crossed from north to south by the Andes, which are divided into two parallel chains; the central is the higher, the other is called the Coast Range. Maritime Peru is an inclined plain, almost entirely sterile and sandy. This is attributed mainly to the height of the Andes, which catch the drifting clouds and prevent the rain from falling on the plains: partly also to the dry winds which blow constantly from the desert of Atacama to the Gulf of Guayaquil. The cultivated spots lie principally along the rivers, and the vegetation is entirely nourished by the abundant dew, which often resembles a light rain. Upon all the coast of Peru the sun is visible hardly six months of the year, and the air is in general stifling and variable. In the interior, on the high lands, vegetation is abundant and of lofty growth.

Up to the elevation of 10,000 feet, the climate is a mixture of autumn and spring. Beyond this, at the height of 14,000 feet, commences the region of eternal winter, where the volcanoes are in full operation, vomiting flames and lava upon the glaciers and snowfields round about. It is the abysses whence these volcanoes are fed that so often scatter terror and consternation among the sparse populations of the Republic. We had three shocks during our short stay in Lima, two of which were pretty hard. In 1746 the little city of

Callao was swallowed up by the sea with all its inhabitants. In Lima hardly a house was left standing, and more than 5,000 persons were buried in the ruins. In 1828 nearly 1,000 lives were lost.

In the maritime region of Peru there are immense forests of pine, cedar, acacia and *ceiba* of prodigious thickness, and an infinity of other valuable woods. Various wild animals are found in these forests, and an endless variety of venomous insects and reptiles, and a great number of birds of rare beauty. Some of the rivers are well stocked with fish, but at the same time crocodiles abound.

Peru lacks the first essentials of internal commerce: there are neither good roads, nor canals, nor good bridges: merchandise is transported on the backs of mules. Agriculture is so neglected that most of their grain has to come from abroad. It can literally be said that in Peru they walk on gold and silver and lack for bread. The mountains abound in mineral wealth: they could furnish the whole universe with gold and silver if the mines were properly worked. There are seventy mines of gold, 680 of silver, four of copper, four of quicksilver, twelve of lead. Emeralds are found, and marcasites, and other precious stones in various parts of the country.

On the 26th of May we received for the last time the blessing of Monseigneur Luna Pizarro, and after taking farewell of our new acquaintances in Lima we turned again to the sea. Since our departure from Antwerp, the *Infatigable* had become filled with intrusive little nuisances, who explored and spoiled everything they could find in the ship. During our absence from Callao a good fumigation took place, and not less than 1,500 rats were found suffocated in the various apartments.

On the 27th we left the roads of Callao, favored by the trade-winds, which blew steadily from the southeast, inso-much that our course was not interrupted for an instant until we were past the Equator. Our sails were filled by the good breeze, and required little or no attention. The air was of

the most agreeable temperature. Do not think that in these moments of tranquil navigation the sailors are idle: the captain always takes care to keep their hands full. We never saw them strolling idly, or loafing, or even talking in a loud tone. The captain was constantly employed upon his observations, calculations or books. We too had our occupations. The sisters observed most strictly all the rules and holy practices in use in their houses, so far as was practicable at sea, and were never seen without a needle, a pen, a chaplet or a spiritual book in their hands: all their conduct during this long sea-voyage was very regular and edifying. Father Louis gave French lessons to the Italian brothers, who applied themselves without relaxation to the study of languages: and I gave lessons in English to them all.

The trade-winds left us finally, and soon we found ourselves in a variable region, where Æolus blew from every direction and where squalls never let us alone, for a fortnight. Calms would come at intervals, and those are the most disagreeable periods of a long sea-voyage. Then an expression of discouragement and melancholy appears on the captain's face and on those of all the crew: it seems as if one were condemned to perish there: a blackened sea surrounds you: a somber sky covers you, and the clouds on the horizon, which appear impenetrable obstacles, changing form and physiognomy every instant, call to mind all kinds of phantoms: while the ship, like a weak toy upon a sea in torment, swelling and sinking unceasingly, rocks you and rocks you until your head and stomach both turn. In those times of disagreeable calm one is always on the lookout to observe every point of the compass, always trying to catch some gleam of hope from every little breath, though scarcely able to stir the sails, however little. At last light but favorable winds came, and drove us tranquilly toward the Tropic of Cancer. When we passed the overhead sun, in longitude  $130^{\circ}$ , we enjoyed a serene sky, and we noticed that our bodies cast no shadows. A good breeze from the northeast came to

restore our happiness: it was even so refreshing that we were obliged to resume our flannels, and when we thought of the region of calms from which we had just escaped, it is impossible to describe our contentment at the change. As we advanced northward, the familiar stars came more and more in sight, and we bade farewell to the Magellanic Clouds and the beautiful southern constellations, which disappeared one after another below the horizon. Between the tropics, here as on the Atlantic, we saw from time to time clouds of flying fish.

From the 17th of July on we had only a continual alternation between uneasiness and joy, as the wind was contrary or favorable. Our disquietude was the better founded, that our provisions were beginning to run low: we were reduced to rice boiled in water and salt meat, which gave out such an odor as might spoil any one's appetite. About the 25th it was announced that we were going to lose our soup, because water was getting scarcer and more precious every day, and the wind seemed obstinately resolved to blow against us. At last, on the 28th, after many prayers and vows, the coast of Oregon was sighted: our joy was unanimous and great. And still the greatest obstacle, that which I feared the most between Antwerp and Fort Vancouver, was not yet overcome: we had now to cross the most dangerous bar known in America, which lies completely across the mouth of the Columbia river.<sup>1</sup>

The captain had been unable to obtain a chart or even any information concerning this dangerous pass, and was, we knew, entirely unacquainted with the rocks and breakers which, at this season, render it almost impracticable. We soon perceived Cape Disappointment, which seems

<sup>1</sup> The bar at the mouth of the Columbia was, in its natural condition, one of the most dangerous known to navigation. In recent times this condition has been largely removed by a system of parallel jetties built by the Government to concentrate the flow over the bar and scour out a deep channel.

to point out to travelers the course they are to pursue. It was growing late, and the captain resolved to steer out into the open sea, to avoid the danger of running aground during the night. As the vessel moved slowly onward, leaving the shore in the distance, we stood out on deck, contemplating from afar the high mountains and vast forests of Oregon. Here and there we could distinguish wisps of smoke curling upward from the huts of our poor Indians. This sight filled my soul with indescribable emotions. It would be necessary to be placed in the same position, to understand fully what were then our feelings. Our hearts palpitated with joy as we gazed on those boundless regions, over which were scattered so many abandoned souls — the young, the aged — dying in the shades of infidelity, for want of missionaries; an evil which we were about to alleviate, if not for all, at least for a great number.

On the 29th all the Fathers celebrated the holy sacrifice, wishing to offer a last violence to heaven and force, as it were, a benediction on our mission. The morning was dark and gloomy: so were our spirits. About ten o'clock the sky cleared, and allowed us to approach, with caution, the vast and fearful mouth of the Columbia. There was nothing anywhere but enormous breakers, and no way of avoiding them appeared. Consternation was general. "This is really perishing in port," said one. "It is no use," said another, "we can never cross." They even came to me and proposed taking us to the Sandwich Islands. Those who were brought to these distant shores by the loftier motives seemed to be the only ones who preserved some gleam of hope: but neither did they perceive any way of arriving at the desired haven. One of the small boats had been made ready to go out and sound, but the weather was so bad that it could not be launched. On the 30th the north wind was succeeded by a perfect calm, but that was no more favorable to our entry than the wind. About ten in the morning a breeze sprang up

and the captain approached the bar. He made several observations from the masthead: after which he announced that he would never dare to risk the passage. But just then, when everything seemed desperate, a ship was espied in the distance, in Baker's bay, making toward Cape Disappointment, and hope sprang up again at once in all hearts. "Let us see how they come out, then we can go in by the same way," was the unanimous expression. For the space of an hour all eyes were fixed on this ship, which seemed to be approaching us. Vain hope! At the moment when the signal of distress was about to be displayed on our vessel, the other disappeared all at once from our eyes. What phantoms the imagination creates under the influence of distress! The captain had heard vaguely at Lima that a large English man-of-war had been sent out to blockade the entrance of the Columbia, and this at once came to his mind. "Assuredly it is the fatal vessel that we have seen." The observation that it was only a two-masted craft instead of a large three-master, hardly sufficed to calm the disturbed minds. The second officer had before this been offering to go and reconnoiter the mouth of the river, and the captain's well-founded fear of those tumultuous unknown waters was at last overcome by his urgency. Preparations were soon made, and at three in the afternoon, the little boat, with four men only, was making its way through the waves, which seemed on the point of swallowing it every instant. As far as we could make it out, we followed it with our eyes — it bore our last gleam of hope.

On the 31st, the day of our Holy Founder, five masses were celebrated in his honor. The sisters approached the holy table and joined us in imploring him to show himself that day the kind father of his children. Early in the morning, all eyes were again fixed on the spot where the skiff had disappeared the night before: toward half-past nine it came in sight again. At once all glasses were fastened upon it — the agreed signal which was to

announce good news did not appear; still we did not lose all hope. Our hearts beat hard: all were divided between hope and fear. By eleven o'clock the little craft came up at last — a mournful silence reigned — all awaited uneasily the word which was to decide our fate. At last the mate was on board. "About eleven last night," he said to the captain, "we found the passage, which seemed to have not less than five fathoms of water. We did not find any insurmountable obstacles." Immediately all hearts were dilated and all faces cleared up at the same time that the sails of the *Infatigable* were spread. Under a light breeze, we advanced slowly and cautiously toward the formidable mouth of the Columbia.

It was a most beautiful day — a cloudless sky — a blazing sun, such as we had not seen in a long time — everything seemed to combine for a day of joy and gladness. All we required to make us perfectly happy was to achieve the entrance into the river. As we drew near the redoubtable bar, every one resumed his serious air, holding himself in readiness for whatever might come. The sisters had gone below to recite the chaplet: when they came up again, we were already upon the dreaded bar. The sounders had several times reported seven fathoms — soon six fathoms was heard — after that five — then four and one-half — presently four, and so it went, always growing less. Each cry was a shock that oppressed our hearts, and at the repeated cry of three fathoms all countenances were visibly discomposed, for that was the vessel's minimum draft: several of us thought that it was all over, that the ship was about to strike: but God only wished to try our faith. "We are between life and death," said the mate to the captain at this time, "but we must go on at any price." Soon the cry of four fathoms caused something of a revival of joy. But of the five miles of the bar we had as yet made only three. Suddenly a cry of "three fathoms" plunged us again into consternation — at the cry of two and one-half fathoms I felt, as it were, annihilated.

I expected to see the anchor let go, and then a mad scramble for the boats. But our imperturbable captain cried, "She is a *passépartout*, this *Infatigable*! Go ahead!" Heaven was for us—the next cast of the lead showed four fathoms, and the depth increased at every plunge until we heard the cry "no bottom." We were out of danger, in the south channel.

About four that afternoon, we saw a canoe, hollowed out of a single tree-trunk, coming toward our ship. In it was an American who had been established on this coast for a number of years, accompanied by a dozen "siwashes" of the Clatsop tribe. We signed to them to come on: the uproar of their cries, all talking at once, would be hard to render, and my companions and the sisters were greatly amused. Upon the captain's invitation they came on board. It was then that we understood more clearly the danger from which divine Providence had preserved us. "You have gotten out of a very dangerous place," said the American. "We thought that you must infallibly perish, for no ship has ever come in that way before. When I saw you on the breakers I started to come to your rescue: but I could not overcome the fears of these poor Indians." The latter, for their part, indicated to us by signs the error they had suffered at seeing us in continual danger of grounding on the bar: their gestures expressed their sentiments in so natural a manner that it was impossible not to be touched.

The better to understand the extent of our obligation to divine Providence, you must know that the Columbia divides near its mouth into two channels: one on the north, skirting Cape Disappointment, which is the one by which we should have entered, and the other on the south, which is shunned by vessels on account of its narrowness and its breakers, over which we had passed without accident. God had not chosen to share with any one the glory of our deliverance: he even permitted that an attempt to show us the right way, should operate to keep us from it. Mr.

Birnie,<sup>2</sup> at present in charge at Fort George or Astoria, which is but three leagues from the sea, having perceived our distress two days before, had gone out to the extremity of the cape with a band of Indians, and had there lighted fires, waved flags, fired repeatedly from guns and cannon, to draw us toward himself. We had indeed observed all these signals, but seafaring makes people suspicious: it was feared that it was some ambush of the Indians, desirous of capturing the vessel. In short, St. Ignatius was to be our pilot, and we have no cause to be otherwise than glad that it was so. In gratitude, this passage so fortunately accomplished for the first time on the day of his feast, was named "St. Ignatius Passage."

The second visit that we received on board was from some Indians of the Chinook tribe, who are scattered through the forests which border the Columbia river on the north. My companions, who were seeing Indians for the first time, wondered extremely at the poverty of their raiment, their uncleanliness, their long hair and their tranquil manners. I warned them that it was necessary to be very reserved with savages if they did not want them to become too familiar. It is natural for almost all Indians to be lazy, but it is worse with these, because of the great ease with which they can procure fish and game. They live from day to day, and spend the greater part of the daytime stretched motionless in the sun: it is no wonder therefore that the ship was almost continually flooded with these poor people.

We had discovered, at anchor under the cape, the ship that we had been watching the previous evening. About nine that night, just as we were all singing the *Te Deum* together in thanksgiving for all the benefits received in the course of the day and of our long voyage, Mr. Birnie and the owner of the ship came on board: they told us that

<sup>2</sup> James Birnie, superintendent of the Hudson's Bay Company's post of Fort George, the former Fort Astoria.

having perceived our distress, they had tried to come out and show us the way, but that the wind had been contrary and had forced them to anchor.

In short, the 31st of July was a day of happiness for us all, and the faces of the party were hardly recognizable.—The American who had been the first to visit us, sent us out some fresh salmon and potatoes; you may judge, from what I said above of our bill of fare, whether his civility was appreciated.

The 1st of August had to be a day of relaxation: we were all in need of it. We commenced by saying two thanksgiving masses. Early in the morning Mr. Birnie had come on board again. It was impossible for a man to be more civil and obliging. He offered to guide us through the sand-bars, which are very numerous and dangerous in the bay. When we arrived opposite Astoria<sup>3</sup> we cast anchor, and were at once invited to come on shore and take a walk, to which we needed no urging. We received the most cordial welcome from Mrs. Birnie and her ten children: the Sisters especially seemed to have won from the first the entire friendship of the seven young ladies who belong to this honorable family. We were shown a tree that is spoken of by Balbi in his geography, which is forty-two feet in circumference; one branch alone measured over two fathoms. It would be impossible to imagine grander or more beautiful forests than those which cover both banks of the Columbia as far as its junction with the Willamette. There is one bush that is very abundant, growing to a height of three or four feet and bearing excellent berries, something like the myrtles of Europe. Mr. Birnie took me to the tomb of the famous chief Tecumle, [Comcomly?] who was buried in the forest behind the fort. When he used to come to Van-

<sup>3</sup> John Jacob Astor's trading-post, established in 1811, transferred to the Northwest Fur Company (later Hudson's Bay Company) in December, 1813.

couver in the days of his glory, 300 slaves would precede him, and he used to carpet the ground that he had to traverse, from the main entrance of the fort to the Governor's door, several hundred feet, with beaver and otter skins.

After a long and pleasant walk we returned to Mr. Birnie's home, where dinner was waiting for us: the open air had sharpened all appetites and we did honor to the dishes accordingly. I blessed the table and said grace, as is the custom in America whenever there is a priest among the guests, even in a Protestant household, as was the case here.

On the 2d I set out in a canoe for Fort Vancouver to notify Governor McLoughlin and Reverend Mr. Blanchet<sup>4</sup> of our arrival. Here again it was Mr. Birnie who had the kindness to furnish me a large Chinook canoe, manned by nine Indians. He himself remained on the vessel until it was past all the dangerous places of the bay, and he furnished a pilot to Vancouver, which is thirty leagues from Astoria. Favored by a good wind, and with two sheets spread for sails, we reached our destination toward evening on the following day. Imagine my joy and happiness at finding there the worthy Mr. McLoughlin, to whom our mountain mission is under so great obligations. I did not find Mr. Blanchet, as he was at the mission of St. Paul on the Willamette: a messenger was at once dispatched to him. But I had the further pleasure of finding the excellent and Reverend Mr. Demers, of whom I have often spoken in my letters. He was making his plans to start soon for Canada, in search of nuns: you may judge of the joy that our arrival caused him. On the 5th I went down the Columbia to take to the ship the good news I had received at the fort. The news from the mountains was very consol-

<sup>4</sup> Reverend Francis Norbert Blanchet, appointed from the Montreal district to the charge of the Oregon Mission in 1838, with the title of vicar-general.

ing. Father De Vos and his companions<sup>5</sup> had reached St. Mary's among the Flatheads in safety — the whole tribe of the Cœur d'Alènes was converted — a church had already been built among them — 436 savages had been baptized from the nations of New Caledonia — a great number of nations were persistently calling for Black-robos — a large convent was being organized on the Willamette.

<sup>5</sup> Fathers Peter De Vos and Adrien Hoeken and Brother J. B. McGean, who started for the mountains after Father De Smet's return to St. Louis in 1842, and reached St. Mary's in the following spring. A second party, consisting of Fathers Joseph Joset and Peter Zerbinati with Brother Vincent Magri, all of whom were fresh arrivals from Europe, followed them a few months later, arriving in the summer of 1843.

Peter De Vos was born in Ghent in 1797. He came to America in 1836, and chose the field of the western missions, though of delicate health, being subject, it appears, to hemorrhages. He remained eight years among the Flatheads and in the Willamette valley, and was thence transferred to the College of Santa Clara, California, where he died April 17, 1859.

Adrien Hoeken, younger brother of Christian Hoeken, whose death in 1851 is recounted in these letters, was born in Holland in 1815. He opened the mission of St. Ignatius among the Kalispels, and ten years later (1854) with Father Menetrey, the present St. Ignatius, Montana, the former site having proved unsuitable. He also reopened in 1859 the abandoned mission to the Blackfeet. He died at Marquette College, Milwaukee, April 19, 1897.

Father Zerbinati was accidentally drowned near St. Mary's in the summer of 1845.

Brother Magri died at Lewiston, Idaho, June 18, 1869. He was a skilled mechanic, and while at St. Ignatius was in charge of the grist and sawmills.

## CHAPTER III.

### PLANTING NEW MISSIONS.<sup>1</sup>

Tarrying at Fort Vancouver — Farewell to their ship — Up the Willamette — Received by Vicar-General Blanchet — Selecting the site for St. Francis Xavier Mission — Sickness and hard work — De Smet sets forth for the interior — Up the Columbia — Hospitably entertained at the Dalles and Walla Walla — Across the Spokan Plain — Makes a map and names some streams — Met by Hoeken and the Kalispels — The first St. Ignatius Mission — The Cœur d'Alènes apologize — He visits them at their Sacred Heart Mission — Attempts to cross to the Bitter Root — Deep snow and a flood — Tries again by way of Clark's Fork — Gives up and winters with the Kalispels — A glorious Christmas — Easter among the Flatheads — Starts the work at St. Ignatius and returns to Fort Vancouver — Bright prospects of work in Oregon — Sets out overland with supplies for upper missions — A visit to the fishing Indians — St. Ignatius of the Bay.

¶ SET out for Fort Vancouver on the 2d of August, [as stated in the previous chapter] wishing to reach there before my companions, that I might inform the Reverend Mr. Blanchet of our happy arrival. As to our Fathers, the remainder of their voyage may be summed up in few words. On the 3d and 4th their vessel was almost stationary, for want of a favorable wind. At a glance, their three days' voyage might be measured. Toward evening a gentle breeze sprang up, and thus permitted them to pursue their

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is in part translated from Father De Smet's manuscript Journal, and in part taken from his published letters, as follows: Letters II, IV, V and XX, *Oregon Missions*, corresponding to Letters I, III, IV and XX, *Missions de l'Orégon*. The first was written to his brother Francis and dated St. Francis Xavier on the Willamette, Oct. 9, 1844; the second and third to Bishop (afterward Archbishop) Hughes of New York, both written from the above place and dated respectively June 20 and August 7, 1845; and the fourth to Mrs. Parmentier of Brooklyn, dated St. Ignatius, July 23, 1846.

course. In a few hours they passed the rocks, extending the distance of six leagues.<sup>2</sup> They were then enabled to keep the center of the river, where the numerous windings of the stream compelled them to make continual manœuvres.

In this place the river is most magnificent: the smooth polished surface of the waters — the rapid current, almost concealed from view by the contraction of its rocky bed — the sullen roaring of the waterfalls and cascades — produce upon the mind an effect of sublimity and grandeur not to be described. One is never weary admiring the richness, beauty and variety of these solitary regions. The shores on either side are bordered by lofty forests, and crowned with thickly-wooded mountains. It is more especially in the forest that the grand, the picturesque, the sublime, the beautiful, form the most singular and fantastic combinations. From the loftiest giants of the forest down to the humblest shrubs, all excite the spectator's astonishment. The parasites form a characteristic feature of these woodlands. They cling to the tree, climb to a certain height, and then, letting their tops fall to the earth, again take root — again shoot up — push from branch to branch — from tree to tree, in every direction — until, tangled, twisted and knotted in every possible form, they festoon the whole forest with drapery in which a groundwork of the richest verdure is diversified with garlands of the most varied and many-colored flowers. In ascending the Columbia we meet from time to time with bays of considerable extent, interspersed with handsome little islands, which, thrown as it were like groups of flowers and verdure, present a charming spectacle. Here the painter should go to study his art — here would he find the loveliest scenery, the most varied and brilliant coloring. At every step the scene becomes more ravishing; the perspective more noble and majestic. In no other part of the world is nature so great a *coquette* as here.

At length, on the 5th of August, the vessel arrived at Fort

<sup>2</sup> Fr. miles.

Vancouver,<sup>3</sup> about seven o'clock in the evening. The Governor, [McLoughlin] an excellent and truly pious man, together with his lady and the most respectable personages of the place, [Douglas and Barclay]<sup>4</sup> were assembled on the shore to receive us. As soon as the ship had cast anchor we landed and hastened to the fort, where we were received and treated with all possible cordiality. Here we were obliged to tarry eight days for the Reverend Mr. Blanchet, who did not arrive till the 12th, not having received my letter informing him of our arrival. No sooner was he aware of it than he hastened to join us, bringing with him a considerable number of his parishioners. He had traveled the entire night and day, and we were delighted to meet this indefatigable clergyman. Though so comfortably situated at the fort, yet we were anxious to arrive as soon as possible at the place destined us by divine Providence. The pious nuns likewise sighed for their convent home of Willamette. Monsieur Blanchet accordingly made the necessary arrangement for our departure, and we left Fort Vancouver on the 14th.

An affecting adieu awaited us. Our worthy captain stood upon the shore. The emotion was sensibly felt by each one of us. For eight months we had shared the same dangers, and so often stood together, gazing in the very face of death: could we then restrain the parting tear, which seemed to gush from the fountain of the heart, as we remembered his kindness?

Our little squadron consisted of four canoes, manned by the parishioners of Mr. Blanchet, and our own sloop. We

<sup>3</sup> For notes on Fort Vancouver and Doctor McLoughlin, see pp. 387 and 355.

<sup>4</sup> James Douglas was for many years prominent in Hudson Bay Company affairs in the northwest, in conjunction with Doctor McLoughlin. It was he who granted Blanchet and Demers the site for the Willamette Valley establishment.—Doctor Forbes Barclay accompanied Sir John Ross on an Arctic voyage in his youth; came to Oregon as surgeon for the Hudson Bay Company in 1840; was long identified with Fort Vancouver and Oregon City, and died at the latter place in 1873.

sailed up the river and soon entered the Willamette, whose waters flow into the Columbia.

As night approached we moored our vessels and encamped upon the shore. There, grouped around the fire, we partook of our evening meal. The night was calm and serene — all nature was hushed in profound silence — all invited us to repose; but the swarms of mosquitoes with which these woods abound prevented our slumber. The nuns, to whom we had yielded the tent, suffered equally with those who had nothing but the star-spangled canopy of heaven above them. You will not, consequently, be surprised that the night appeared somewhat long and that the morning's dawn found us on foot. It was the festival of the glorious Assumption of the Mother of God, which, in these regions, is usually solemnized on the following Sunday. Aided by the nuns, I erected a small altar. Mr. Blanchet offered the holy sacrifice, at which all communicated.

Finally, the 17th, about eleven o'clock, we came in sight of our dear mission of Willamette. Mr. Blanchet charged himself with the transportation of our baggage. A cart was procured to conduct the nuns to their dwelling, which is about five miles from the river. In two hours we were all assembled in the chapel of Willamette, to adore and thank our Divine Savior, by the solemn chanting of the *Te Deum*, in which all hearts and lips joined with lively emotion.

Early in the morning of Sunday, the 18th, the day on which the Assumption is celebrated here, we saw the Canadian cavaliers arriving in crowds with their wives and children, whom they had brought from great distances, to assist at the solemn services of the Church.

At nine o'clock all were arranged in perfect order in the church; the men on one side, the women on the other. The Reverend Mr. Blanchet celebrated the august sacrifice, assisted by twenty acolytes. The piety of his parishioners contributed much to our edification.

On arriving at the Mission of St. Paul<sup>5</sup> of the Willamette, we proceeded at once to the residence of the Very Reverend Mr. Blanchet, who received us with the greatest kindness, and immediately placed at our disposal everything on the place. My first care was to seek some convenient locality where, according to the plan of our Very Reverend Father General, a mother mission could be established. For this purpose I made several unsuccessful excursions into the adjacent country. The most eligible situations were already occupied. The Methodists,<sup>6</sup> indeed, offered to sell me their Academy, which is a sufficiently large and handsome house, but entirely destitute of wood and arable land. In this perplexity Mr. Blanchet relieved me, by a generous and disinterested offer. He proposed to examine the property belonging to the mission, and take such portions of it as I should judge most proper for our projected establishment. We accordingly set out on this new excursion; but we had scarcely proceeded two miles when we came to a point unit-

<sup>5</sup> Dedicated January 6, 1840, by Vicar-General Blanchet; the first Catholic establishment in Oregon proper. Reverend M. Demers had been located in the Cowlitz valley, Washington (St. Francis Xavier), since October 13, 1839, but the log church at St. Paul was the oldest in the Pacific Northwest, having been built by the French inhabitants in 1836, in the expectation of the speedy arrival of priests.

<sup>6</sup> I cannot pass over one little incident: at the same time that the priests and nuns entered to establish themselves on the Willamette, several Protestant ministers and their wives were leaving the country in well-grounded despair, and going down the river on their way to the States. The great Methodist establishment, more than ten years old, was suppressed, and a little Protestant church, built by the Protestants who had just dismissed their minister, was offered to a Catholic priest. (From Father De Smet's manuscript journal.)

The Methodist mission in the Willamette valley was established in the fall of 1834 by Jason and Daniel Lee. It was closed in 1844, and all property sold; but according to the dates on record, the transfers were made before Father De Smet's arrival. "Thus," says Bancroft, "ends the history of ten years of missionary labor, in which nothing was done that ever in the least benefited the Indians, but which cost the missionary society of the Methodist Episcopal Church a quarter of a million dollars."

ing every desirable advantage. Picture to yourself an immense plain extending southward as far as the eye can reach; on one side the snowy crests of the gigantic Hood, Jefferson, or Moléris, and St. Helen's (the three highest peaks of Oregon), towering majestically upward, and losing themselves in the clouds; on the east a long range of distant hills, their blue-tinged summits melting, as it were, into the deep azure of the sky; on the west the limpid waters of two small lakes, on whose beautiful shores the beaver, the otter and the muskrat sport in careless security, heedless of our presence. The elevation on which we were standing, gradually sloping downward and forming a charming amphitheatre, extended to the borders of one of the lakes.

I hesitated not a moment in selecting this spot for the mother mission of St. Francis Xavier. The sweet recollections of our first establishment on the Missouri returned to my mind; and the remembrance of the rapid progress of the Mission of St. Stanislaus, near St. Ferdinand, whose branches now extend over the greater part of Missouri, Ohio, Louisiana, reaching even the Rocky Mountains, and penetrating to the western boundary of America, led me to breathe a fervent prayer, that here also might be formed a station, whence the torch of faith would diffuse its cheering light among the benighted tribes of this immense territory. We have also a fine view of the Willamette river, which in this place makes a sudden bend, continuing its course amidst dense forests, which promise an almost inexhaustible supply of materials for the construction of our mission-house. In no part of this region have I met with a more luxuriant growth of pine, fir, elm, ash, oak, buttonball [sycamore] and yew trees. The intervening country is beautifully diversified with shadowy groves and smiling plains, whose rich soil yields abundant harvests, sufficient for the maintenance of a large establishment. Besides these advantages, there are a number of springs on one side of the hill, one of which is not more than 100 yards from the house, and it will probably

be of great use hereafter. Having now made choice of the locality, we commenced without delay the erection of the buildings. The first thing to be done was to clear the ground by cutting away the underbrush and isolated trees, after which, with the aid of the inhabitants, we constructed three wooden buildings, covered by a single roof of ninety feet; these were to serve as workshops for the brother blacksmith, carpenter and joiner.

Besides these, a house, forty-five by thirty-five feet, is now under way. It is to be two stories, and will be the dwelling-house of the missionaries.

We arrived in the Oregon Territory during the prevalence of a disease (bloody flux) which was considered contagious, though the physicians attributed it to the unwholesome properties of the river water. Numbers of savages fell victims to it, especially among the Chinooks and the Indians of the Cascades, large parties of whom encamped along the banks of the river, on their way to Vancouver, to obtain the aid of a physician. Those who could not proceed were abandoned by their friends; and it was truly painful to see these poor creatures stretched out and expiring on the sand. The greater part of our sailors, and three of the Sisters, were attacked by the pestilence; the Reverend Father Accolti also experienced its terrible effects; for myself, I was obliged to keep my bed during fifteen long days, and to observe a rigorous diet. But the captain of our vessel was the greatest sufferer. The disease attacked him so violently that I seriously fear he will never again return to the cherished family — the affectionate wife and children, of whom he used daily to speak with so much tenderness. He was a worthy man — an experienced and skilful navigator; I esteemed him highly, although I could not forbear blaming him for the little courage he had shown in repressing the profane language of one of the passengers, who, from the time of his embarkation until we landed him at Fort Vancouver, had never ceased to offend our ears by his horrid oaths. The Almighty has denounced his curse

against the blasphemer; and sooner or later it will fall upon him. Poor *Infatigable*, I tremble for thy fate.

The winter was rapidly approaching, and notwithstanding my weak state, I could not resist my pressing desire to visit once more my dear Indians of the mountains, who, on their side, await my return with the greatest impatience, as I was informed by the Reverend Father Mengarini, who had come to meet me.

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On the 9th of September the good sisters commenced instructing the women and children, who were preparing for their first communion. As their house was not yet habitable, they were obliged to give their instructions in the open air. In three days' time they had already nineteen pupils, from sixteen to sixty years of age, all of whom came from a distance, bringing with them provisions for several days, and sleeping in the woods, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather. It is easy to conceive by this how eager these poor people are for instruction. Each day the sisters devote six hours to teaching them the usual prayers and manner of making the sign of the cross. On one occasion it was discovered that a woman had remained two days without food; the dogs had devoured her little provision, and, lest she should miss the instruction, she was unwilling to go home for another supply. It is past belief how these Indian women cherish and respect the sisters and what thankfulness they show them; some bring them melons, others potatoes, butter, eggs, etc.

The convent having as yet neither doors nor sashes, owing to the scarcity of mechanics, some of these good Sisters were seen endeavoring to handle the plane, others glazing, painting the windows and doors, etc. They were the more ardently desirous for the completion of their new habitation, as already thirty Canadian pupils had been offered them; and thus would they be enabled to procure the means of giving a gratuitous support and protection to the hapless orphans of the forests. These poor children, rescued from

their destitute condition and placed under the benign care of the kind Sisters, would enjoy the blessings of a Christian education and become, one day, co-operators in the mission. But to effect this and to realize the cheering hopes it holds forth, funds must be raised to provide the necessary clothing for the orphans, as the profits arising from the school will not be more than sufficient to defray the expenses of their board. I here give you the brilliant prospectus of their academy. Per quarter, 100 pounds flour, twenty-five pounds pork, or thirty-six of beef, one sack of potatoes, four pounds hogs' lard, three gallons peas, three dozen eggs, one gallon salt, four pounds candles, one pound tea, four pounds rice.

The Sisters took possession of their convent in the month of October; a few days after, their chapel was solemnly consecrated by the Reverend Mr. Blanchet; and they have since enjoyed the happiness of assisting every day at the holy sacrifice of the mass, offered up at their simple altar by one of the missionaries stationed at St. Francis Xavier. They have also twice had the consolation of presenting at the table of the Lord the little band of fervent neophytes,<sup>7</sup> whom they had prepared with so much care for this solemn action. This success in so short a time has induced us to conceive the project of founding another house of this order in Oregon City [Cuhute in the English version]. Monsieur Blanchet and Father De Vos think that the departure of the Protestant ministers, on account of their fruitless labors, renders this an auspicious moment for the establishment of a religious house. The station of St. Mary of the Willamette would furnish occupation sufficient for twelve Sisters, but unfortunately they are but six in number. We learn with pleasure that it is the intention of Monseigneur Blanchet to visit Europe immediately after his consecration,<sup>8</sup> in order to obtain, if possible, twelve more of these zealous and devoted women for the mission. God grant he may

<sup>7</sup> Fr. une trentaine de femmes.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. pour y être consacré. Right Reverend F. N. Blanchet was consecrated in Montreal in the course of the year 1844.

succeed; and that the want of pecuniary means may not oppose an insurmountable obstacle to the generous sacrifice, which, we are all well assured, the pious Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame are disposed to make again in our behalf.

<sup>9</sup> On the 3d of October [1844] I left the [regular] mission of St. Paul and our new [Jesuit] establishment called St. Francis Xavier, after having thanked and taken farewell of the Very Reverend Mr. Blanchet and of my dear brothers in Jesus Christ. I reached Vancouver on the 5th, just in time to take my place, with the Governor's permission, in a barge,<sup>10</sup> manned by eight men, which was starting for Walla Walla. The next day we camped near Cape Horn, a rock which rises from the middle of the river in the form of a sugar loaf. As far as this cape, the river may be navigated freely by ships drawing fourteen feet of water. On the 7th we carried our goods over the portage to the head of the Cascades. The distance from this point to the Dalles is about forty miles and no obstacles are encountered on the way. We passed by several basaltic islands, where the savages deposit their dead on scaffolds or in huts made of split cedar planks, covered with mats. This is to preserve them from the rapacity of wolves, who in this region have the same tastes as the hyenas of Barbary. Between Wappatoo Island, at the mouth of the Willamette, and the sea, the corpses are generally deposited in canoes which are covered in like manner. Certain rocky islets, called the Islands of the Dead, are covered with coffins of this kind.

At the Dalles I was politely invited to come and take din-

<sup>9</sup> The account here given of the period between October 3d and November 6, 1844, is taken from a manuscript journal. This journey is not described in any of the published works, but the incidents are largely transferred to a journey over the same ground in 1846; see hereafter.

<sup>10</sup> This statement is at variance with the itinerary prepared for publication by Father De Smet in 1854, where it is said that he made this journey on horseback from the establishments on the Willamette.

ner and supper with Messieurs the Protestant ministers.<sup>11</sup> On the 20th I arrived at Fort Walla Walla, where I was cordially and civilly received by Mr. [Archibald] McKinlay, in charge of the post. I employed several days here in making all my preparations for the rest of the journey; for I had twenty horses to buy, and as many saddles and bridles to get made. On the 28th I took farewell of the amiable McKinlay family, thanking them most sincerely for their kindness to us, and for the assistance which they had so liberally lavished upon us. I went a few days ahead of Reverend Father M., in order to send him the cattle and extra horses that I had bought. An Iroquois and a Canadian, from Colville, served as my guides. Though the season was well advanced, the weather seemed still inclined to favor us. The first night we encamped on the Walla Walla river. The next day we crossed the Lewis or Nez Percé river, one of the largest tributaries of the Columbia. The higher branches of this river, which I have crossed in my two journeys to the mountains, come down from the angle formed by the Rocky and Snowy Mountains, between the forty-second and forty-fourth degrees and near the sources of the Colorado, Platte, Yellowstone, and Missouri rivers. From the base of the Snowy range it runs westerly to the Blue Mountains, where it traverses one of its chains near the forty-third degree of latitude and is joined by Salmon river. Its course thence is northwest as far as the junction with the Columbia, receiving in its course the Malade, the Wapticacos or North Branch, the Kooskooske from the east, the Malheur, Powder, and Brulé from the west, and a great number of smaller tributaries on both sides.

At the crossing of the Nez Percé we found a small camp of the Indians called Palooses, belonging to the tribe

<sup>11</sup> A Methodist mission at the Dalles had been started in 1838 by Reverends Daniel Lee and H. K. W. Perkins, as a branch of the establishment on the Willamette. Lee left in August, 1843, and was followed in the late summer of 1844 by Perkins, who was succeeded by Reverend A. F. Waller.

of the Sapatans or Nez Percés. On the high plain between this river and the Spokan we found abundance of sage-brush, as well as bunch-grass, excellent for horses. Twice we camped on the borders of beautiful little lakes, covered with wild-fowl. On the 2d of November we reached the Spokan river, coming from the southeast. I have made a map of the headwaters of this interesting river. I have called the two streams, hitherto unknown on the maps, which form the great Cœur d'Alène lake, whence the Spokan river derives its waters, by the names of St. Ignatius and St. Joseph. They in turn are formed by a great number of branches, the four principal of which are known to-day by the names of the four Evangelists; and the various mountain streams which form these last bear the names of all the Catholic hierarchy of the United States. I have moreover counted forty-eight little lakes, lying at the base of the mountains, which are named after the Venerables of the Company of Jesus. The Mission of the Sacred Heart<sup>12</sup> lies nearly in the center of this system. The head of this river therefore forms a fine Catholic group — may the inhabitants of that region be worthy of the fair names which environ them.

We were fortunate enough to find a ford whereby to cross the Spokan river; for all the savages were already away to their various winter quarters. Then climbing to a lofty plateau, a few miles' gallop brought us to a rich and beautiful valley, in which is a Presbyterian mission,<sup>13</sup> established a few years ago. My two good guides, the Iroquois and the Canadian, left me at the foot of the great Mountain of the Kalispels, to proceed on their way toward Colville. On the 5th I crossed the mountain, which is

<sup>12</sup> For founding of this mission, see note, p. 377.

<sup>13</sup> That on the Chemakane branch of Spokan river, established in 1839, by Reverends Elkinah Walker and Cushing C. Eells and their wives. After the downfall of the Presbyterian missions, both settled in the Willamette valley, and were among the founders of the Pacific University.

ascended by a crooked and difficult trail on the eastern side, but is easy of access from the west. Here I found myself in company with some of the hands from Fort Colville, who had seventeen pack-horses to manage. Darkness came upon us in the forest, but we worked ourselves out, with much difficulty and misery; two of the pack-horses from Colville, and one of mine, were lost, but we found them again the next day. We camped toward nine in the evening, on the shore of Lake De Boey, which was literally covered with wild swans, geese and ducks. One of the hunters fired off his gun over the lake, and the innumerable multitude of birds rose in a mass, the beating of their wings resembling the deep sound which ordinarily accompanies an earthquake.

On the 6th, Reverend Father Hoeken came to meet me, accompanied by several of the Kalispels of the Bay, among whom I had proposed two years before to establish a mission, but the approach of the snowy season had compelled me to defer the examination of the spot and the plan of building, until the following spring. They displayed every mark of friendship and joy at my return among them; they conducted me in triumph to their camp, and received me there amidst volleys of musketry and the sounding of trumpets. It would be impossible to describe the feelings of my heart at thus meeting with the first band of my dear neophytes and children in God, and to represent to you the real joy which animated them on this occasion. How much had we not to communicate to each other! I gave them some little and to them interesting details of the vast countries through which I had traveled in order to promote the interest and welfare of the Indians, since I bade them farewell, that is, within fifteen months. I had crossed the great American desert, and passed through many warlike, nomadical nations, extending from the Pacific Ocean to the frontier of the State of Missouri. I had traveled over the United States from New Orleans to Boston — visited Louisville, Cincinnati,

Pittsburg, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Washington and New York — crossed the Atlantic — seen a great part of Ireland and England — the whole of Belgium, Holland and France. From Marseilles I had passed by Genoa, the city of palaces, Leghorn and Civita Vecchia, to visit the capital of the Christian world. From Rome I had gone to Antwerp, and then, sailing round Cape Horn, touching at Chile and Peru, and having twice crossed the Equator, I had at length disembarked at Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia, and had the happiness to embrace, on the 6th of November [1844], my dear neophytes, who had prayed so fervently for me, that, during all these long voyages, by sea and land, passing through so many different climates, and at all seasons of the year, I had not been troubled either by sickness or any untoward accident. Glory to God for so special a protection, and a thousand thanks to the good Indians who, from the moment of my departure until my return, had not ceased to invoke, morning and evening, the blessing and assistance of heaven on its unworthy servant.

The details which the young missionary gave me respecting their present dispositions are too interesting to be here omitted; and I give them in proof of the divine grace over the hearts of this well-disposed people. All that I had recommended to them in the visits I paid them in 1841-2, had been strictly complied with. "The first thing," says Father Adrien Hoeken in a letter home, "which struck me on my arrival among them, was a truly brotherly love and perfect union, which animated the whole tribe and seemed to make them but one family. They manifest great love, obedience and respect for their chiefs, and what is still more admirable, they all, as the chiefs themselves declare, speak and desire but one and the same thing. These chiefs are as much the real fathers of their people as is a good superior the father of a religious community. The chiefs among the Kalispels speak calmly, but never in vain; the instant they intimate

their wish to one of their followers, he sets to work to accomplish it. Is any one involved in difficulties — is he in want or sickness — or does he wish to undertake a journey, whether long or short — he consults his chief, and shapes his conduct in accordance with the advice he receives. Even with regard to marriage, the Indians consult their chiefs, who sanction or postpone or disapprove of it, according as they deem it conducive, or otherwise, to the happiness of the parties. A man who had a hereditary ailment would not obtain a marriage permit. “Because,” say the chiefs, “the village would otherwise soon be filled up with people of that kind, and they would never listen to reason.” If such a rule prevailed in the civilized world, would we see so many degenerates? And would so many establishments be required to keep them in? The chief, in quality of father, endeavors to provide for the support of his people. It is he, consequently, who regulates hunting, fishing, and the gathering of roots and fruit. All the game and fish are brought to his lodge, and divided into as many shares as there are families. The distribution is made with rigid impartiality. The old, the infirm, the widow, all receive their share equally with the hunter. Is not this something like the return of the golden age — those happy times when everything was held in common and all had, as the apostle informs us, but one heart and one soul? Complaints, murmurings and backbiting are here unknown; blasphemy has never been uttered by an Indian: there are not even words in his language to express it.” On the arrival of the Black-robe, the great chief explained to him, with patriarchal simplicity, their manner of life. “We are ignorant,” he added, “but now that we have the happiness to have a Black-robe among us, we will listen to his voice and obey it; whatever changes he may deem necessary to make, we will cheerfully submit.”

The Black-robe confirmed and approved all the good practices and customs he found established in this little

corner of the world, where, notwithstanding their poverty, the Indians all seemed contented and happy. It is really affecting to hear them speak of the darkness in which they had been buried; and to see them now exulting in the light of the gospel and the knowledge of the Christian virtues, which they cherish, and by which their hearts seem to be inflamed. Their whole ambition consists in listening with docility to the word of God, and in being able thoroughly to understand and recite their prayers. Piety is what a young man seeks in her who is to be his future wife — and what a young woman desires to find in him who is to become her husband. In their leisure hours they surround and, if I may be allowed the expression, besiege their missionary. To the day they would add the night, if he could bear the fatigue, in speaking of heavenly things. Pride and human respect are absolutely unknown to them. How often have we not seen gray-headed old men and even chiefs sit down by the side of children ten or eleven years old, who would teach them their prayers, and explain to them the figures of the Catholic Ladder,<sup>14</sup> with all the gravity becoming a teacher; and give to the explanation, for one or two hours, all the attention of obedient pupils. In seasons of scarcity, when the fishing or hunting has failed, or in other misfortunes, they manifest no signs of impatience. They are quiet and resigned, receiving them as punishments for their sins; while their success they attribute to the bounty of God and render to him all the glory of it. One day the Black-robe was praising a young hunter for his skill. He blushed, and replied, smiling, "I am no hunter at all. I pray, and when the Great Spirit sends a deer my way, I let fly at him and he is dead."

The usual place of residence of the Kalispels — that in

<sup>14</sup> A chart, invented by F. N. Blanchet in 1839, for the more convenient instruction of the Indians, "representing on paper the various truths and mysteries of religion in their chronological order."

which the Reduction of St. Ignatius<sup>15</sup> is now established — is an extensive prairie, called the Bay of the Kalispels, thirty or forty miles above the mouth of Clark or Flat-head river. A beautiful grotto exists in the neighborhood of the mission, which I have named the grotto of Manresa,<sup>16</sup> in honor of our holy founder. It is very large and might, at a small expense, be fitted up for a church. May the Indians gather in crowds into this new Manresa, and after the example of their patron, St. Ignatius, be penetrated with a feeling sense of heavenly things, and inflamed with the love of God!

I might easily have forgotten, amongst our good Kalispels, that the season was already far advanced, and that I must make haste to reach St. Mary's before winter. On the 8th therefore I made my preparations, when toward evening a little deputation appeared, which the Cœur d'Alène tribe had sent to find me among the Kalispels. They had feared, and with reason, that I did not mean to come to them very soon, because of the behavior of some of their chiefs toward the Black-robe, and this was their message:

“ Father Pierre, our chiefs speak to thee, we bring thee their words. We heard that thou hadst crossed the big water to see thy children of the mountains again, and our hearts were very glad at the news. We had spoken often of Father Pierre, since he left us, and we thought we would be the first to see thee. This thought made us very glad. But we have learned that thy heart is not the same toward us, and this news makes us sorry. It is true, Father, thou hast no cause to be much pleased with us,

<sup>15</sup> See p. 474.

<sup>16</sup> A town in Catalonia, where, in a cavern now called the Cueva de San Ygnacio, Ignatius Loyola “ lived for a year, fasting and submitting himself to the severest penances, constantly gazing at the shrine of the Virgin of Montserrat, who, he asserted, encouraged him in his austerities.”

for some among us have done very wrong; but the Great Spirit has punished us, and this makes us think that he will not reject us. We have lost our head chief and several others this year, besides a number of children, who died before they could be baptized. This last appeared to us the greater loss, and made us think that the Great Spirit wished to show us, by punishing us in this way, that it is a great evil to forget his baptism. Now that we are all together again at the village of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we try to satisfy the Black-robe, or rather to satisfy our Father who is in heaven; also we are trying to get our hearts right for our first communion. To help us in this, our Black-robe speaks to us four times each day, and our chiefs almost all day and part of the night; several of us are to have that happiness on the first great day of Mary of the next moon, and perhaps all the others by Christmas. Thou knowest better than we, Father, that those are two very great days, and that of the first communion the greatest of our life; come and see us, then, to witness our happiness. Oh! if thou couldst be among thy children on that day, it seems to us that we would have nothing more to wish for. We wish to show thee that we know now that the greatest good that thou couldst do us, was to show us the way to heaven, as thou didst do, and to give us Black-robos to keep us walking in it; and to show thee that it is not with our words alone that we love thee, but with our hearts; for we wish at present to do what our fathers may tell us; those are the last words of our hearts. Now, Father Pierre, we ask only one thing, that thou wilt come thyself to say whether the Cœur d'Alènes love thee as thou wouldst have them. We have spoken."

On the 9th I bade farewell to Father Hoeken and his small but interesting colony of about 300 persons; 200 being away on the winter hunt.<sup>17</sup> I yielded with pleasure

<sup>17</sup> The following incident and narrative of the attempted journey to the Flatheads are from the manuscript journal. Other incidents of the same journey were published in Letter XXI of the Oregon Missions.

to the urgent solicitations of the Cœur d'Alènes, the more readily that the season seemed still to permit the passage of the lofty mountain-range which separates them from the Flatheads. The three Cœur D'Alène deputies and two of the Kalispels accompanied me. The day was fine and the trail easy; toward noon we skirted a beautiful little lake, which I named De Nef, in memory of one of the great friends and benefactors of the mission.

On the 10th, the sun rose majestically and everything promised a fine day; but all these fair appearances disappeared in threatening reddish clouds, and soon after the first snow began to fall in great flakes, and the rain that followed soaked us to the skin. We crossed the Spokan river at the foot of the great rapids, and kept the road until sunset. It rained heavily, but the stream-beds in the elevated plain that we had to cross were still dry. We camped by a little spring that we found by the way. The rain continued all night. I could only accommodate two persons in my tent — the three others made themselves some kind of shelter out of bark. They replenished the fire from time to time, and rested wondrous well — I took their word for this.

It continued to rain and snow all day on the 11th. We set out, however, hoping to be able to reach the mission; but the trail had become so slippery, along the sides of the high hills which we had to cross, that we barely made twenty miles. A large part of this desert is more prairie than forest, dotted with red pines, 100 to 200 yards apart, and here and there with fine little bunches of spruce. We camped by a pond, and as our provisions were nearly gone, the Indians roasted a goose that they had picked up on the road, half eaten by crows. We struck camp early on the 12th, in a blizzard or *pouderie* of snow. We reached the summit of a rather high mountain through a thick forest, where the snow that fell off the branches inconvenienced us greatly, and our horses slid and stumbled at almost every step on the narrow winding path. About two in the

afternoon we found ourselves on the banks of St. Joseph's river, the southern fork that feeds the great Cœur d'Alène lake, and an hour later I was in the village of the Sacred Heart, with Reverend Father Point and the coadjutor brother, and surrounded by some 500 Cœur d'Alènes, who ran up in crowds to shake hands and welcome me among them. I returned thanks to divine Providence, which had brought me through.

The whole tribe was actuated by a common spirit of fervor and zeal, and was preparing with the greatest assiduity to make the first communion, at Christmas, in a worthy manner. From morning to evening, and even in the night, nothing was heard throughout the camp but the recitation of prayers and the singing of canticles. They added daily to my consolation and joy.

On the 19th I left the Mission of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, accompanied by four Indians to serve me as guides and hunters as far as St. Mary's. The rain and snow had not ceased for several days, and were still falling. They even increased, but after all kinds of difficulties and hardships, caused by the bad weather, we found ourselves on the 27th, after traversing the valley of St. Ignatius, almost at the foot of the mountain. For several days we now wound through thick woods and along the side of cliffs, among the most prodigious cedars. I doubt if Lebanon ever bore any more majestic, or any as mysterious. The silence of these places is unearthly.

Presently we met two Nez Percés, who were just down from the mountains. They gave us a most terrifying description of the state of the trail. In view, therefore, of the unremitting snowfall, we concluded that the passage was at present impracticable and impossible; moreover, the waters were now coming down from the mountains so fast and in such volume, that we thought of nothing but of returning in haste. We were confronted by a new deluge; the little brooks of the day before were now swollen torrents, rushing uproariously down. They arrested us con-

tinually, to make bridges or throw trees across, and unload and load again our pack-animals. After endless miseries, tumbles and headers, we at last came again to the St. Ignatius river, which had risen over ten feet, and was carrying down great masses of tree-trunks. It was not crossed without the greatest danger. Once I found myself under water, and under my mule; but I held fast to my beast, which dragged me to the farther shore. We camped for the night near the large cross planted on the territory of the chief Paulin. The river was still several feet below the top of the bank, and we all lay down to sleep without the least uneasiness; but toward midnight one of my men was surprised and amazed to find both his legs in the water. He put his head out of the tent, and lost no time in giving the alarm to his companions. It was, in fact, high time; we found ourselves surrounded by water, as by an immense lake. The plain was flooded throughout its entire extent of some seventy miles. I had barely got on my shoes and cassock and tied up my baggage and provisions, when I found myself in water up to the knees. But here, as in a hundred other places, Providence had furnished us a means of escape; there were two infirm little canoes of bark at the precise spot where we had encamped, and by their means we were enabled to take refuge, with arms and baggage, though all soaked, upon an eminence two miles away. Our horses and mules had made their way to the mountain-side during the night, where there was still abundant grass. We elected one of the Cœur d'Alènes to go to the mission with the news of our distress, and two days later, five canoes, under two of the chiefs, came to our rescue and carried us back to the village. The savages seemed to rejoice in the mishaps that had brought me to them again, and manifested the same cordiality and gladness with which they had received me the first time.

On the 4th of December, I started off again to try to reach the Flatheads, by way of Clark's Fork. On the 8th four Kalispels took me, with two canoes, and we ascended

the river unhindered for four days. When we reached the great lake, the ice began to impede our progress. We were constantly having to land, to re-gum the thin bark of which our canoes were composed. Thus I found myself stopped for the second time. All navigation had ceased a month before — my pilots declared that to advance was to expose ourselves to imminent danger. I had learned by a letter just received from Father Mengarini that he had only escaped with the greatest difficulty from the snow and the water, and that twelve of his horses had perished in the “evil forest.” One of the Kalispels offered to carry a message to St. Mary’s, on snowshoes — so I wrote to Father Mengarini, saying, among other things, “I have done what I could, with prudence, to come to you; but I have found insurmountable barriers in the snows of the Cœur d’Alène mountains and the overflowed rivers, and now finally the ice stops me on Clark’s Fork. I find myself frustrated in my most earnest desire, that of seeing the mother mission once more — of embracing my dear brothers in Jesus Christ, and pouring out upon the hearts of our dear good Flatheads all the attachment and godly love that I bear them. Tell them all sorts of things for me; I shall pass but a sad winter away from them. Tell them that I hope the Lord will grant me the favor of seeing them and taking their hands at the beginning of next spring; for as soon as the river is navigable I shall set out once more.”

I was not long in descending the river, and on the 17th I reached the Kalispels’ winter quarters. They seemed to have nothing more pressing to do than to procure me the best lodge in the camp, and to make all arrangements to make my stay among them as agreeable and comfortable, as the place and their poor circumstances permitted.

I shall always remember with pleasure the winter of 1844-5, which I had the happiness of spending among these good Indians. The place for wintering was well chosen, picturesque, agreeable and convenient. The camp was placed near a beautiful waterfall, caused by Clark river

being blocked up by an immense rock, through which the waters, forcing narrow passages, precipitate themselves. A dense and interminable forest protected us from the north winds, and a countless number of dead trees standing on all sides furnished us with abundant fuel for our fires during the inclement season. We were encircled by ranges of lofty mountains, whose snow-clad summits reflected in the sun their brightness on all the surrounding country.

At the beginning of winter, as soon as the snow begins to fall in abundance, thousands of deer come down from the mountains. Sometimes the snow attains a thickness of two and three feet, and when the surface is frozen, it often happens that forty hunters will kill 300 in a day. You may judge of the great numbers of deer that fill the valleys and low places in winter. Where we were encamped we lived entirely on the chase. But if the snow is light, the Indians go hungry, and though the ground is frozen they have recourse to the Camas-root, which is very abundant in that region, and which the natives call *Sxâaolot*.<sup>18</sup>

The place for wintering being determined, the first care of the Indians was to erect the house of prayer. While the men cut down fir trees, the women brought bark and mats to cover them. In two days this humble house of the Lord was completed — humble and poor indeed, but truly the *house of prayer*, to which pure, simple, innocent souls repaired, to offer to the Great Spirit their vows and the tribute of their affections. Here the missionaries continued with care and diligence their instructions preparatory to baptism. How consoling was it to see ourselves surrounded by this fervent band, who had renounced the chase of the buffalo — a pleasure so attracting to an Indian — and had come from various parts of the country to place themselves under our direction, in the well-founded hope of being speedily regenerated in the saving waters of baptism. They had al-

<sup>18</sup> Apparently in the Kalispel or Pend d'Oreille language. In a Cœur d'Alène vocabulary, Father De Smet gives the name for the Camas as *Sxa-o-lo-it-xoa*.

ready learned their prayers and all those things which it was necessary they should practice. They applied with ardor to become acquainted with the nature and obligations of the sacrament of regeneration and the dispositions required for its worthy reception.

The great festival of Christmas, the day on which the little band<sup>19</sup> was to be added to the number of the true children of God, will never be effaced from the memory of our good Indians. The manner in which we celebrated midnight mass may give you an idea of our festival. The signal for rising, which was to be given a few minutes before midnight, was the firing of a pistol, announcing to the Indians that the house of prayer would soon be open. This was followed by a general discharge of guns in honor of the birth of the Infant Savior, and 300 voices rose spontaneously from the midst of the forest, and intoned in the language of the *Pend d'Oreilles* the beautiful canticle: "*Du Dieu puissant tout annonce la gloire.*"—"The Almighty's glory all things proclaim." In a moment a multitude of adorers were seen wending their way to the humble temple of the Lord—resembling indeed the manger in which the Messiah was born. On that night, which all at once became bright as day, they experienced I know not what, that which made them exclaim aloud, "O God! I give thee my heart." Oh! I trust that the happy impression which this unwonted spectacle made upon their hearts will never be effaced.

Of what was our little church of the wilderness constructed? I have already told you—of posts fresh cut in the woods, covered over with mats and bark; these were its only materials. On the eve, the church was embellished with garlands and wreaths of green boughs; forming, as it were, a frame for the images which represent the affecting mysteries of Christmas night. The interior was ornamented with pine branches. The altar was neatly decorated, be-

<sup>19</sup> Fr. 124 adults.

spangled with stars of various brightness, and covered with a profusion of ribbons — things exceedingly attractive to the eye of an Indian. At midnight I celebrated a solemn mass and the Indians sang several canticles suitable to the occasion. That peace announced in the first verse of the angelic hymn — the *Gloria* — “Peace on earth to men of good will,” was, I venture to say, literally fulfilled to the Indians of the forest. A grand banquet, according to Indian custom, followed the first mass. Some choice pieces of the animals slain in the chase had been set apart for the occasion. I ordered half a sack of flour and a large boiler of sweetened coffee to be added. The union, the contentment, the joy and charity, which pervaded the whole assembly, might well be compared to the *agapé* of the primitive Christians.

After the second high mass, all the adults, with the chiefs at their head, presented themselves in the church to receive baptism, the fulfilment of their longing desires. The old man and woman whom I baptized two years before were sponsors for all. The men were placed on the one side, according to the custom of Paraguay, and the women on the other. I was assisted during the ceremony by Father Hoeken, their worthy and zealous missionary. Everything was done in order and with propriety. Permit me to repeat here that I should be delighted could I but communicate to the zealous and fervent those pleasurable feelings — that overflowing of the heart, which one experiences on such occasions. Here, indeed, the Indian missionary enjoys his greatest consolations: here he obtains his strength, his courage, his zeal to labor to bring men to the knowledge of the true God, in spite of the poverty, the privations of every description, and the dangers with which he has to contend. Yes, surely, even in this life is the promise of the Savior fulfilled with regard to him, “Ye shall receive a hundredfold.” The trifling things of the world he abandons are nothing to be compared with the blessings he finds in the wilderness. The priest does not address in vain to the In-

dians those beautiful words of the Roman ritual: "Receive this white garment," etc., "Receive this burning taper," etc. He may be certain that the greater number of his catechumens will wear that spotless garment — will preserve their baptismal innocence, to the hour of their death. When I have afterward asked them if they have not offended God? if their conscience does not reproach them with some fault? how often have I received this touching and consoling answer: "Oh, Father! in baptism I renounced sin, I try to avoid sin, the very thought of offending God frightens me!" The ceremonies of baptism were closed by a second instruction and by the distribution of beads, which the Indians are accustomed to say every evening in public.<sup>20</sup>

About three o'clock in the afternoon the solemn benediction of the blessed sacrament was given for the first time, immediately after which upward of fifty couples, many of whom were eighty years old, came forward to renew before the church their marriage promises. I could not help shedding tears of joy at witnessing this truly primitive simplicity, and the love and affection with which they pledged again their faith to each other. The last instruction was then given, and thanks were returned to God for all the blessings he had vouchsafed to shower upon them on this ever-memorable day. The recitation of prayers and the chanting of hymns were heard in all the lodges of the camp till the night was far advanced.

Fathers Mengarini and Zerbinati<sup>21</sup> (the last-mentioned Father has since died), had the consolation to see the whole tribe of the Flatheads, among whom they had been laboring, approach the holy table on this day. Twelve young Indians,

<sup>20</sup> "I have received sad news from the Pend d'Oreille nation, where I founded a mission in 1844. They write me that all the principal chiefs of this tribe have been killed by some hostile bands, belonging to the nation of the Blackfeet."—*Letter to Mrs. Parmentier, January, 1851.*

<sup>21</sup> Reverend Peter Zerbinati, S. J., came across the plains with Joset and Magri in 1843; was drowned September, 1845; the first Catholic priest to die in Montana.

taught by Father Mengarini, performed with accuracy several pieces of music, by the best German and Italian composers, during the midnight mass. Fathers Point and Joset had also the consolation of admitting for the first time nearly the entire tribe of the Cœur d'Alènes, on this auspicious day, to the holy communion. Father Point has given the particulars of this first communion in a letter, which has been published, and which you have, no doubt, read with pleasure. The Christmas of 1844 was, therefore, a great and glorious day in the Rocky Mountains.

I will close this already lengthy letter with a few words more concerning the Pend d'Oreilles of the Bay. Early in the spring of 1845 they began to build upon the spot selected for the reduction of St. Ignatius, and to open fields. On Ascension day of the same year Father Hoeken administered baptism to upward of a hundred adults. At my last visit, which I paid them in July, 1845, they had already put up fourteen log houses, besides a large barn, had the timber prepared for a church, and had upward of 300 acres in grain, enclosed by a substantial fence. The whole village, men, women and children, had worked most cheerfully. I counted thirty head of horned cattle—the squaws had learned to milk the cows and to churn; they had a few hogs and some domestic fowls. The number of Christians had doubled since Christmas, 1844.

A flour and sawmill, a few more plows, with other agricultural implements, and carpenter's tools, were much wanted in the village of St. Ignatius. All is to be commenced among these poor, good Indians, and to us they look for means and supplies, which we readily grant as far as we are able. Already was an appeal made to the generous and charitable Christians, and it is consoling for me to say, that appeal found an echo in the hearts of the friends of the Indians which enabled us to enlarge our missionary operations, and I may add that the grateful prayer of the Indians is daily ascending to the throne of the Almighty, to implore the blessings of heaven on their bene-

factors. In 1845 and 1846, several stations were formed, and the extensive mission of New Caledonia was commenced.

In the beginning of February, [1845] I set out to visit our different settlements and stations, and to form new ones among the neighboring tribes of our reductions. The entire surface of this region was then covered with snow five feet deep; and I was compelled to go from the Bay of Pend d'Oreilles to the Horse Plain, in a bark canoe, a distance of 250 miles.

I was among my dear Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles of the mountains, during the Paschal time, and had the great consolation of finding them replete with zeal and fervor in fulfilling the duties of true children of prayer. The solemn feast of Easter, all the Flatheads at St. Mary's devoutly approached the most blessed sacrament during my mass; and about 300 Pend d'Oreilles (the greater number adults), belonging to the station of St. Francis Borgia, presented themselves at the baptismal font. Five chiefs were among the number; the most distinguished are Stietiedloodsho, or chieftain of the Braves; Selpisto, the head chieftain, and Chalax, that is to say the White Robe, sur-named the Juggler or great medicine man. The word "medicine man," in their language, is synonymous with juggler.

How consoling it is to pour the regenerating waters of baptism on the furrowed and scarified brows of these desert warriors — to behold these children of the plains and forests emerging from that profound ignorance and superstition in which they have been for so many ages deeply and darkly enveloped; to see them embrace the faith and all its sacred practices, with an eagerness, an attention, a zeal, worthy the pristine Christians.

Were I to give you the history of these chiefs, I should greatly exceed the limits I have proposed. Suffice it to say that these heroes of the Rocky Mountains have been for years the terror of their enemies. Chalax had acquired

great celebrity as a juggler, and in predicting future events; if we may credit the Kalispels and the whites who have traveled in company with him, these prophecies have always been verified. He indicated the day, the place, and the number of Blackfeet who would attack their camp. Having interrogated him relative to this affair, he, with great simplicity and candor, replied: "I am called the great doctor, yet never have I given myself up to the practices of juggling, nor condescended to exercise its deceptions. I derive all my strength from prayer; when in a hostile country, I address myself to the Master of Life and offer him my heart and soul, entreating him to protect us against our enemies. A voice had already warned me of coming danger; I then recommend prudence and vigilance throughout the camp; for the monitory voice has never deceived me. I have now a favor to request: the mysterious voice calls me by the name of Chalax, and, if you will permit, I desire to bear that name until my death." I willingly consented, and then explained to him the ceremony of the white garment he was about to receive, in the holy sacrament of baptism. To the name of Chalax I affixed that of the prince of the apostles. This is the same chief who on my first visit to the mountains, aided by only sixty men, sustained during five days an obstinate struggle against 200 lodges of Blackfeet, whom he put to flight, leaving on the ground eighty men, whilst among the Flatheads only one man was wounded. He died three months later, the day after he was baptized.

With regret I parted from these good Indians and my beloved brothers in Jesus Christ, the Reverend Fathers Mengarini, Zerbinati, and four coadjutor brothers; who are laboring with indefatigable zeal in this portion of our Lord's vineyard.

As the snow was fast disappearing, the Kalispels of the Bay were awaiting my return. I re-entered my fragile canoe, guided by two Indians, and made all possible haste to descend Clark's river. You may judge of its impetuosity

when I inform you that we were sixteen days ascending the river, and but four in descending the same. On returning to the Bay, accompanied by Reverend Father Hoeken and several chiefs, my first care was to examine the lands belonging to this portion of the tribe of Kalispels and select a fit site for erecting the new establishment of St. Ignatius.<sup>22</sup> We found a vast and beautiful prairie, three miles in extent, surrounded by cedar and pine, in the neighborhood of the cavern of New Manresa and its quarries, and a fall of water more than 200 feet, presenting every advantage for the erection of mills. I felled the first tree, and after having taken all necessary measures to expedite the work, I departed for Walla Walla, where I embarked in a small boat and descended the Columbia as far as Fort Vancouver.

The melting of the snow had occasioned a considerable freshet and our descent was very rapid. The place was indicated to me where, a few months previously, four travelers from the United States had miserably perished, victims of their own temerity and presumption. When advised to provide themselves with a guide, they answered they had no need of any; and when warned that the river was dangerous and deceptive, the pilot, with a scoffing boast, replied, "I am capable of guiding my barge, were it even across the infernal gulf." The monitor wished them a fortunate voyage, but at the same time trembled for their fate, saying: "This

<sup>22</sup> *Further history of the first Mission of St. Ignatius, among the Kalispels.*— This establishment was maintained for ten years by Father Hoeken, but in 1854 it was abandoned for a more favorable site, that of the present St. Ignatius Mission, a few miles from Selish station on the Northern Pacific railroad, at that time considered the territory of the Upper Pend d'Oreilles. The reasons for the change are thus given by Father Palladino: "It was subject to inundation at the melting of heavy snow-falls in the mountains, and, further, the missionaries having now acquired a better knowledge of the country, a more central position with reference to other tribes was deemed preferable, as greater good could be accomplished. Consequently, at the request of the Indians themselves, the mission was removed."

pilot is not a native Indian, he is not an Iroquois, nor even a Canadian." The turbulent stream soon engulfed its presumptuous and daring victims. They steered out into the midst of the river, and in an instant the canoe was borne along with the rapidity of lightning, leaving in its train a thick foam, caused by the violent plying of oars. Approaching the rapids, they fearlessly hurried onward. Alas, their fate was soon to be decided. Drawn by the eddy into the center of a whirlpool, vainly they struggled to extricate themselves — they beheld the dread abyss yawning to receive its prey! Yet an instant the ill-fated barge twirled upon the surface, and then sank amidst the despairing shrieks of the helpless crew, which the roaring waves rendered the more appalling, whilst the dismal sounds, re-echoing from shore to shore, proclaimed a new disaster of the Columbia. Soon the waters resumed their wonted course, and left no trace of the sad catastrophe. This fatal spot might appropriately be designated Presumptive's Rapids; doubtless it will be a lesson to future boasters not to venture, without pilot or guide, upon this formidable tributary of the western ocean.

After a prosperous voyage of five days I debarked at Vancouver, where I had the happiness of meeting Father Nobili, who during eight months had applied himself to study the Indian language, while he exercised his sacred ministry among the Catholic employees of the fort and the Indians of the neighborhood. More than a tenth of the latter had been swept off by a mortal disease; happily, they all had the consolation of receiving baptism before they expired.

Father Nobili accompanied me in a Chinook canoe up the beautiful river of Multnomah or Willamette, a distance of about sixty miles, as far as the village of Champoeg, three miles from our residence of St. Francis Xavier. On our arrival all the fathers came to meet us, and great was our delight in being again reunited after a long winter season. The Italian fathers had applied themselves chiefly to

the study of languages. Father Ravalli, being skilled in medicine, rendered considerable services to the inhabitants of St. Paul's Mission; for every dwelling contained several sick. Father Vercruysse, at the request of Right Reverend Bishop Blanchet, opened a mission among the Canadians who were distant from St. Paul's, and he succeeded in causing them to contribute to the erection of a new church, in a central location. Father De Vos is the only one of our fathers of Willamette who speaks English. He devotes his whole attention to the Americans, whose number already exceeds 4,000. There are several Catholic families, and our dissenting brethren seem well disposed; many among them are eager to be instructed in the Catholic faith.

Nowhere does religion make greater progress, or present brighter prospects for the future, than in Oregon Territory. The Very Reverend Mr. Demers, vicar-general and administrator of the diocese in the absence of the bishop, is preparing to build a brick cathedral. There is now being built, under his superintendence, a fine church at the Falls of the Willamette, where, three years ago, was commenced the first town of Oregon. This rising village numbers more than 100 houses. Several lots have been selected by the respectable Mr. McLoughlin, Governor for the Hudson Bay Company, west of the Rocky Mountains, for a convent and two schools. A Catholic church has been erected at Vancouver.

The Convent of the Sisters of Notre Dame is fast progressing, and it will be the finest building of Willamette. The church is eighty feet long, and proportionably wide; it is under the invocation of the Blessed Virgin. The nuns have already fifty boarders. The Bishop's College, under the management of the Very Reverend Mr. Bolduc, is very prosperous. The number of pupils has augmented; forty young men, chiefly half-breeds, are receiving a Christian education. Some years ago a church was erected at Cowlitz, and the inhabitants are now preparing to construct a convent under the direction of Reverend Mr. Langlois.

Our residence of St. Francis Xavier is completed; it will hereafter serve for a novitiate and seminary, to prepare young men for the missions.

Measures, which I trust will be realized, have been taken by our fathers for visiting during this year the numerous tribes inhabiting the Pacific coast north and south of the Columbia; where already the visits of the bishop and his grand vicar have been so productive of favorable results. The 17th of February, 1842, Bishop Blanchet thus wrote to the Bishop of Quebec: "God has deigned to bless our labors, and to fructify the divine word. The adorable name of Jesus has been announced to new nations of the north. Mr. Demers bent his steps to Fort Langley on Frazer's river, in which place he administered baptism to upwards of 700 children. Many of them already enjoy the precious fruits of regenerating grace."

In my preceding letters, I gave you the details of our missions among the mountains of the higher Oregon; of the conversion of two tribes, the Flatheads and the Cœur d'Alène or Pointed Hearts; of the first communion of the latter, and conversion of a large number of Kalispels of the Bay, on the solemn festival of Christmas. From 1839, when the mission was established, to July, 1845, the reverend Canadian missionaries baptized 3,000 persons. The number of Catholics residing at the different stations of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company in Oregon, together with the colonists of the same nation, amounts to several hundreds. By adding to these 2,857 baptized since 1841 in the different mountain missions, it gives us a total of more than 6,000 Catholics in Oregon. The diminutive grain of mustard is fast extending far and wide its branches over this once sterile and neglected region. In the month of June Father Nobili, accompanied by a novice brother, left Willamette to visit the tribes of New Caledonia. The Very Reverend Mr. Demers saw there in 1842-3 the following named tribes: Kameloups, the Atnans or Shouwapemoh, the Porteurs or

Ltaoten,<sup>23</sup> which names vary according to the different places where the tents are pitched. They affix the word *ten* which signifies people, i. e., Stelaoten, Nashkoten, Tchilkoten, Nakazeteoten. Reverend Mr. Demers had the consolation of baptizing 436 children among these tribes.

Such has since been the fervor and zeal of these poor Indians, that, though deprived of a priest, they have built three churches, hoping that a nepapayattok, or father, would settle among them.

Many Catholics reside in the different forts of this country. The honorable gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company, although Protestants, were strongly interested in favor of these savages, and did all in their power to facilitate the introduction of a clergyman into this portion of their jurisdiction.

A few days after the departure of Father Nobili, who obtained a place in a barge belonging to the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, I started by land from St. Francis Xavier's with eleven horses laden with plows, spades, pickaxes, scythes and carpenters' implements. My companions were the good Brother McGil, from Ireland [J. B. McGean?], and two metis or mongrels [half-breeds]. We encountered many obstacles and difficulties among the Cascade Mountains owing to the water which at this season descends on every side in torrents and with irresistible fury upon the rocks, over which we were compelled to cross. In the narrow valleys between these mountains, the rhododendron displays all its strength and beauty; it rises to the height of fifteen or twenty feet. Entire groves are formed by thousands of these shrubs, whose clustering branches entwine themselves in beautiful green arches, adorned with innumerable bouquets of splendid flowers, varying their hues from the pure white to the deepened tint of the crimsoned rose.

<sup>23</sup> This name is given variously as Ltaoten and Itcaten in different letters of Father De Smet's. Mackenzie, who met these Indians in 1793, gave their native name as Nagailer.

Our path was strewed with the whitened bones of horses and oxen, melancholy testimonies of the miseries endured by other travelers through these regions. We passed the foot of Mt. Hood, the most elevated of this stupendous chain. It is covered with snow, and rises 16,000 [12,225] feet above the level of the sea. Captain Wyeth, on beholding this ridge from the summit of the Blue Mountains, thus speaks of it in his journal:<sup>24</sup> "The traveler on advancing westerly, even at the distance of 160 miles, beholds the peaks of the Cascade Mountains. Several of them rise 16,000 feet above the level of the sea. Every other natural wonder seems to dwindle, as it were, into insignificance when compared to this. From one single spot I contemplated seven of these majestic summits extending from north to south, whose dazzling white and conic form resemble a sugar loaf."

We were twenty days going from the Willamette to Walla Walla, across desert and undulating lands, abounding in absinthium or wormwood, [sage brush] cactus, tufted grass, and several species of such plants and herbs as are chiefly found in a sterile and sandy soil. Game is scarce in these latitudes; however, we found large partridges and pheasants, aquatic fowls, small birds of various new kinds, hares and rabbits. Salamanders [horned toads?] swarm in sandy places, and armadilloes are not rare in the vicinity of the Great Dalles.

Fort Walla Walla is situated in latitude  $46^{\circ} 2'$ , and longitude  $119^{\circ} 30'$ . The sandy neighborhood of this settlement likens it to a little Arabia. The river Walla Walla discharges its waters a mile distant from the fort. The lowlands, when watered, are tolerably fertile, and produce maize, barley, wheat, potatoes and pulse of every kind. Cows and hogs are easily raised, and horses abound in this part of the country.

<sup>24</sup> Father De Smet is apparently in error here. At any rate, the quoted passage is not to be found in the published journal of Nathaniel J. Wyeth.

Having already spoken to you of the Nez Percé and Spokan desert, I have nothing further to add relative to this dreary region. On advancing easterly toward the Blue Mountains, we find beautiful and fertile plains, interspersed with limpid and wholesome streams. The valleys are picturesque, covered with luxuriant prairies, and forests of pine and fir. The Nez Percés and Cayuses inhabit these delightful pastures. They are the most wealthy tribes in Oregon; even some private families possess 1,500 horses. The savages successfully cultivate potatoes, peas, corn, and several kinds of vegetables and fruits. No situation affords finer grazing for cattle; even in winter they find an abundance, nor do they need shelter from the inclemency of the weather. Snow is never seen, and the rains are neither destructive nor superabundant.

About the middle of July I arrived safely with all my effects at the Bay of the Kalispels. In my absence the number of neophytes had considerably increased. On the feast of the Ascension Father Hoeken had the happiness of baptizing more than 100 adults. Since my departure in the spring our little colony has built four houses, prepared materials for constructing a small church, and enclosed a field of 300 acres. More than 400 Kalispels, computing adults and children, have been baptized. They are all animated with fervor and zeal; they make use of the hatchet and plow, being resolved to abandon an itinerant life for a permanent abode.

The beautiful falls of the Columbia, called the Kettle Falls, in the vicinity of Fort Colville, are distant two days' journey from our new residence of St. Ignatius. From eight to nine hundred savages were there assembled for the salmon fishery. I repaired thither in time to spend with them the nine days preceding the feast of our holy founder. Within the last four years, considerable numbers of these Indians were visited by the "Black-gowns," who administered the sacrament of baptism. I was re-

ceived by my dear Indians with filial joy and tenderness. I caused my little chapel of boughs to be placed on an eminence in the midst of the Indians' huts, where it might not inaptly be compared to the pelican of the wilderness surrounded by her young, seeking with avidity the divine word, and sheltering themselves under the protection of their fostering mother. I gave three instructions daily; the Indians assisted at them with great assiduity and attention.

Last year the feast of St. Ignatius proved for me a day of danger, trial and uneasiness. I love to recall it to my mind, for it terminated joyfully, and so gloriously that I know my companions can never forget it, and they will return lasting thanks to the Almighty for the display of his mercy. Without a chart or any knowledge of the mouth of the Columbia, we traversed, as if borne on angels' wings, the bar of this formidable river. This year I passed the feast of St. Ignatius amidst many occupations, but they were of such a nature as to console the missionary's heart, and repay him a hundredfold for the trifling privations, pains and fatigues he endures.

More than 100 children were presented for baptism, and eleven old men, borne to me on skins, seemed only awaiting the regenerating waters to depart home and repose in the bosom of their divine Savior. The eldest among them, an Okinagan, apparently about 100, and blind, addressed me in the following pathetic words: "My life has been long on earth, and my tears have not ceased to flow; even now I daily weep, for I have beheld all my children and early associates disappear. I find myself isolated among my own nation, as if I were in a strange land; thoughts of the past alone occupy me, and they are of a mournful and bitter nature. Nevertheless, I find consolation in remembering that I have avoided the company of the wicked. Never have I shared in their thefts, battles or murders. This blessed day, joy has penetrated the inmost recesses of my soul; the Great Spirit has taken pity on me, I have received

baptism, I return him thanks for this favor, and offer him my heart and life."

A solemn mass was celebrated, during which the Indians chanted canticles in praise of God. The ceremonies of baptism followed, and all terminated in the most perfect order, to the great delight and edification of the savages. It was indeed a most imposing spectacle; all around contributed to heighten the effect. The noble and gigantic rock, the distant roar of the cataracts breaking in on the religious silence of that solitude, situated on an eminence overlooking the powerful Oregon river, and on the spot where the impetuous waters, freeing themselves from their limits, rush in fury and dash over a pile of rocks, casting upwards a thousand *jets d'eau*, whose transparent columns reflect in varied colors the rays of the dazzling sun.

There were besides the Skoyelpi or Chaudière Indians, the Sinpoils and the Zingomènes, and several Kalispels, Indians from the great lakes of the Columbia and Okinagans, accompanied me in the capacity of singers and catechists.

I gave the name of St. Paul to the Skoyelpi nation, and placed under the care of St. Peter the tribe inhabiting the shores of the great Columbia lakes, whither Father Hoeken is about to repair, to continue instructing and baptizing their adults. My presence among the Indians did not interrupt their fine and abundant fishery. An enormous basket was fastened to a projecting rock, and the finest fish of the Columbia, as if by fascination, cast themselves by dozens into the snare. Seven or eight times during the day these baskets were examined, and each time were found to contain about 250 salmon. The Indians, meanwhile, were seen on every projecting rock, piercing the fish with the greatest dexterity [with spears].

They who know not this territory may accuse me of exaggeration, when I affirm that it would be as easy to count the pebbles so profusely scattered on the shores, as to sum up the number of different kinds of fish which this

western river furnishes for man's support. As the buffalo of the north, and deer from north to east of the mountains, furnish daily food for the inhabitants of those regions, so do these fish supply the wants of the western tribes. One may form some idea of the quantity of salmon and other fish, by remarking that at the time they ascend the rivers, all the tribes inhabiting the shores choose a favorable location, and not only do they find abundant nutriment during all the season, but, if diligent, they dry, and also pulverize and mix with oil a sufficient quantity for the rest of the year. Incalculable shoals of salmon ascend to the river's source, and there die in shallow water. Great quantities of trout and carp follow them, and regale themselves on the spawn deposited by the salmon in holes and still water. The following spring the young salmon descend toward the sea, and I have been told (I cannot vouch for the authenticity) that they never return until the fourth year. Six different species are found in the Columbia river.

I left Kettle Falls August 4th, accompanied by several of the nation of the Crees to examine the lands they have selected for the site of a village. The ground is rich and well suited for all agricultural purposes. Several buildings were commenced; I gave the name of St. Francis Regis to this new station, where a great number of the mixed race and beaver hunters have resolved to settle, with their families. The 6th I traversed the high mountains of the Kalispels, and toward evening reached the establishment of St. Ignatius. The Reverend Fathers Hoeken and Ravalli, with two lay brothers, superintend this interesting little settlement. These fathers likewise visit the different neighboring tribes, such as the Zingomènes, Sinpoils, Okinagans, the stations of St. Francis Regis, of St. Peter, and that of St. Paul, the Flatbows and the Kootenais. I purpose visiting these two tribes, who have never yet had the consolation of beholding a Black-robe among them. All these tribes number, on an average, about 500 souls each.

## CHAPTER IV.<sup>1</sup>

### EXPEDITION TO THE BLACKFEET COUNTRY — ST. IGNA- TIUS TO FORT AUGUSTUS.

Sets out for the Flatbow country — Meets Ogden in the woods — De Smet on the Oregon Question — The country and its products — The camas root — Fish festival of the natives — Dense forests — Precious metals and their bearing on the Indians' welfare — Meets Kootenais in Tobacco Prairie — Good trail to sources of Columbia — Starts to find the Blackfeet — Notes on bears — On Canadians — Is well fed — Wild scenery — Quotes much poetry — Bow river — Dreams, omens and more poetry — Comes upon an Assiniboin camp — They are untidy and their dogs steal — Porcupine lore — How to ride in the woods — Mineral deposits — The prairie ocean — Survey of the Indian field — Comes to Rocky Mountain House — Kindness of Harriote — Something about the Crees — A crafty medicine-man — Thirteen Blackfeet come in — A hard year for Blackfeet — Some of their traditions — Sets forth again in search of the main camp — Loses a bad interpreter and pursues a good one — Gives up and repairs to Fort Augustus.

#### *Monsieur.*<sup>2</sup>

THE 9th of August I continued my route toward the country of the Arcs-à-plats [Flatbows]. The roads were still inundated by the great freshet. I preferred ascending the Clark or Flathead river in my bark canoe, and sent my horses across the forests bordering the river to await me at the great lake of the Kalispels. I had here a very agreeable and unexpected interview; as we approached the forests, several horsemen issued forth in tattered garments.

<sup>1</sup> This chapter follows the English text of the *Oregon Missions*, and comprises Letters VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI and part of XIII of that work (Letters V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X and XII, *Missions de l'Orégon*), published as letters to Bishop Hughes and dated as by footnotes inserted at the proper places.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated Station of the Assumption, Flatbow country, August 17, 1845.

The foremost gentleman saluted me by name, with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. I returned the gracious salutation, desiring to know whom I had the honor of addressing. A small river separated us, and with a smile he said, "Wait until I reach the opposite shore, and then you will recognize me." He is not a beaver hunter, said I to myself; yet under this tattered garb and slouched hat, I could not easily descry one of the principal members of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, the worthy and respectable Mr. Ogden.<sup>3</sup> I had the honor and good fortune of making a voyage with him, and in his own barge, from Colville to Fort Vancouver in 1842; and no one could desire more agreeable society. It would be necessary for you to traverse the desert, to feel yourself insulated, remote from brethren, friends, to conceive the consolation and joy of such an encounter.

Mr. Ogden left England in the month of April last, accompanied by two distinguished [? engineer] officers. It was a source of great pleasure to receive recent news from Europe, but the Oregon question appeared to me somewhat alarming. It was neither curiosity nor pleasure that induced these two officers to cross so many desolate regions, and hasten their course toward the mouth of the Columbia. They were invested with orders from their Government to take possession of Cape Disappointment, to hoist the English standard, and erect a fortress for the purpose of securing the entrance of the river, in case of war.<sup>4</sup> In the Oregon question, John Bull, without much talk, attains his end, and secures the most important part of the country; whereas Uncle Sam loses himself in words, inveighs and storms! Many years have been passed in debates and useless contention, without one single practical *effort* to secure

<sup>3</sup> See p. 384.

<sup>4</sup> Probably their orders in this regard were somewhat elastic. Father De Smet met them returning eastward the following spring; see p. 542. He **there** says their names were Ward and Vavasour.

his real or pretended rights.<sup>5</sup> The poor Indians of Oregon, who alone have a right to the country, are not consulted. Their future destiny will be, undoubtedly, like that of so many other unfortunate tribes who, after having lived peaceably by hunting and fishing for centuries, will finally dis-

<sup>5</sup> The following letter to Senator Benton, written about November 3, 1849, is of interest in this connection:

"Honorable Colonel Benton,

"Sir;

"Agreeably to your request, I have the honor of sending you the following statement of a fact that has fallen under my own cognizance. It occurred in the middle of June, 1846, on the war brig *Modeste* while lying before Fort Van Couver, on which I had been kindly invited to partake of a dinner, in company with the officers of the war vessel *Fisgard*, and several gentlemen from the fort.

"Among various topics of discussion, while at table, mention was made of the Oregon question, of which the officers appeared to be anxiously awaiting the result. One of the principal officers remarked, that if the question did not come to a speedy and favorable issue, they would take possession, not of the whole of Oregon only, but moreover add California to the conquest. I in my turn remarked that this was a dream not easily realized, for supposing they did take Oregon for the moment, could not twenty or twenty-five thousand Americans cross the Rocky Mountains, early in the next summer, and almost without a blow, wrest from them the entire Oregon. As to California, I remarked that it was my idea, that the Yankees were there already, and that they, the British, would probably come too late; for that the Yankees, who never sleep over such bargains, would be master over the whole country, before the Britisher would land one single soldier on its shores. 'Are you a Yankee?' asked the captain, somewhat warmly. 'Not a born one, Captain,' was my reply, 'but I have the good luck of being a naturalized American, for these many years past — and in these matters all my good wishes are for the side of my adopted country — if California is to fall into either hands, I hope the star-spangled banner may wave triumphant there.'"

This incident is a strange reminder of a similar one so often related in the life of Doctor Whitman, but which historians generally agree in considering mythical. See Nixon, *How Marcus Whitman Saved Oregon*, p. 105.

The *Fisgard* was a frigate of forty-two guns, manned by a crew of 350, Captain J. A. Duntz. Bancroft says she "came to remain for the summer, or so long as the war-cloud threatened."

appear, victims of vice and malady, under the rapacious influence of modern civilization.

The route from the great Kalispel lake to the Flatbow country is across dense forests and much obstructed by fallen trees, morasses, frightful sloughs, from which the poor horses with much difficulty extricate themselves; but having finally surmounted all these obstacles, we contemplate from an eminence a smiling and accessible valley, whose mellow and abundant verdure is nourished by two lovely lakes, where the graceful Kootenai river winds in such fantastic beauty, that it serves to make the weary traveler not only forget his past dangers, but amply compensates him for the fatigues of a long and tiresome journey.

This section of the valley of Arcs-à-plats greatly resembles the two valleys of the Cœur d'Alènes; same fertility of soil, lakes, pastures, willow and pine groves; elevated mountains covered to the very summit with dense forests of trees, low lands, in which the towering cedar displays all its majesty and splendid foliage; and, as Racine says:

“ Elèvent aux cieux  
Leurs fronts audacieux ! ”

The river is, in this place, deep and tranquil; moving along with a tardy pace until aroused from its inertness by the universal thaw; it then descends with such astounding impetuosity that it destroys the banks, and in its furious course uproots and bears along trees, fragments of rocks, etc., which vainly oppose its passage. In a few days the entire valley is overflowed, and it presents to view immense lakes and morasses, separated by borders of trees. Thus does the kind Providence of God assist his poor creatures who inhabit these regions, by the liberality with which he ministers to their wants. These lakes and morasses, formed in the spring, are filled with fish; they remain there inclosed as in natural reservoirs, for the use of the inhabitants. The fish swarm in such abundance that the Indians have no other labor than to take them from the water and prepare them

for the boiler. Such an existence is, however, precarious; the savages, who are not of a provident nature, are obliged to go afterward in quest of roots, grain, berries and fruits; such as the thorny bush which bears a sweet, pleasant blackberry; the rose-buds, mountain cherry, cormier or service berry, various sorts of gooseberries and currants of excellent flavor; raspberries, the hawthorn berry, the wappato, a very nourishing bulbous root; the bitter root, whose appellation sufficiently denotes its peculiar quality, is, however, very healthy; it grows in light, dry, sandy soil, as also the caious or biscuit root. The former is of a thin and cylindrical form; the latter, though farinaceous and insipid, is a substitute for bread; it resembles a small white radish; the watery potato, oval and greenish, is prepared like our ordinary potato, but greatly inferior to it; the small onion; the sweet onion, which bears a lovely flower resembling the tulip. Strawberries are common and delicious.

To this catalogue I could add a number of detestable fruits and roots which serve as nutriment for the Indians, but at which a civilized stomach would revolt and nauseate. I cannot pass over in silence the camas root, and the peculiar manner in which it is prepared. It is abundant, and, I may say, is the queen root of this clime. It is a small, white, vapid onion, when removed from the earth, but becomes black and sweet when prepared for food. The women arm themselves with long crooked sticks to go in search of the camas. After having procured a certain quantity of these roots, by dint of long and painful labor, they make an excavation in the earth from twelve to fifteen inches deep, and of proportional diameter, to contain the roots. They cover the bottom with closely-cemented pavement, which they make red hot by means of a fire. After having carefully withdrawn all the coals, they cover the stones with grass or wet hay; then place a layer of camas, another of wet hay, a third of bark overlaid with mold, whereon is kept a glowing fire for fifty, sixty, and sometimes seventy hours. The camas thus acquires a consistency equal to that of the

jujube. It is sometimes made into loaves of various dimensions. It is excellent, especially when boiled with meat; if kept dry, it can be preserved a long time.

As soon as their provisions are exhausted the Indians scour the plains, forests, and mountains in quest of game. If they are unsuccessful in the chase, their hunger becomes so extreme that they are reduced to subsist on moss, which is more abundant than the camas. It is a parasite of the pine, a tree common in these latitudes, and hangs from its boughs in great quantities; it appears more suitable for mattresses than for the sustenance of human life. When they have procured a great quantity, they pick out all heterogeneous substance, and prepare it as they do the camas; it becomes compact, and is, in my opinion, a most miserable food, which in a brief space reduces those who live on it to a pitiable state of emaciation.

Such are the Arcs-à-plats. They know neither industry, art, nor science; the words *mine* and *thine* are scarcely known among them. They enjoy in common the means of existence spontaneously granted them by nature; and as they are strangely improvident, they often pass from the greatest abundance to extreme scarcity. They feast well one day, and the following is passed in total abstinence. The two extremes are equally pernicious. Their cadaverous figure sufficiently demonstrates what I here advance.

I arrived among the Arcs-à-plats in time to witness the grand fish festival, which is yearly celebrated; the men only have the privilege of assisting thereat. Around a fire fifty feet long, partially overlaid with stones of the size of a turkey's egg, eighty men range themselves; each man is provided with an osier vessel, cemented with gum and filled with water and fish. The hall where this extraordinary feast is celebrated is constructed of rush mats, and has three apertures, one at either extremity for the entrance of guests; the middle one serves for transporting the fish. All preparations being completed, and each man at his post, the chief, after a short harangue of encouragement to his people, fin-

ishes by a prayer of supplication to the Great Spirit, of whom he demands an abundant draught. He gives the signal to commence, and each one, armed with two sticks flattened at the extremity, makes use of them instead of tongs, to draw the stones from the embers, and put them in his kettle. This process is twice renewed, and in the space of five minutes the fish are cooked. Finally, they squat around the fire in the most profound silence to enjoy the repast, each trembling lest a bone be disjointed or broken — an indispensable condition (a *sine quâ non*) of a plentiful fishery. A single bone broken would be regarded as ominous, and the unlucky culprit banished the society of his comrades, lest his presence should entail on them some dread evil.

A species of sturgeon which measures from six to ten and sometimes twelve feet in length, is taken by the dart in the great lake and river of the Arcs-à-plats.

Since my arrival among the Indians, the feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has ever been to me a day of great consolation. I had time to prepare for the celebration of this solemn festival. Thanks be to the instructions and counsels of a brave Canadian, Mr. Berland, who for a long time has resided among them in the quality of trader, I found the little tribe of Arcs-à-plats docile, and in the best disposition to embrace the faith. They had already been instructed in the principal mysteries of religion. They sang canticles in the French and Indian tongues. They number about ninety families. I celebrated the first mass ever offered in their land; after which ten adults already advanced in age and ninety children received baptism. The former were very attentive to all my instructions. In the afternoon, the erection of the cross was as solemn as circumstances would admit. There was a grand salute of ninety guns, and at the foot of the lowly standard of the God-Savior, the entire tribe made a tender of their hearts to him, with the promise of inviolable attachment to all the duties of true children of prayer, availing themselves

of this occasion to renounce the remains of their ancient juggling and superstition. The cross was elevated on the border of a lake, and the station received the beautiful name of the Assumption. Under the auspices of Mary, that good Mother, in whose honor they have for many years sung canticles, we hope that religion will take deep root and flourish amidst this tribe, where union, innocence and simplicity reign in full vigor. They ardently desire to be taught agriculture, the advantages of which I have explained, and promised to procure the necessary seed and implements of husbandry.

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*Monseigneur.*<sup>6</sup>

The Flatbows and Kootenais now form one tribe, divided into two branches. They are known throughout the country by the appellation of the Skalzi. Advancing toward the territory of the Kootenais we were enchanted by the beautiful and diversified scenery. We sometimes traversed undulatory woods of pine and cedar, from which the light of day is partially excluded. We next entered sombre forests, where, axe in hand, we were forced to cut our way and wind about to avoid hosts of trees that had been leveled by the autumnal blasts and storms. Some of these forests are so dense that at the distance of twelve feet,<sup>7</sup> I could not distinguish my guide. The most certain way of extricating one's self from these labyrinths is to trust to the horse's sagacity, which, if left unguided, will follow the track of other animals. This expedient has saved me a hundred times.

I cannot refrain from communicating to your lordship the gloomy and harrowing thoughts which imagination conjures up in these dismal regions. The most fearful apprehensions dismay the bravest heart and cause an involuntary

<sup>6</sup> Letter dated Upper Ford of the Flatbow [Kootenai] river, September 2, 1845.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. une douzaine de verges.

shudder, as some dire apparition of a bear or panther stalks in fancy before the mind, whilst groping our way amidst these dark and frightful haunts, from which there is no egress. We caught a transitory glimpse of many charming spots covered with vegetation as we pursued our winding path near the river, wherever it deviated from its natural course. At a place called the Portage, the river crosses a defile of mountains, or rather of precipitous and frightful rocks; and the traveler is compelled, for the distance of eight miles, to risk his life at every step and brave obstacles that appear at first sight insuperable.

Whatever can be imagined appalling seems here combined to terrify the heart — livid gashes of ravines and precipices, giant peaks and ridges of varied hue, inaccessible pinnacles, fearful and unfathomable chasms filled with the sound of ever-precipitating waters, long, sloping and narrow banks, which must be alternately ascended, and many times have I been obliged to take the attitude of a quadruped and walk upon my hands; often during this perilous passage did I return fervent thanks to the Almighty for his protection from impending danger. Amid these stern, heaven-built walls of rocks the water has forced its way in varied forms, and we find cataracts and whirlpools engulfing crags and trees beneath their angry sway. Whilst the eye rests with pleasure on the rich and russet hues of distant slopes, upland turf and rock-hung flower — the ear is stunned by the confused sounds of murmuring rills, rushing streams, impetuous falls and roaring torrents.

An extensive plain at the base of the Portage mountain presents every advantage for the foundation of a city. The mountains surrounding this agreeable site are majestic and picturesque. They forcibly recalled to my memory the noble Mapocho Mountains that encompass the beautiful capital of Chile (Santiago). Innumerable little rills, oozing from the mountain's stony bosom, diffuse a transparent haze over the valleys and lower slopes. The fine river Des Chutes

[Elk river?] comes roaring down and crosses the plain before it joins its waters to the McGilvray, [Kootenai] which tranquilly pursues its course. The quarries and forests appear inexhaustible; and having remarked large pieces of coal along the river, I am convinced that this fossil could be abundantly procured. What would this now solitary and desolate land become, under the fostering hand of civilization? Indeed, the entire tract of the Skalzi seems awaiting the benign influence of a civilized people. Great quantities of lead are found on the surface of the earth; and from the appearance of its superior quality, we are led to believe there may be some mixture of silver.

Poor, unfortunate Indians! they trample on treasures, unconscious of their worth, and content themselves with the fishery and chase. When these resources fail, they subsist upon roots and herbs; whilst they eye, with tranquil surprise, the white man examining the shining pebbles of their territory. Ah! they would tremble, indeed, could they learn the history of those numerous and ill-fated tribes that have been swept from their land, to make place for Christians who have made the poor Indians the victims of their rapacity.

After a few days' journey we arrived at the Prairie du Tabac, the usual abode of the Kootenais. Their camp is situated in an immense and delightful valley, bounded by two eminences, which, from their gentle and regular declivity, covered with smooth pebbles, appear to have originally bounded an extensive lake.

On my arrival, I found about thirty lodges of Kootenais; hunger had forced many families to cross the great mountain. They came in quest of the buffalo, elk, antelope and stag. I was received with every demonstration of joy and filial affection by those who remained in the lodges. They hailed me with a long and boisterous discharge of musketry. Several showed me their journal, consisting of a square stick on which they had notched the number of days and

weeks elapsed since I abode with them in the neighborhood of the great Flathead lake. They had computed forty-one months and some days.

Mr. Berland had exerted his zeal to maintain the Kootenais and their brethren in the good dispositions in which I had the consolation of finding them. Since my last visit they have followed, to the very letter, all they remembered of my recommendations. I was obliged to decide some controversial points, which they had misinterpreted or misapprehended. They habitually assembled for morning and evening prayer, continued the practice of singing canticles in French and Flathead, and faithfully observed the Sabbath precept.

On the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary I sang high mass, thus taking spiritual possession of this land, which was now for the first time trodden by a minister of the Most High. I administered the sacrament of baptism to 105 persons, among whom were twenty adults. An imposing ceremony terminated the exercises of the day. Amidst a general salute from the camp, a large cross was elevated. The chiefs, at the head of their tribe, advanced and prostrated themselves before that sacred ensign, which speaks so eloquently of the love of a Man-God, who came to redeem a fallen race. At the foot of that sacred emblem, they loudly offered their hearts to him who has declared himself our master and the divine pastor of souls. This station bears the name of the Holy Heart of Mary. One of our Fathers will soon visit the two branches of this tribe.

Though these poor people were much in want of food, they pressed me to remain some days amongst them, whilst they listened with avidity to my instructions relative to their future conduct. After my departure they divided into small bands to go in search of provisions among the defiles of the mountains.

On the 30th of August I bade adieu to the Kootenais. Two young men of their tribe offered to conduct me to the

country of the Blackfeet, and a third Indian, an expert hunter and good interpreter, completed the number of my little escort. I then journeyed on toward the sources of the Columbia. The country we traversed was highly picturesque and agreeably diversified by beautiful prairies, from which poured forth spicy odors of flower and shrub and fresh spirit-elating breezes, smiling valleys and lakes, surrounded by hoary and solemn pines, gracefully waving their flexible branches. We also crossed magnificent dark Alpine forests, where the sound of the axe has never resounded; they are watered by streams which impetuously rush over savage crags and precipices from the range of mountains on the right. This stupendous chain appears like some impregnable barrier of colossal firmness. From Tobacco Prairie to the sources of the Columbia, we found a fine practicable trail.

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All hail! Majestic Rock — the home,  
Where many a wand'rer yet shall come,  
Where God himself from his own heart,  
Shall health and peace and joy impart.<sup>8</sup>

### *Monseigneur.*<sup>9</sup>

The 4th of September, toward noon, I found myself at the source of the Columbia. I contemplated with admiration those rugged and gigantic mountains where the great river escapes — majestic, but impetuous even at its source; and in its vagrant course it is undoubtedly the most dangerous river on the western side of the American hemisphere. Two small lakes from four to five miles in length, formed by a number of springs and streams, are the reservoirs of its first waters.

<sup>8</sup> From Father De Smet's *Ode to the Rocky Mountains*, see p. 1354.

<sup>9</sup> Letter dated Source of the Columbia, September 9, 1845.

I pitched my tent on the banks of the first fork that brings in its feeble tribute, and which we behold rushing with impetuosity over the inaccessible rocks that present themselves on the right. What sublime rocks! How varied in shape and figure! The fantastic in every form, the attractive, the ludicrous and the sublime, present themselves simultaneously to the view; and by borrowing ever so little the aid of the imagination, we behold rising before our astonished eyes castles of by-gone chivalry, with their many-embattled towers — fortresses, surrounded by their walls and bulwarks — palaces with their domes — and, in fine, cathedrals with their lofty spires.

On arriving at the two lakes, I saw them covered with swarms of aquatic birds — coots, ducks, water-fowl, cormorants, bustards, cranes and swans; whilst beneath the tranquil water lay shoals of salmon in a state of exhaustion. At the entrance of the second lake, in a rather shallow and narrow place, I saw them pass in great numbers, cut and mutilated, after their long watery pilgrimage among the rapids, cataracts, valleys and falls; they continue this uninterrupted procession during weeks and months. Perhaps I shall scarcely be believed when I affirm that the salmon fish are quarrelsome. I witnessed with surprise the sharp and vengeful bites they mutually inflicted. These two lakes form an immense tomb, for they there die in such numbers as frequently to infect the whole surrounding atmosphere.

In the absence of man, the grey, [grizzly] black and brown bear, the wolf, the eagle and the vulture assemble in crowds at this season of the year. They fish their prey on the banks of the river and at the entrance of the lakes — claws, teeth and bills serving them instead of hooks and darts. From thence, when the snow begins to fall, the bears, plump and fat, resume the road back to their dens in the thick of the forests and hollows of rocks, there to pass the four sad wintry months in complete indolence, with no other pastime or occupation than that of sucking their four paws.

If we may credit the Indians, each paw occupies the bear for one moon, (a month) and the task accomplished, he turns on the other side and begins to suck the second, and so on with the rest.

I will here mention, *en passant*, that all the hunters and Indians remark that it is a very uncommon incident for a female bear to be killed when with young, and notwithstanding they are killed in all seasons of the year. Where they go — what becomes of them during the period they carry their young — is a problem yet to be solved by our mountain hunters.

When emigration, accompanied by industry, the arts and sciences, shall have penetrated into the numberless valleys of the Rocky Mountains, the source of the Columbia will prove a very important point. The climate is delightful; the extremes of heat and cold are seldom known. The snow disappears as fast as it falls; the laborious hand that would till these valleys would be repaid a hundredfold. Innumerable herds could graze throughout the year in these meadows, where the sources and streams nurture a perpetual freshness and abundance. The hillocks and declivities of the mountains are generally studded with inexhaustible forests, in which the larch tree, pine of different species, cedar and cypress abound.

In the plain between the two lakes are beautiful springs, whose waters have reunited and formed a massive rock of soft sandy stone, which has the appearance of an immense congealed or petrified cascade. Their waters are soft and pellucid; and of the same temperature as the milk just drawn from the cow. The description given by Chandler of the famous fountain of Pambuk Kalesi, or the ancient Hierapolis of Asia Minor, in the valley of Meander, and of which Malte Brun makes mention, might be literally applied to the warm springs at the source of the Columbia. The prospect unfolded to our view was so wonderful, that an attempt to give even a faint idea of it would savor of romance, without

going beyond the limits of fact. We contemplated with an admiring gaze this vast slope, which from a distance had the appearance of chalk, and when nearer extends like an immense concreted cascade, its undulating surface resembling a body of water suddenly checked or indurated in its rapid course.

The first lake of the Columbia is two miles and a half distant from the river des Arcs-à-plats, and receives a portion of its waters during the great spring freshet. They are separated by a bottom land. The advantages nature seems to have bestowed on the source of the Columbia will render its geographical position very important at some future day. The magic hand of civilized man would transform it into a terrestrial paradise.

The Canadian! Into what part of the desert has he not penetrated? The monarch who rules at the source of the Columbia is an honest emigrant from St. Martin, in the district of Montreal, who has resided for twenty-six years in this desert. The skins of the rein and moose deer<sup>10</sup> are the materials of which his portable palace is composed; and to use his own expressions, he *embarks on horseback* with his wife and seven children, and *lands* wherever he pleases. Here no one disputes his right, and Polk and Peel, who are now contending for the possession of his dominions, are as unknown to our carbineer as the two greatest powers of the moon. His sceptre is a beaver trap — his law a carbine — the one on his back, the other on his arm, he reviews his numerous furry subjects, the beaver, otter, muskrat, marten, fox, bear, wolf, the sheep and the white goat of the mountains, the black-tailed roe-buck, as well as its red-tailed relative, the stag, the rein and moose deer; some of which respect his sceptre — others submit to his law. He exacts and receives from them the tribute of flesh and skins. Encircled by so much grandeur, undisturbed proprietor of all the skyward palaces, the strongholds, the very last refuge

<sup>10</sup> Fr. caribou et orignal.

which nature has reared to preserve alive liberty in the earth — solitary lord of these majestic mountains, that elevate their icy summits even to the clouds — Morigeau (our Canadian) does not forget his duty as a Christian. Each day, morning and evening, he may be seen devoutly reciting his prayers midst his little family.

Many years had Morigeau ardently desired to see a priest; and when he learned that I was about to visit the source of the Columbia, he repaired thither in all haste to procure for his wife and children the signal grace of baptism. The feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, this favor was conferred on them, and also on the children of three Indian families who accompany him in his migrations. This was a solemn day for the desert! The august sacrifice of mass was offered; Morigeau devoutly approached the holy table — at the foot of the humble altar he received the nuptial benediction; and the mother, surrounded by her children and six<sup>11</sup> little Indians, was regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. In memory of so many benefits a large cross was erected in the plain, which from that time is called the Plain of the Nativity.

I cannot leave my good Canadian without making an honorable mention of his royal *cuisine à la sauvage*. The first dish he presented me contained two paws of a bear. In Africa, this ragout might have given some alarm; in effect, it bears a striking resemblance to the feet of a certain race. A roast porcupine next made its appearance, accompanied by a moose's muzzle, which had been boiling all night. The latter I found delicious. Finally the great kettle, containing a sort of hotch-potch or salmagundi, was placed in the midst of the guests, and each one helped himself according to his taste; there was the choice back-fat of the buffalo-cow, venison, cutlets, beavers' tails, quail, rabbits, dumplings and a substantial broth.

<sup>11</sup> Fr. ten.

“—— Here

Poplars and birch trees ever quivering played,  
 And nodding cedars formed a vagrant shade;  
 On whose high branches, waving with the storm,  
 The birds of broadest wings their mansion form;  
 The jay, the magpie, the loquacious crow,  
 And soar aloft and skim the deeps below.  
 Here limpid fountains from the clefts distil,  
 And every fountain forms a noisy rill,  
 In mazy windings wand'ring down the hill.”— *Pope*.

*Monseigneur*:<sup>12</sup>

We bade adieu to the Morigeau family on the 9th, and to their companions of the chase, the Shooswaps. We quitted the upper valley of the Columbia by a small foot-path, which soon conducted us to a narrow mountain defile,<sup>13</sup> where the light of day almost vanished from view amidst the huge, bold barriers of colossal rocks. The grand, the sublime, the beautiful, here form the most singular and fantastic combinations. Though gray is the prevailing color, we find an immense rock of porphyry, or white-veined granite. Here and there, from the fissures of the rock, or wherever there is a handful of dust, the heavy and immortal pine enroots itself, adding its gloomy verdure to the variegated hues of the torpid rocks. These circuitous paths often present the most ravishing and picturesque vistas; surrounded by colossal walls, the greatest diversity and most beautiful scenery in nature is spread out before the eye,

<sup>12</sup> Letter dated Foot of the Cross of Peace, September 15, 1845.

<sup>13</sup> “In 1845, while trying to reach the summit of the Rocky Mountains and cross it to reach the Blackfoot country, I left the upper lakes of the Columbia by a narrow valley along the bank of a great torrent, between two lofty chains of mountains. This valley and mountain stream bear the name of ‘the place where the old man lied.’ I learned from my guides that the Indians speak of the place with horror to their children, as of an accursed land, and inspire them with an aversion for lying. They assured me that when the savages traverse this ‘Liar’s Valley,’ they observe profound silence.”— Letter written in July, 1855.

where the spruce and cedar rise majestically in these venerable woods, the graceful poplar waves on high its emerald plumes and fights its battles with the howling storm, whilst over the precipitous and jagged rocks the scarcely-waving pine fills the brown shade with religious awe. The birch springs from an earth carpeted with moss, and shines like magnificent silver columns, supporting diadems of golden autumnal leaves, amidst the redolent purple-berried juniper and azure turpentine of these humid dells and forests.

After a day's journey through these primeval scenes, we reached the banks of the river *Arce-à-plats*, where innumerable torrents rush headlong with a thousand mazes from the mountain's brow, and in their union form this noble river. From afar is heard the deafening and continuous sound of its own dashings, as it traverses a rocky bed with extraordinary rapidity. We crossed the river in order to attempt the passage of another defile, still more wonderful, where the waters of the *Vermillion* have forced an opening. Here, everything strikes the eye; all is wild sublimity in this profound but turbulent solitude. Projecting mountains rise like holy towers where man might commune with the sky — terrible precipices hang in fragments overhead — the astounding noise of the deep-tongued waves, in their unconfined flow, resembles that of the angry tempest, sweeping wild and free, like the spirit of liberty. Now the breaking waves play low upon the rock-ribbed beach, and madly plunge into an abyss — anon it returns foaming to its sedgy bed, apparently sporting with the sedges for diversion — falling from slope to slope, from cascade to cascade, passing in its course a long train of rapids — now concealing itself under the tufted foliage of cedar and pine — again pouring its brilliant and crystalline waters into a capacious basin, as if to take breath before quitting the ravine, and finally precipitating its wandering course with renovated vigor.

From this almost impenetrable forest issues a harmonious

sound. 'Tis the whistling or lowing of the noble stag, calling its companion. The moose, the most vigilant of animals, gives the signal of alarm. He has heard the cracking branch — he has inhaled the hunter's deadly breath[?]; a confused noise is heard from the mountain; the sportsman raises his eager eye to its summit, and scans a flock of reindeer perched upon the snow; they are started at the approach of man; in an instant they are lost among the inaccessible pinnacles, the

“Palaces where Nature thrones  
Sublimity in icy halls.”

We often catch a glimpse of the graceful forms and nimble feats of the roe-bucks, as they caper and gallop, or tarry an instant to look around with their lancet ears distended to catch every sound; these wild forest stragglers resume their course, and finally penetrate into the sombre forest. Flocks of wild goats gambol carelessly and tranquilly beside herds of mountain sheep above overhanging precipices and peaked rocks, chequered by patches of snow, far beyond the reach of human footsteps.

A monstrous animal, the grey [grizzly] bear, which replaces on our mountains the African lion, is not content with growling and menacing the intrepid venturer, who dares infringe on his cavernous dominions, but grinds his teeth, expressive of his rage. Suddenly, a well-aimed gunshot forces him to make a lowly reverence; the formidable beast rolls in the dust, biting the sand saturated with his blood, and expires.

The ordinary music of the desert is the shrill cry of the panther, and the howling of the wolf. The diminutive mountain hare, six inches high,<sup>14</sup> and whose biography has not yet found a place in natural history, amuses itself amidst the stony rubbish, and exhibits wonderful activity; whilst

<sup>14</sup> Long? Fr. qui n'a pas plus de 6 pouces.

his neighbor, the lubberly porcupine, clambers up, seats himself upon a branching cypress and gnaws the bark. He views the eager huntsman with a careless and indifferent air, unconscious that his tender flesh is regarded as a most delicious morsel. The industrious beaver, like a wary sentinel, warns his family of man's approach by striking the water with his tail. The muskrat, or musquash, plunges immediately into the water. The otter quits his sports and slides upon his belly among the reeds — the timid squirrel leaps from bough to bough, until it reaches the topmost shade of the cypress; the marten jumps from tree to tree, and buries itself in the foliage — the whistler<sup>15</sup> and weasel repair to their respective domiciles — a precipitous flight alone saves the fox his rich silvery *pelisse* — the badger, or ground-hog, too remote from his dwelling, digs the sandy soil and buries himself alive, to avoid pursuit — his magnificent skin is destined to adorn the loins of an Indian — it requires the joint efforts of two men to force<sup>16</sup> him from his hiding place, and to kill him.

The evening previous to our egression from the blind mazes of this tangled wood, our eyes were recreated by a ravishing scene. When it presents itself after a disastrous combat, the spectacle consoles the afflicted heart of the savage warrior. From the mountain's top we contemplated the "dance of the manitous or spirits, and the glorious entrance of departed champions into the country of souls." Vast columns of light varying in splendor appeared to divert and balance themselves in the heavens — some of perpendicular form; others resembling undulatory waves; now concealing, now exhibiting themselves under diversified aspects until the entire hemisphere seemed brilliantly illuminated. All these masses united at the zenith, and then separated under a variety of forms.

<sup>15</sup> Siffleur; elsewhere defined as "a species of mountain rat."

<sup>16</sup> Fr. *arracher*.

Mysterious, solemn, cold and clear,  
 Their steps majestic rise,  
 Like barriers round this earthly sphere,  
 Like gates of Paradise.  
 Well may imagination faint  
 Before your sacred blaze,  
 And baffled science fail to paint  
 The source of heaven-lit rays.<sup>17</sup>

The aurora borealis is a phenomenon which I always contemplate with mingled admiration and pleasure. All that is seen, all that is heard in this unfathomable solitude, is both agreeable and instructive. It strikes, captivates and elevates the mind toward the Author of nature. *Mirabilia opera Domini!*

After much fatigue, labor and admiration, on the 15th we traversed the high lands separating the waters of Oregon from those of the south branch of the Saskatchewan, or the ancient Bourbon river, so called before the Canadian conquest by the British. It is the largest tributary of the [lake] Winnipeg, which flows into Hudson Bay by the river Nelson, 58° north latitude.

The Christian's standard, the cross, has been reared at the source of these two rivers: may it be a sign of salvation and peace to all the scattered and itinerant tribes east and west of these gigantic and lurid mountains.

On the cypress which serves for constructing the cross, the eagle, emblem of the Indian warrior, perches himself. The huntsman aims — the noble bird lies prostrate, and even in his fall, seems to retain his kingly pride. It so forcibly recalls to memory the beautiful lines of the illustrious Campbell, that I quote them in full:

Fallen as he is, the king of birds still seems  
 Like royalty in ruins. Though his eyes  
 Are shut, that looked undazzled on the sun,  
 He was the sultan of the sky, and earth

<sup>17</sup> Park Benjamin.

Paid tribute to his eyrie. It was perched  
 Higher than human conqueror ever built  
 His bannered fort. \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* He clove the adverse storm  
 And cuffed it with his wings. He stopped his flight  
 As easily as the Arab reins his steed,  
 And stood at pleasure 'neath heaven's zenith, like  
 A lamp suspended from its azure dome;  
 Whilst underneath him the world's mountains lay  
 Like mole-hills, and her streams like lucid threads.

We breakfasted on the bank of a limpid lake at the base of the "Cross of Peace," from whence I have the honor of dating my letter, and of giving you the renewed assurance of my profound respect and veneration; recommending to your fervent prayers, in a special manner, this vast desert, which contains so many precious souls still buried in the shades of death.

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"Here bloomy meads with vivid greens are crown'd,  
 And glowing violets throw sweet odors round."

*Monseigneur.*<sup>18</sup>

By a steep declivity we entered a rich valley, agreeably diversified by enameled meads, magnificent forests, and lakes — in which the salmon-trout so abound, that in a few minutes we procured sufficient for an excellent repast. The valley is bounded on either side by a succession of picturesque rocks, whose lofty summits, rising in the form of pyramids, lose themselves in the clouds. The far-famed Egyptian monuments of Cheops and Cephren dwindle into nought before this gigantic architectural cliff of nature. The natural pyramids of the Rocky Mountains seem to deride the artificial skill of man; they serve as a resting place for the clouds that come hither to seek repose, and to encircle their

<sup>18</sup> Letter dated Camp of the Assiniboins, September 26, 1845.

giant brows. The Lord's omnipotent hand has laid the foundations — he has permitted the elements to form them, and in every age they proclaim his power and glory!

We emerged from this delightful valley on the 18th of September, after a three days' excursion, and recommenced our mountainous peregrination, which presented nothing but obstacles and contusions, both to men and horses. For the space of six hours we were compelled to trace our route across fragments of broken rocks, through an extensive and parched forest, and where millions of half-consumed trees lay extended in every direction. Not a trace of vegetation remained, and never had I contemplated so dismal and destructive a conflagration!

We reached the Bow or Askow river in the evening, and pitched our solitary tent upon the shore. Here we discovered some vestiges of a savage party. Five days previous, nine lodges of Indians had encamped upon the very spot. We made a careful search, and my guides imagined they were the formidable Blackfeet! We, the same day, saw two smokes at the extremity of the plain over which these barbarians had traveled. My companions seemed to hesitate, as we drew near the vicinity of these fearful Blackfeet. They recounted to me their inauspicious dreams, and wished to deter me from proceeding. One said: "I saw myself devoured by a wild bear;" another, "I saw ravens and vultures, (ill-omened birds) hovering over the head of our Father;" a third saw a bloody spectacle. I gave them, in my turn, the history of one of my sentries, the archetype of vigilance, courage and simplicity.

"Midst the dark horrors of the sable night  
(No idle dream I tell nor fancy's strain)  
Thrice rose the red man's shade upon my sight,  
Thrice vanished into dusky air again.  
With courage high my panting bosom swells,  
Onward I rushed upon the threatening foe,  
When, hark! Horrific rise the spectre's yells  
He points the steel and aims the fatal blow;

Guard, sentinel! to arms! to arms! to arms!  
 Indians! Indians! my voice swelled loud and deep:  
 The camp is roused at dread of my alarms,  
 They wake and find — *that I am sound asleep!*<sup>19</sup>

They were greatly amused at the recital of his imaginary fancies, and seemed to understand how little import I attached to such visions. “Happen what may,” said they, “we shall never quit our Father until we see him in a place of safety.” This was precisely what I desired. I could not,

<sup>19</sup> This episode and the above lines composed in honor of it were evidently favorites with Father De Smet. He was fond of working them into his letters, and he, or some of his polyglot friends, put the rhymes into various languages. We give two versions:

Tempus erat, quo densa tenebrarum agmina terram  
 Invadunt, et nox infudit praecordia somnos.  
 Ecce autem medium tenebris, exhorreo dictu!  
 Terribilis mihi silvicularum occurrit imago!  
 Ter rapidis volitans alis, repetitque fugitque  
 Umbra. Tumente animo sub pectore fortis in hostem  
 Irruo, vel potius trepidans visu irruere opto;  
 Cum subito tremulis pennis hasta umbra minante  
 Advolat ut condat crudele in pectore ferrum.  
 Loca tenens animo constanti, arma, arma! clamabam!  
 Magna lustra sonant voce! Indicus, Indicus ecce!  
 Miscentur subito pavitantia murmure castra,  
 Excussi somno, currunt quo voce vocati.  
 Obstupuere! gravis mea somnus membra tenebat!

\* \* \* \* \*

De grouwzaem middernacht was nauwelyk geslagen,  
 Toen, en 'k bied u de waerheid aen,  
 Shaks en tot drymael toe myn eigen oogen zaegen  
 De schim van eenen Indiaen.  
 Vol moed, ik loop er op, gewapend met myn degen;  
 Maer ziet, ver van te zyn vervaerd,  
 Het schroomelyke spook kooft my stoutmoedig tegen,  
 En heft op my zyn naekte zwaerd.  
 De vrees springt my naer 't hert; ik roop als half verslonden,  
 Moord, moord! de duivel, d'Indiaen!  
 Ontwekt 't volk kooft ter hulp, en heeft m'in slaep gevonden:—  
 Zoo ben ik dit gevaer ontgaen.

however, deceive myself. I had finally entered a land, the theatre of so many sanguinary scenes. I was now on the very confines of these barbarous people, from which, possibly, I should never return! It not unfrequently happens that in their unbridled fury when they hear some relative has been killed, the Blackfeet dispatch the first stranger they meet, scalp him — and then abandon to the wolves and dogs the palpitating limbs of the unfortunate victim of their vengeance, hatred and superstition. I declare to you, I was beset by a thousand disquietudes concerning the fate that awaited me. Poor nature! this timid and fragile *meus homo* is sometimes terrified. He would wish to look back and listen to dreams. My longing desires repeated incessantly — *Advance!* I placed my whole confidence in God — the prayers of so many fervent souls encouraged and re-animating me; I resolved not to be deterred by an uncertain danger. The Lord can, when he pleases, mollify these pitiless and ferocious hearts. The salvation of souls is at stake, and the preservation of the Mission of St. Mary's depends on my proceeding; for there the incursions of the Blackfeet are very frequent. What consideration could deter me from a project which my heart had cherished, since my first visit among the mountains?

The 19th and 20th, we followed the tracks of our unknown predecessors, and they appeared more and more recent. I dispatched my two guides to reconnoitre, and ascertain whom we were so closely pursuing. One of them returned the same evening, with the news that he had found a small camp of Assiniboins of the Forest; that they had been well received; that a disease reigned in the camp, of which two had lately died, and that they expressed great desire to see the Black-robe. The following morning we joined them, and journeyed several days in company.

The Assiniboins of the Forest do not amount to more than fifty lodges or families, divided into several bands. They are seldom seen in the plains; the forest is their element, and

they are renowned huntsmen and warriors. They travel over the mountains and through the woods, over the different forks and branches of the sources of the Saskatchewan and Athabasca. Agriculture is unknown to this tribe; they subsist exclusively on small animals, such as bighorns, goats, bucks; but especially on the porcupine, which swarms in this region. When pressed by hunger, they have recourse to roots, seeds and the inner bark of the cypress tree. They own few horses, and perform all their journeys on foot.

Their hunters set out early in the morning, kill all the game they meet, and suspend it to the trees as they pass along — their poor wives, or rather their slaves, often bearing two children on their backs and dragging several more after them, tardily follow their husbands and collect what game the latter have killed. They had a long file of famished dogs, loaded with their little provisions, etc. Every family has a band of six to twelve of these animals, and each dog carries from thirty to fifty pounds weight. They are the most wretched animals in existence; from their tender-hearted masters and mistresses they receive more bastinados than morsels, consequently they are the most adroit and incorrigible rogues to be found in the forest. Every evening we find it necessary to hang all our property upon the trees, beyond the reach of these voracious dogs. We are even compelled to barricade ourselves within our tents at night, and surround them with boughs of trees; for whatever is of leather, or whatever has pertained to a living being, these crafty rogues bear away and devour. You will say I have little charity for these poor brutes — but be not astonished. One fine evening having neglected the ordinary precaution of blocking up the entrance of my tent, I next morning found myself without shoes — with a collarless cassock — and minus one leg to my *culottes de peau!* One of the chiefs of this little camp recounted to me, that last winter one of his nation, having been reduced to extreme famine, (and such cases are not rare) had eaten suc-

cessively his wife and four children. The monster then fled into the desert, and he has never been heard of since.

The Oregon missionary, Reverend Mr. Bolduc, related in his journal that at Akena, one of the Gambier Isles,<sup>20</sup> he saw an old dame, who, having had eight husbands, had eaten three of them, during a time of famine. I add this last fact to give you a reverse to the above horrible picture.

The Assiniboins have the reputation of being irascible, jealous and fond of babbling; in consequence of these bad qualities, battles and murders are not unfrequent among them, and of course continual divisions. Every evening I gave them instruction by means of an interpreter. They appeared docile, though somewhat timorous: for they had frequently been visited by persons who defamed both priests and religion. I rendered all the little services in my power to their invalids, baptized six children and an old man<sup>21</sup> who expired two days after; he was interred with all the funeral ceremonies and prayers of the Church.

Cleanliness is a virtue which has no place in the Indian catalogue of domestic or personal duties. The Assiniboins are filthy beyond conception; they surpass all their neighbors in this unenvied qualification. They are devoured by vermin, which they, in turn, consume. A savage, whom I playfully reprehended for his cruelty to these little invertebral insects, saying, "Are you not ashamed to bite those

<sup>20</sup> A Polynesian group.

<sup>21</sup> *Missionary work among the Assiniboins.*—Father Palladino says, somewhat vaguely, of the Assiniboins and Grosventres, "Father De Smet, and after him Father Point, were the first who did missionary work among these Indians." A detachment of Assiniboins accompanied Father De Smet for some distance in the summer of 1851, on the way to the Grand Council, and he took a special interest in one of their chiefs called Fool Bear. No baptisms are mentioned, however. In 1866 Father De Smet baptized a number of Assiniboin children at Fort Union; see pp. 857 and 883. Father Giorda baptized certain Grosventre children in 1862, and Father Grassi some Assiniboins in 1879. The Mission of St. Paul's was established, with Government approval, among them in 1885.

poor little beasts?" Answered me: "They bit me first; I have a right to be revenged." Through complacency, I one day overcame natural disgust and assisted at their porcupine feast. I beheld the Indians carve the meat on their leathern shirts, highly polished with grease — filthy, and swarming with vermin; they had disrobed themselves, for the purpose of providing a tablecloth! They dried their hands in their hair — this is their only towel — and as the porcupine has naturally a strong and offensive odor, one can hardly endure the fragrance of those who feast upon its flesh and besmear themselves with its oil.

A good old woman, whose face was anointed with blood of the porcupine, (the Indians' mourning weeds) presented me a wooden platter filled with soup; the horn spoon destined for my use was dirty and covered with grease; she had the complaisance to apply it to the broad side of her tongue, before putting it into my unsavory broth.

If a bit of dried meat, or any other provision is in need of being cleansed, the dainty cook fills her mouth with water and spurts it with her whole force upon the fated object. A certain dish, which is considered a prime delicacy among the Indians, is prepared in a most singular manner, and they are entitled to a patent for the happy faculty of invention. The whole process belongs exclusively to the female department. They commence by rubbing their hands with grease, and collecting in them the blood of the animal, which they boil with water; finally, they fill the kettle with fat and hashed meat. But — hashed with the teeth! Often half a dozen old women are occupied in this mincing operation for hours; mouthful after mouthful is masticated, and thus passes from the mouth into the cauldron, to compose the choice ragout of the Rocky Mountains. Add to this, by way of an exquisite dessert, an immense dish of crusts, composed of pulverized ants, grasshoppers and locusts, that had been dried in the sun, and you may then be able to form some idea of Assiniboin luxury.

The American porcupine, the *Hystrix dorsata*, is called by modern zoologists the prickly beaver. In fact there is great similarity between the two species in size and form, and both inhabit the same region. The porcupine, like the beaver, has a double peltry or fur; the first is long and soft; the second is still softer, and greatly resembles down or felt. They both have two long sharp, strong tusks at the extremity of the jaw-bone. The Flatheads affirm that the porcupine and beaver are brothers, and relate that anciently they abode together; but that, having frequently been discovered by their enemies, through the indolence, idleness and extreme aversion of the porcupines for the water, the beavers met in council and unanimously agreed upon a separation. The latter availed themselves of a fine day and invited their spiny brethren to accompany them in a long ramble, among the cypress and juniper of the forest. The indolent and heedless porcupines, having copiously regaled themselves with the savory buds of the one and the tender rind of the other, extended their weary limbs upon the verdant moss and were soon lost in profound sleep. This was the anticipated moment for the wily beavers to bid a final adieu to their porcupine relatives.

The Assiniboins inhabiting the plains are far more numerous than their forest brethren. They number about 600<sup>22</sup> lodges; they own a greater number of horses, and the men, in general, are more robust and of a commanding stature. They are more expert in thieving, are greater toppers, and are perpetually at war. They hunt the buffalo in the great plains between the Saskatchewan, the Red river, Missouri and Yellowstone.

The Crows, Blackfeet, Aricaras and Sioux are their most inveterate enemies. They speak nearly the same language as the Sioux, and have the same origin.

<sup>22</sup> Fr. 300.

*Monseigneur.*<sup>23</sup>

The last few days we journeyed with the little Assiniboin camp, the aspect of the country offered nothing very interesting. We passed from valley to valley between two high chains of adamantine mountains, whose slopes are here and there ornamented with mounds of perpetual snow. A beautiful crystalline fountain issues from the centre of a perpendicular rock about 500 feet high, and then pours its waters over the plain in foam and mist.

The 27th we separated from the Assiniboins; the path conducted us through a thick forest of cypress; I am told this is the last — *Deo Gratias!* These belts of tall firs are very numerous, and form great obstacles and barriers to land communications between the east and west of the mountains. I have a little word of advice to give all who wish to visit these latitudes. At the entrance of each thick forest, one should render himself as slender, as short and as contracted as possible, imitating the different evolutions in all encounters of an intoxicated cavalier, but with skill and presence of mind. I mean to say, he should know how to balance himself — cling to the saddle in every form, to avoid the numerous branches that intercept his passage, ever ready to tear him into pieces, and flay his face and hands. Notwithstanding these precautions, it is rare to escape without paying tribute in some manner to the ungracious forest. I one day found myself in a singular and critical position: in attempting to pass under a tree that inclined across the path, I perceived a small branch in form of a hook, which threatened me. The first impulse was to extend myself upon the neck of my horse. Unavailing precaution! It caught me by the collar of my surtout, the horse still continuing his pace. Behold me suspended in the air — struggling like a fish at the end of a hook. Several respectable pieces of my coat floated, in all probability, a long time in the forest, as an undeniable proof of my having paid toll in

<sup>23</sup> Dated Rocky Mountain House, October 5, 1845.

passing through it. A crushed and torn hat — an eye black and blue — two deep scratches on the cheek, would, in a civilized country, have given me the appearance rather of a bully issuing from the Black Forest, than of a missionary.

To render a bad forest superlatively so, a great fall of snow is necessary. This special favor was lavished upon us in this last passage. Woe to the first pedestrians! The branches groan under the burden of their wintry shroud, and seem to present the motto: "*Si tangas, frangas!*" and assuredly, at each rubbing of the hat, the least touching of the arm or leg, a deluge of snow showers down upon the shivering cavalier and horse. Immediately the branch rises proudly as if in derision. On such occasions, there is nothing better to be done than to form a rear guard, and walk in the track of the predecessor.

In pursuing our route, the 27th, on one of the branches of the river "a la Biche,"<sup>24</sup> (Red Deer on the maps), we remarked several sulphurous fountains, which furnish great quantities of sulphur, and a coal mine, apparently very abundant.

I here beg the favor of a short digression from my subject. Coal abounds east of the Rocky Mountains, on the borders of the Missouri and Yellowstone, on the Saskatchewan and Athabasca. Saltpetre is found in abundance, and iron is not scarce in many parts of the mountains. I have already spoken of lead in the country of the Kootenais, the name of the Copper Mine river in the north indicates its riches; bars [probably not right] of this precious metal are discovered among the rocks bordering the river. Rock salt is found in powder, and very plentiful in the Snake country.

The valley is picturesque and variegated; flocks of sheep and goats contribute to beautify the scenery. We find many tracks of the bears and buffaloes; on seeing the latter my party became animated; for the buffaloes' flesh is, without

<sup>24</sup> Fr. *Rivière aux Daims*.

contradiction, the most delicate of these regions. One is never tired of it. Hitherto, the animals of the mountains had abundantly satisfied our necessities, for the huntsmen killed no less than eighteen pieces, without counting the fowl and fish which are so plentiful in this country. The same evening the remainder of our provisions was consumed, and a buffalo chase was proposed for the following day. One of the sportsmen set out early, and at breakfast time we perceived him coming, with a round fat cow; immediately the ribs, tripes, etc., honored the fire with their presence. The rest of the day was spent in seeking fresh provisions.

The 30th we continued our route through the valley, where a rivulet of clear water meanders. It is similar to all the other valleys west of the mountains, agreeably diversified with meadows, lakes and forests — the valley widens in proportion as one descends — the rocky banks disappear — the mountains decrease and appear insensibly to commingle with one another. Some are covered with forests even to their tops, others present cones, elevated ramparts, covered with rich verdure.

The 4th of October, after having traversed the great chain of mountains nineteen days in pursuit of the Blackfeet, we entered the vast plain — this ocean of prairies, inhabited by a multitude of roving savages, buried in the deepest superstition. The Blackfeet, Crows, Snakes, Aricaras, Assiniboins of the Plains, the Cheyennes, Comanches, Sioux, Omahas, Otoes, Pawnees, Kansas, Sauks, Iowas, etc., etc., are without pastors! We hope that divine Providence has not deferred the epoch when the darkness now overwhelming these immense regions will give place to the beneficial light of the gospel; that worthy and zealous pastors will come to guide in the way of salvation these poor and unhappy children of the desert, who, during so many ages, have groaned under the dominion of the devil, and among whom the war-song and the cry of carnage never ceased to

resound. There, we hope, will reign in their turn peace and Christian charity, and the fragrance of divine love and praise ascend to the only true God.

The worthy Bishop of Juliopolis has established his See on Red river, a tributary of Lake Winnipeg, amidst the possessions of the Anglo-Indians. Already two of his zealous missionaries, Reverend Messrs. Thibault and Bourassa, have penetrated to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains, whilst other indefatigable priests have been employed for many years in extending the kingdom of God in this immense diocese. The population of Red river is about 5,500 souls, of whom 3,175 are Catholics. There are 730 houses inhabited. I had the honor of receiving a letter from the Reverend Mr. Thibault on my arrival in this latitude. He says:

“From the month of March to September last, I have labored among the mountain tribes; they are well disposed to embrace the faith. I cannot give you a better idea of these people than by comparing them to the Flatheads. I have baptized more than 500 children and adults in the course of this mission. As soon as I find the opportunity of a water conveyance, I shall continue my labors among these good savages, and extend my route as far as Mackenzie river. A rich harvest would be there found for many laborers in the sacred ministry, for this nation is populous and occupies a vast extent of country, without including several other nations I visited this summer. ‘Come, then, to us,’ said they, ‘we, also, shall be happy to learn the joyful news you have brought our brethren of the mountains; we are to be pitied, not knowing the word of the Great Spirit; be, therefore, charitable to us—come, teach us the way of salvation—we will listen to it.’

“My fellow-laborer, Bourassa, set out in September, to announce the gospel to the Indians residing near the Peace river.”

From Lake St. Anne, or Manitou, the ordinary residence of these two gentlemen, they extend their apostolic course

to the different tribes on the rivers Athabasca and MacKenzie, Peace river and Slave lake.

Within the limits, as far as they have traveled, are found the Blackfeet, Crees, Assiniboins of the Forest and of the Mountains, Beaver Hunters, Flatside Dogs, Slaves and Deer Skins. (It is by these names that the different Indians are known among the whites and travelers.)

The great Indian district of the United States is (if I may say so) the only one deprived of spiritual succor and the means of salvation. It contains several hundred thousand savages. This vast territory is bounded on the northwest by the Anglo-Indian possessions — east by the Western States — south by Texas and Mexico — west by the Rocky Mountains. It contains many forts or trading-houses, in which the greater number of persons employed are Canadian Catholics or French creoles. The principal of these forts are, Fort des Corbeaux, or Alexander, on the Yellowstone, Fort Laramie, on a branch of the river Platte, Fort Osage, on the river of the same name — Fort Pied-noir, or Lewis, near the mouth of the river Maria, Fort Union near the mouth of the Yellowstone, Fort Berthold, Fort Mandan or Clark near the mouth of the little Missouri, Fort Pierre, Fort Lookout and Fort Vermillion at the mouth of this river, the other trading-houses among the Potawatomies of Council Bluffs and of Bellevue for the Otoes and Pawnees. The great depository which furnishes these forts and receives all the peltry and buffalo hides is kept at St. Louis.

Monseigneur Loras, Bishop of Dubuque, has sent two priests among the Sioux on the river St. Peter, a tributary of the Mississippi.

The Society of Jesus has a mission among the Potawatomies on Sugar creek, a tributary of the Osage river. The ladies of the Sacred Heart have an establishment here. During the summer of 1841 the late distinguished Madame de Galitzin, provincial of the Order in America, visited this section of the country for the purpose of founding among these rude savages a house of education, in which the hap-

less children of the desert now enjoy the benefit of being instructed in the Christian faith, of being formed to habits of industry and cleanliness, and acquiring a knowledge of those branches of education suited to their condition. These two missions are located near the frontiers of the States, and are the only ones in this immense territory.

The Upper Missouri and all its branches as far as the Rocky Mountains are without spiritual assistance. But wherever the priest has passed in traversing the desert, he has been received with open arms among the tribes that rove over this country — alas! so long a time forgotten and neglected!

The evening of the 4th of October, I arrived at the Fort des Montagnes,<sup>25</sup> belonging to the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, without having accomplished the object of my travels and my desires, namely, meeting the Blackfeet. The respectable and worthy commander of the fort, Mr. Harriote, [J. E.]<sup>26</sup> an Englishman by birth, is among the most amiable gentlemen I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He invited and received into his hospitable fort the poor missionary, a Catholic and stranger, with a politeness and cordiality truly fraternal. These qualities characterize all the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company, and although Mr. Harriote is a Protestant, he encouraged me to visit the Blackfeet, who would soon arrive at the fort, promising me to use all his influence with these barbarians to obtain me a friendly reception. He has resided many years among them, nevertheless he did not conceal from me that I should soon be exposed to great dangers. “We are in the hands of God — may his holy will be done.”

<sup>25</sup> Rocky Mountain House; a prominent trading post of the Hudson Bay Company, built in 1805 by Simon Fraser at the eastern end of what was called the Rocky Mountain Portage, the carrying-place at the principal bend of Peace river.

<sup>26</sup> See letter from Harriote, p. 1559.

*Monseigneur.*<sup>27</sup>

A band of about twenty Crees, encamped near the fort, came to shake hands cordially with me on my arrival. The joy my presence seemed to occasion them proved that I was not the first priest they had seen. Moreover, the greater number wore medals and crosses. They informed me that they too had been so fortunate as to have a Black-gown, (Reverend Mr. Thibault) who taught them to know and serve the Great Spirit — and baptized all their little children, with the exception of three, who were absent on the occasion. These children were brought to me — I administered baptism to them, and at the same time to one of my guides, a Kootenai. During their stay at the fort, I gave them instructions every evening.

Two Crees, of the same band and family, father and son, had been killed in a quarrel two years since. The presence of the offending party for the first time since the perpetration of the murder, rekindled in the others that spirit of rancor and revenge so natural to an Indian's breast, and which only the Christian religion is able to mollify, and there was every reason to apprehend fatal consequences from the old feud.

With the approbation of Mr. Harriote, I assembled them all in the fort; the Governor himself had the kindness to be my interpreter. He made a long discourse on the obligation and necessity of their coming to a sincere reconciliation; the matter was discussed in form, each Indian giving his opinion in turn, with a good sense and moderation that surprised me. I had the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing the calumet passed around the assembly. This is the solemn pledge of peace — the token of Indian brotherhood — the most formal declaration of the entire forgetfulness and sincere pardon of an injury.

The Cree nation is considered very powerful, and numbers more than 600 wigwams. This tribe is one of the

<sup>27</sup> Letter dated Fort of the Mountains, October 30, 1845.

most formidable enemies of the Blackfeet, and continually encroaches upon the territory of its adversaries. The preceding year they carried off more than 600 horses. The actual [present] limit of the country they traverse extends from the bases of the Rocky Mountains, between the two forks of the Saskatchewan, some distance beyond the Red river. Their turbulent and warlike spirit and rapacity for plunder, especially for horses, are among the great obstacles which retard the conversion of the larger portion of this tribe.

The example of their brethren, who listen with docility to the exhortations of their zealous and indefatigable missionary will, we trust, produce fruit in due time and be imitated by the entire nation.

To give you an idea of their military discipline, and of the profound superstition in which these unfortunate people are still immersed, I will relate to you some of their proceedings.

The Crees were meditating a deadly stroke upon the Blackfeet, and for this purpose they collected all their ready forces, amounting to more than 800 warriors. Before setting out in quest of the enemy, every species of juggling and witchcraft imaginable was resorted to in order to secure the success of the expedition. It was decided that a young girl, with a bandage over her eyes, should be placed at the head of the Indian army, and thus blindfold serve as a guide to the combatants. In case of success the heroine was destined to become the bride of the most valiant. According to the Oracle, none but the great chief himself had the privilege of shoeing or unshoeing her.

This concluded, they began their march, intoxicated with confidence and presumption, following this extraordinary guide over hills and valleys, ravines, marshes and swamps. One day she would direct her steps toward the north, the next to the south or west — the point of the compass mattered nought — the manitou of war was supposed to guide her, and day after day the infatuated Crees continued to

follow the steps of the blindfolded Indian. They had already penetrated far into the plain, when they were discovered by a party of seven Blackfeet. The latter might easily have escaped under favor of the night, but the partisan, or Blackfoot chieftain, a man of undaunted courage, determined to oppose this formidable force. With the aid of their poniards they made themselves a hollow, in which they took shelter.

The following morning at daybreak the 800 champions surrounded their feeble prey. The first who pressed forward to dislodge them were driven back several times, with the loss of seven men and fifteen wounded. The failure of ammunition at length put the Blackfeet at the mercy of the Crees, by whom they were cut into pieces. The first engagement threw the victorious party into consternation, for they too numbered seven killed and fifteen wounded. They removed the bandage from the young heroine's eyes, and the manitous whom they had thought so propitious being now judged unfavorable to their warlike projects, the warriors hastily dispersed, taking the nearest road back to their respective homes.

The Crees have a rather singular custom among them, and one contrary to the practice of other nations. They stain the faces of the warriors who fall in combat, clothe them in their richest ornaments, and thus expose them in places conspicuous to their enemies. They place near them their guns, bows and arrows, to show that in their death there was no cause for compassion; and this they do purposely that they may be cut into pieces — an opportunity which an enemy never suffers to escape, and which a Cree warrior regards as the height of his wishes. Other nations, on the contrary, carry off and conceal their dead, to save them from the rapacity and insults of their enemies, and to be cut into pieces, even after death, is considered a great dishonor among them. The Crees and Sauteux [Saulteurs] are allies, and considerably intermixed by reciprocal mariages. The latter form the most numerous and widely-

diffused nation of these parts. They are to be met with from the confines of lower Canada even to the foot of the Rocky Mountains.

This is also the nation of medicine, *par excellence*: — for all pretend to be jugglers, and sell their medicines and quackery at a high price. In consequence of this attachment to their old superstitious practices, and the great profits they derive from them, the seeds of the divine word have hitherto fallen upon an unprofitable soil. An adroit impostor who has been baptized, and who is, moreover, a great medicine man among them, has contributed not a little to keep his nation in an obstinate ignorance, which makes them prefer the shades of paganism to the beneficial light of the gospel. Falling one day into a species of lethargy, it was thought that he had expired — but recovering after a short time, he assembled his band and told them the following story :

“Immediately after my death I repaired to the heaven of the white men, or Christians, where the Great Spirit and Jesus Christ dwell, but they refused to admit me on account of my red skin. I then went to the country where the souls of my ancestors are, and there, too, I was refused admittance on account of my baptism. I am, therefore, come back to this earth, to renounce the promises I made in baptism and resume my medicine bag, hoping to expiate my former error by my sincere attachment to jugglery, and thus render myself once more worthy of the beautiful and spacious plains of that happy and delightful abode, where reigns everlasting spring, and numberless flocks and herds afford an abundant and everlasting subsistence to all the inhabitants of the Indian Elysium.”

This extravagant report, which has been circulated throughout the whole tribe and among the neighboring people, has greatly contributed to attach them to their old customs and superstitions — and make them turn a deaf ear to the instructions of their worthy missionary.

The Reverend Mr. Belcourt has, notwithstanding, suc-

ceeded in converting a considerable number, whom he has persuaded to renounce the illusions of their brethren, and united in a village at St. Paul des Sauteurs, where they persevere fervently in all the practices of religion. The number of faithful, in this spot, increases every year.

At length, on the 25th of October, thirteen Blackfeet arrived at the fort. They saluted me with a politeness truly *à la sauvage*, rough and cordial at the same time. The old chief embraced me quite tenderly when he learned the object of my journey. He was distinguished from his companions by his dress — being decorated from head to foot with eagles' plumes, and wearing a large breast-plate in form of medallion, figured with blue, as a mark of distinction. He was profuse in attention to me, making me sit beside him whenever I went to visit them in their apartment — shaking me affectionately by the hand and amicably rubbing my cheeks with his scarlet-painted nose. He cordially invited me to his country, offering to be my guide and to introduce me to his people. The difference of physiognomy existing between the Indians inhabiting the plains east of the mountains and those near the upper waters of the Columbia is as great as the stupendous rocks that separate them. The latter are remarkable for their mildness, serenity and affability, while cruelty, craft — the word blood, in fine, may be read in every feature of the Blackfoot Indian. Scarcely could an innocent hand be found in the whole nation. The Lord, however, is all-powerful — “from stones he can raise up children unto Abraham,” and, full of confidence in the treasures of his holy grace and mercies, I purpose to visit them. The essential point and my greatest perplexity is, to find a good and faithful interpreter; the only one now at the fort is a suspicious and dangerous man: all his employers speak ill of him — he makes fine promises. In the alternative of either renouncing my project or being of some utility to those poor unfortunate Indians, I accept his services. May he be faithful to his engagement!

*Monseigneur.*<sup>28</sup>

The year 1845 will be a memorable epoch in the sad annals of the Blackfeet nation. It has been a year of disasters. In two skirmishes with the Flatheads and Kalispels, they lost twenty-one warriors. The Crees have carried off a great number of their horses, and twenty-seven scalps. The Crows have struck them a mortal blow — fifty families, the entire band of Little Robe,<sup>29</sup> were lately massacred, and 160 women and children have been led into captivity.

What a dreadful state for these unfortunate beings! In the first excitement, numbers of the captives were sacrificed by the Crow squaws to the *manes* of their husbands, brothers, fathers or children. The survivors were condemned to slavery. The scarlet fever shortly after made its appearance in the conquerors' camp, and spread rapidly from lodge to lodge. The Crows thought themselves attacked by smallpox. The Blackfeet had suffered from this scourge a few years previous, and thousands had fallen victims to it.

The Crows, therefore, interrogated their captives to know by what means they had escaped death. A dark spirit of vengeance seized the latter; they counseled cold baths as the only efficacious remedy to stop the progress of the disease. The sick immediately plunged into the water, and mothers went to the river to bathe their little children. Some plunged into their graves; others gave up their last sigh while endeavoring to reach the shore — and disconsolate mothers returned to their cabins with dead or expiring infants in their arms. Cries of despair succeeded to the shouts of victory — desolation and mourning replaced the

<sup>28</sup> Letter dated Fort of the Mountains, October 30, 1845.

<sup>29</sup> This statement no doubt explains the disappearance from contemporary Indian literature of the Little Robe band of Blackfeet. Catlin spoke them in the early 30's, but they seem to have been little known, and were probably not a large band.

fanatic, barbarous joy of the Crows. Death visited every tent of the victorious camp!

The tradition of man's creation and future immortality exists among most of the Indian tribes I have had the opportunity of visiting and questioning on the subject. Those who live by fishery suppose their heaven to be full of lakes and rivers, abounding in fish, whose enchanted shores and verdant islands produce fruits of every kind.

I encamped on the banks of two lakes to the east of the Rocky Mountains, which the Blackfeet call the *lake of men* and the *lake of women*. According to their traditions, from the first of these issued a band of young men, handsome and vigorous, but poor and naked. From the second an equal number of ingenious and industrious young women, who constructed and made themselves clothing. They lived a long time separate and unknown to each other, until the great Manitou Wizâkéschak, or Old Man, (still invoked by the Blackfeet) visited them; he taught them to slay animals in the chase, but they were yet ignorant of the art of dressing skins. Wizâkéschak conducted them to the dwelling of the young women, who received their guests with dances and cries of joy. Shoes, leggings, shirts and robes, garnished with porcupine quills, were presented them. Each young woman selected her guest, and presented him with a dish of seeds and roots; the men, desiring to contribute to the entertainment, sought the chase, and returned loaded with game. The women liked the meat, and admired the strength, skill and bravery of the hunters. The men were equally delighted with the beauty of their trappings, and admired the industry of the women. Both parties began to think they were necessary to each other, and Wizâkéschak presided at the solemn compact in which it was agreed that the men should become the protectors of the women, and provide all necessaries for their support: whilst all other family cares would devolve upon the women.

The Blackfeet squaws often bitterly complain of the astonishing folly of their mothers in accepting such a proposi-

tion; declaring, if the compact were yet to be made, they would arrange it in a very different manner.

The Blackfoot heaven is a country composed of sandy hills, which they call *Espatchekié*, whither the soul goes after death, and where they will find again all the animals they have killed and all the horses they have stolen. The buffalo, hind and stag abound there. In speaking of the departed, a Blackfoot never says such a one is dead, but *Espatchekié êtapo* — to the Sand Hills he is gone!

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*Monsieur*.<sup>30</sup>

I arranged with the thirteen Blackfeet of whom I spoke in my last, that they should precede me among their people, to pave the way, as it were, and prepare their minds to receive me. Everything seemed propitious, and accordingly on the 31st of October I took leave of the friendly Mr. Harriote. I was accompanied by my interpreter and a young half-breed of the Cree nation, who had charge of the horses. Notwithstanding his good resolutions, my interpreter did not long leave me in doubt of his true character. The wolf cannot remain concealed beneath the sheep's clothing. He became sullen and peevish, always choosing to halt in those places where the poor beasts of burden could find nothing to eat after their long day's journey. The farther we penetrated into the desert, the more and more sulky he became. It was impossible to draw from him a single pleasant word, and his incoherent mutterings and allusions became subjects of serious apprehension. Thus passed ten sorrowful days; my last two nights had been nights of anxiety and watching; when fortunately I encountered a Canadian, with his Indian family, on whom I prevailed to remain with me some time. The following day my interpreter disappeared. Although my situation was extremely precarious in this dan-

<sup>30</sup> Letter dated Fort Augustus on the Saskatchewan, December 31, 1845.

gerous desert, without interpreter, without guide, yet I could not but feel relieved of a heavy burden by the departure of this sullen and gloomy fellow. Had it not been for my opportune meeting with the Canadian, it is probable I should not have escaped his deep-laid scheme against me.

Friends and travelers in the desert, beware of choosing for your guide or placing your dependence on a morose half-breed, especially if he has been for some time a resident among the savages; for such men usually possess all the faults of the white man joined to the cunning of the Indian. I determined to continue my route in search of a Canadian interpreter,<sup>31</sup> who we understood was some distance in ad-

<sup>31</sup> June 12, 1850, Father De Smet wrote from St. Louis (in French), as follows, to one "Monsieur Monroe, Pays des Pieds-noirs," who is evidently the one here in question:

I cannot let Mr. Harvey start without giving you a sign of life and some little news of myself. Though I have never had the good fortune to see you, I have heard your name often, and I have always heard you so well spoken of that I have for years past considered you a dear and personally familiar friend. Mr. Harvey has been kind enough to come and see me; he has told me a great deal about you, and I have listened with the greatest pleasure. Ah! how much I regret that I was so hindered by circumstances, and that I did not meet you on my first visit to the Blackfoot territory. I traveled through a labyrinth of narrow valleys, on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, and plains that seemed endless — always searching for you — I looked forward to doing immense good among the savages, through you. I followed your traces to your encampment at the foot of the Quilloux mountain, where I found the signs that you had left, evidently for my benefit — then I took up your trail with fresh courage, believing you to be very near; later a little misunderstanding on the part of my guides caused me to lose them, and we began wandering as chance might lead, to the point of discouragement. Then snow began to fall in great flakes and to cover the ground with a thick layer — and with it vanished my hope of finding you, that season, in some Blackfoot camp. So I deferred my visit to the following summer, and made my way in haste back to the plains, where the snow was not so deep, and so to Fort Augustus on the Saskatchewan. There again I expected you, but in vain, for two months. The worthy and respectable Messrs Rowan and Harriote, at this post, were very attentive to me, and I shall always be extremely grateful to them.

vance of us on the same road. For eight successive days we wandered on in that labyrinth of valleys, but in vain; although in the heart of their territory, neither the Canadian nor the Blackfeet were to be found. Large marauding parties of the Crees were beating the country at that time, and it appeared evident from the tracks that they had carried everything before them. It snowed without intermission during four days — our poor horses were nearly exhausted — my wallet contained nothing but crumbs — the passage from the east to the western side of the mountains was become impracticable, and I had no alternative but to repair to one of the forts of the Hudson Bay Company, and beg hospitality during the inclement season.

The entire region in the vicinity of the first eastern chain of the Rocky Mountains, serving as their base for thirty or sixty miles, is extremely fertile, abounding in forests, plains, prairies, lakes, streams and mineral springs. The

No doubt you would like to know whether I have entirely given up returning to the Indian country; whether I shall be seen again among the Blackfeet? This is my answer: I have not given it up at all — I desire ardently and with all the sincerity of my heart to see my friends the Blackfeet again, to find myself in the midst of their little children, whom I tenderly love, and of whom a great number have already been regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. \* \* \* What prevents my leaving St. Louis is this — I am filling a position which keeps me very much occupied, and there is no one to take my place — we have many churches, many colleges, many schools, in the States, and unfortunately there are too few of us for so great a task. I hope that other Fathers may soon come to us from Europe, and that then I can be released, and allowed the fulfilment of my desire, permission to tread once more the Indian soil. \* \* \* So you see that the enterprise is not abandoned, but rather postponed.

From John Rowand, Edmonton, December 3, 1845.

\* \* \* \* \*

Beware, my good sir, of your interpreter Bird. He *hates* everything connected with the French or Canadians. Munroe is not a bad sort of man, but I cannot recommend him as fit to interpret what you have to say to the natives. Munroe does well enough at a trading post and in the shop.

rivers and streams are innumerable, and on every side offer situations favorable for the construction of mills. The northern and southern branches of the Saskatchewan water the district I have traversed, for a distance of about 300 miles. Forests of pine, cypress, thorn, poplar and aspen trees, as well as others of different kinds, occupy a large portion of it, covering the declivities of the mountains and banks of the rivers.

These, ordinarily, take their rise in the highest chains, whence they issue in every direction like so many veins. The beds and sides of these rivers are pebbly, and their courses rapid, but as they recede from the mountains they widen and the currents lose something of their impetuosity. Their waters are usually very clear. In this climate wens are not unfrequent. The country would be capable of supporting a large population, and the soil is favorable for the produce of barley, corn, potatoes, peas and beans, which grow here as well as in the more southern countries.

Are these vast and innumerable fields of hay forever destined to be consumed by fire, or perish in the autumnal snows? How long shall these superb forests be the haunts of wild beasts? And these inexhaustible quarries, these abundant mines of coal, lead, sulphur, iron, copper and saltpetre — can it be that they are doomed to remain forever inactive? Not so — the day will come when some laboring hand will give them value: a strong, active and enterprising people are destined to fill this spacious void. The wild beasts will ere long give place to our domestic animals; flocks and herds will graze in the beautiful meadows that border the numberless mountains, hills, valleys and plains of this extensive region. A large portion of the surface of the country is covered with artificial lakes, formed by the beavers. On our way we had frequently occasion to remark, with wonder and admiration, the extent and height of their ingeniously constructed dams and solid lodges. These are remains of the admirable little republics, concerning which so many wonders have justly been recorded.

Not more than half a century ago, such was the number of beavers in this region, that a good hunter could kill 100 in a month's space.

I reached Fort Augustus<sup>32</sup> or Edmonton toward the close of the year. Its respectable commandant, the worthy Mr. Rowand, received me with all the tenderness of a father, and together with his inestimable [?] family, showed me every kindness and attention. Never shall I have it in my power to cancel the debt of gratitude I owe them. May heaven protect and repay them with its choice blessings; such is the most sincere prayer of a poor priest, who will ever remember them.

I must await a more favorable moment for visiting the Blackfeet. The skirmishing parties appear to be still scouring the country. The tidings which reach us concerning them tell only of plunder and bloodshed.

<sup>32</sup>Fort Edmonton, "New" Fort Augustus or Upper Fort des Prairies; a trading-post of the Northwest Company, established about 1798, succeeding a much older Fort Augustus some twenty miles below; site of the present Edmonton, Alberta, a town of several hundred inhabitants, having a railroad and electric lights and agricultural prospects; though still remaining the principal outlet for the furs of the north country.

## CHAPTER V.<sup>1</sup>

### RETURN FROM FORT AUGUSTUS TO THE MISSION.

Good Governor Rowand — Occupations of two months — Visits Lake St. Anne — Impatient to get away in spring — Northward by dog sled for nine days — The Athabasca country — A Catholic Indian with a large family — Fort Jasper and Colin Fraser — They all go out for meat — Mount De Smet — Terrific scenery — A mountain of ice — Meets the Hudson Bay Company's brigade — Old friends — Takes to snowshoes — Extreme suffering and exhaustion — The bright side of it — Comes to the Columbia and a feast — Down the river — Tragedies — Geography — Reaches Fort Colville — Father Nobili in New Caledonia.

Fort Jasper,<sup>2</sup> April 16, 1846.

*Monseigneur:*

**F**ORT EDMONTON or Augustus is the great emporium of the Hudson Bay Company in the districts of upper Saskatchewan and Athabasca: Forts Jasper, Assiniboin, Little Slave Lake, on the river Athabasca, Forts des Montagnes, Pitt, Carrollton, Cumberland, on the Saskatchewan, depend on it. The respectable and worthy Mr. Rowan,<sup>3</sup> Governor of this immense district, unites to all the amiable

<sup>1</sup> This chapter follows the English text of the *Oregon Missions*, and comprises Letters XIV, XV, XVI and XVII of that work (Letters XIII, XIV, XV and XVI, *Missions de l'Orègon*), published as letters to Bishop Hughes and to the Provincial of Missouri, Reverend J. C. Van de Velde, and dated as by footnotes inserted at the proper places.

<sup>2</sup> Jasper House or Jasper's House; a trading-post built about 1800, and said to have been named curiously for Jasper Hawes or House, clerk in charge.

<sup>3</sup> Probably John Rowand, who entered the service of the Northwest Company in 1800; or perhaps his son, Doctor Rowand, called "of Quebec," who was born at Fort Edmonton, educated abroad, and who accompanied Sir George Simpson, in his tour around the world in 1841, from Edmonton as far as Honolulu. See letters from Rowand, p. 1561.

and polite qualities of a perfect gentleman, those of a sincere and hospitable friend; his goodness and paternal tenderness render him a true patriarch amidst his charming and numerous family. He is esteemed and venerated by all the surrounding tribes, and though advanced in age, he possesses extraordinary activity.

The number of servants at Edmonton, including women and children, is about eighty. They form a well-regulated family. Besides a large garden, a field of potatoes and wheat, belonging to the establishment, the lakes, forests and plains of the neighborhood furnish provisions in abundance. On my arrival at the fort, the icehouse contained 30,000 white-fish, each weighing four pounds, and 500 buffaloes, the ordinary amount of the winter provisions. Such is the quantity of aquatic birds in the season, that sportsmen often send to the fort carts full of fowls. Eggs are picked up by thousands in the straw and reeds of the marshes.

The greater number of those employed being Catholics, I found sufficient occupation. Every morning I catechized the children and gave an instruction; in the evening, after the labors of the day, I recited the prayers for the honorable commander and his servants. I must acknowledge, to the credit of the inhabitants of Edmonton, that their assiduity and attention to religious duties and the kindness and respectful regard evinced for me, were a source of great consolation during my sojourn of two months among them. May God, who has granted them so liberally and plentifully the dews of the earth, enrich them likewise with those of heaven; such is the most sincere wish and prayer of a friend who will never forget them.

I visited Lake St. Anne, the ordinary residence of Messrs. Thibault and Bourassa; the latter gentleman was absent. The distance from the fort to the lake is about fifty miles. I mentioned this interesting mission in my preceding letters, and I will now say a word relative to the country. The surface of this region is flat for the most part, undulating in some places — diversified with forests and meadows, and

lakes teeming with fish. In Lake St. Anne alone were caught, last autumn, more than 70,000 white-fish, the most delicious of the kind; they are taken with the line at every season of the year.

Notwithstanding the rigor and duration of the winter in this northern region, the earth in general appears fertile; vegetation is so forward in the spring and summer, that potatoes, wheat and barley, together with other vegetables of Canada, come to maturity. Fall wheat would, in my judgment, yield better than spring wheat, which they sow at present. Lake St. Anne forms one of a chain of lakes; I counted eleven of them, which flow into the Saskatchewan by the little Sturgeon river. Innumerable republics of beavers formerly existed there; each lake, each marsh, each river, bears even to this day proofs of their labors. What I here say of beavers is applicable to almost all the Hudson territory. When the reindeer, buffalo and moose abounded, the Crees were then peaceful possessors; the animals have disappeared, and with them the ancient lords of the country. Scarcely do we meet with a solitary hut — but now and then the tracks of some large animal. Seventeen families of half-breeds, descendants of English Canadians and savages, have assembled and settled around their missionaries. The Crees have gained the buffalo plains, and they contend for them with the Blackfeet, whose mortal foes they have become.

In proportion as the rigors of winter began to give place to the cheering dawn of spring, simultaneously did my pulse beat to approach nearer the mountain, there to await a favorable opportunity to cross it, so that I might arrive as early as possible at the mission of St. Ignatius.

The 12th of March, I bade farewell to the respectable Rowand family and to all the servants of the fort. I was accompanied by three brave half-breeds, whom Mr. Thibault was so kind as to procure me. At this season the whole country lies buried in snow, and voyages are made in sledges drawn by dogs. Our provisions and baggage were con-

veyed in two of these sledges; the third, drawn by four dogs, was reserved for me. I found this mode of traveling quite a novelty; and on the glittering ice of the rivers and lakes, it was particularly convenient and agreeable. The third day we encamped near Black Eagle lake, which abounds in white-fish; on the 6th, we arrived at Fort Assiniboin, built in a meadow on the river Athabasca, where it is 233 fathoms broad, which breadth it seems to preserve more or less until it leaves the Rocky Mountains; its current is extremely rapid. In the spring it can be descended in three days from Fort Jasper to Fort Assiniboin, a distance of more than 300 miles. With our sledges we were nine days accomplishing the journey. The bed of the river is studded with islands, which, by their various positions and features, render the prospect very agreeable. Its shores are covered with thick forests of pine intersecting rocks and high hills which embellish and give a touch of the picturesque to the general monotony of the desert.

The principal branches are the Pembina, which measures 464 feet across — the river des Avirons, 128 feet; the river des Gens Libres, McLeod's Fork, and Baptist Berland river, are about eighty fathoms wide at their mouth. The rivers du Vieux, du Milieu, des Prairies and des Roches form beautiful currents. Lake Jasper, eight miles in length, is situated at the base of the first great mountain chain. The fort of the same name, and the second lake, are twenty miles higher, and in the heart of the mountains. The rivers Violin and Medicine on the southern side, and the Assiniboin on the northern, must be crossed to arrive there, and to reach the height of land at the Committee's Punch Bowl, we cross the rivers Maline, Gens de Colets, Miette and Trou, which we ascended to its source. The river Medicine mingles its waters with those of the north branch of the Saskatchewan; the Assiniboin and Gens de Colets with those of the Boucane, a tributary of Peace river. The waters of the Miette have their source upon the same height with some branches of the river Frazer, which crosses New Caledonia.

Some years since, the valleys and high forests of Athabasca were exclusively appropriated to the chase by the Assiniboins of the Forest: the scarcity of game forced them to quit their land — since their departure the animals have increased in an astonishing manner. In various places on the river, we saw ravages of the beavers which I should have taken for recent encampments of savages, so great a quantity of felled trees was there. Many wandering families of the Carrier tribe and Ashiganés or Sock Indians of New Caledonia, compelled by hunger, have quitted their country, traversed the east of the mountains, and now range the valleys of this region in quest of food. They nourish themselves with roots, and whatever they can catch; many of them have their teeth worn to the gums by the earth and sand they swallow with their nourishment. In winter they fare well: for then the moose, elk and reindeer are plentiful. The reindeer feed on a kind of white moss, and the paunch is considered delicious when the food is half digested. By way of a dainty morsel, the Indians pluck out the eyes of fish with the end of the fingers and swallow them raw, likewise the tripes with their whole contents, without further ceremony than placing them an instant on the coals, from thence into the omnibus or general reservoir, without even undergoing the operation of the jaws.

The Montagnès Indians inhabit the lower part of Athabasca, also the great lake of that name. The elk is very common, and the reindeer are found in large bands; the chase of the latter is both easy and singular. They regularly bend their course northward in autumn, and return toward the south in the spring. The Indians know their usual crossing-places over the lakes and rivers — and when the herd (often many hundreds in number) are in the water, and approach the opposite shore, the huntsmen leave their concealment, jump into their light canoes, and yell with all their strength to make them return to the centre; there they harass them, continually driving them from the shore, until the poor animals become exhausted; then begins the work

of carnage; they are killed without difficulty by daggers and darts, and it rarely happens that one effects his escape. In winter they snare them. They cover their huts and dress themselves with the skins of the reindeer. Lakes and marshes being so numerous in this country, swans, geese, bustards and ducks of various species, come hither in thousands during the spring and autumn. Then the savages travel over these marshy places on snow-shoes in quest of eggs, on which they mostly subsist during this season. Often squares of several acres are found covered with nests. White-fish, carp, dory, the large salmon trout and unknown fish, abound in all these lakes and rivers.

Two missionaries, a Father of the Order of Oblats of Marseilles and a Canadian priest, are on the way with the intention of penetrating into the interior of the country. The reception given to Mr. Thibault last summer by the Montagnès leaves little doubt of the happy results of this praiseworthy and holy enterprise. On the banks of Lake Jasper, we met an old Iroquois called Louis Kwaragkwanté, or Walking Sun, accompanied by his family, thirty-six in number. He has been forty years absent from his country, during which he has never seen a priest — has dwelt for the last thirty-four years in the forests of the Athabasca and on Peace river and subsisted by hunting and fishing. The good old man was overwhelmed with joy, and the children experienced a similar feeling with their father. I will give you the old man's words in English, on learning that I was a priest: "How glad I am to have come here, for I have not seen a priest for many years. To-day I behold a priest, as I did in my own country — my heart rejoices — wherever you go I shall follow you with my children — all will hear the word of prayer — all will have the happiness to receive baptism. Therefore my heart rejoices and is happy." The little Iroquois camp immediately set out to follow me to Fort Jasper. Most of them know their prayers in Iroquois. I remained fifteen days at the fort, instructing them in the duties of religion — after mass, on Easter Sunday, all were

regenerated in the waters of baptism, and seven marriages renewed and blessed. The number of baptized amounted to forty-four; among whom was the lady of Mr. [Colin] Fraser, (superintendent of the fort) and four of his children and two servants.

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*Monseigneur:*<sup>4</sup>

Provisions becoming scarce at the fort, and the large Iroquois family being encamped round about, resolved to remain until my departure, in order to assist at the instructions, we should have found ourselves in an embarrassing situation had not Mr. Fraser come to our relief, by proposing that we should leave the fort and accompany himself and family to the Lake of Islands, where we could subsist partly on fish. As the distance was not great, we accepted this invitation, and set out to the number of fifty-four persons and twenty dogs. I count the latter, because we were as much obliged to provide for them as for ourselves. A little note of the game killed by our hunters during the twenty-six days of our abode at this place will perhaps afford you some interest; at least, it will make you acquainted with the animals of the country, and prove that the mountaineers of Athabasca are blessed with good appetites. Animals killed — twelve moose deer, two reindeer, thirty large mountain sheep or bighorn, two porcupines, 210 hares, one beaver, two muskrats, twenty-four bustards, 115 ducks, twenty-one pheasants, one snipe, one eagle, one owl; add to this from thirty to fifty fine white-fish every day and twenty trout, and then judge whether or not our people had reason to complain; yet we heard them constantly saying: "How hard living is here? The country is miserably poor — we are obliged to fast."

As the time approached at which I was to leave my new children in Christ, they earnestly begged leave to honor me,

<sup>4</sup> Letter dated Foot of the Great Glacier, at the Source of the Athabasca, May 6, 1845.

before my departure, with a little ceremony to prove their attachment, and that their children might always remember him who had first put them in the way of life. Each one discharged his musket in the direction of the highest mountain, a large rock jutting out in the form of a sugar loaf, and with three loud hurrahs gave it my name. This mountain is more than 14,000 feet high, and is covered with perpetual snow.

On the 25th of April I bade farewell to my kind friend Mr. Fraser and his amiable children, who had treated me with every mark of attention and kindness.

All the men in the camp insisted on honoring me with an escort, and accompanied me a distance of ten miles. Here we separated, each one affectionately pressed my hand — mutual good wishes were exchanged — tears flowed on both sides — and I was left with my companions in one of those wild ravines where nothing meets the eye, but ranges of gloomy mountains rising on all sides, like so many impassable barriers.

Upper Athabasca is, unquestionably, the most elevated part of North America. All its mountains are prodigious, and their rocky and snow-capt summits seem to lose themselves in the clouds. At this season, immense masses of snow often become loosened and roll down the mountains' sides with a terrific noise, that resounds throughout these quiet solitudes like distant thunder — so irresistible is the velocity of their descent, that they frequently carry with them enormous fragments of rock, and force a passage through the dense forests which cover the base of the mountain. Every day, and often every hour, the noise of ten avalanches descending at once breaks upon the ear; on every side we see them precipitated with a frightful rapidity.

From these mountains, the majestic rivers of the north, the upper branch of the Saskatchewan, the two great forks of the Mackenzie, the Athabasca and Peace rivers, the Columbia, and Frazer at the west, derive the greater part of their waters.

In the neighborhood of the Miette river, we fell in with one of those poor families of *Porteurs* or "Itoaten," of New Caledonia, of whom I spoke to you in a former letter; they saw us from the summit of the mountain that overlooks the valley through which we were passing, and perceiving we were whites, hastened down to meet us. They appeared overjoyed at seeing us, particularly when they discovered that I was a Black-gown; they crowded around me and begged me to baptize them, with an earnestness that affected me to tears, though I was able to grant this favor to only two of their smallest children; the others required instruction, but there was no interpreter. I exhorted them to return soon to their own country, where they would find a Black-gown (Father Nobili) who would instruct them. They made the sign of the cross, recited some prayers in their own language, and sang several hymns with great apparent devotion. The condition of these people seemed very wretched; they had no clothes but a few rags and some pieces of skins, and yet, notwithstanding their extreme poverty, they laid at my feet the mountain sheep they had just killed.

The history of a poor young woman, one of their number, deserves to be recorded, as it affords a lively picture of the dangers and afflictions to which these unfortunate people are often exposed. When she was about fifteen years of age, her father, mother and brothers, together with another family of her nation, were surprised in the wood by a party of Assiniboin warriors and massacred without mercy. At the time of this horrid scene, the young girl was in another part of the forest with her two sisters, both younger than herself; they succeeded in concealing themselves, and thus escaped falling into the hands of the assassins. The hapless orphan wandered about the desert for two years, without meeting any human being, without knife or hatchet, making her fire by means of two pieces of wood, subsisting on roots, wild fruits and porcupines. In winter she sheltered herself in the abandoned den of a bear. The sisters left her

at the end of the first year, since which they have never been heard of. At length, after three years, she was fortunately found by a good Canadian, who took her home, provided her with comfortable food and clothing, and six months after restored her to her tribe.

We resumed our journey the following day, and arrived about nightfall on the banks of the Athabasca, at the spot called the Great Crossing.<sup>5</sup> Here we deviated from the course of that river, and entered the valley of the Fourche du Trou.

As we approached the highlands the snow became much deeper. On the 1st of May we reached the great Bature, which has all the appearance of a lake just drained of its waters. Here we pitched our tent to await the arrival of the Columbia brigade, who always pass by this route on the way to Canada and York Factory. Not far from the place of our encampment, we found a new object of surprise and admiration; an immense mountain of pure ice, 1,500 feet high, enclosed between two enormous rocks. So great is the transparency of this beautiful ice, that we can easily distinguish objects in it to the depth of more than six feet. One would say by its appearance, that in some sudden and extraordinary swell of the river immense icebergs had been forced between these rocks, and had there piled themselves on one another so as to form this magnificent glacier. What gives some color of probability to this conjecture is that on the other side of the glacier there is a large lake of considerable elevation. From the base of this gigantic iceberg the river du Trou takes its rise.

The brigade from the Columbia have just arrived. I must, therefore, take this present opportunity, the only one I shall have for a long time, of sending you my letters, and before closing this, permit me again to recommend myself and all my missions to your holy sacrifices and fervent prayers.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Grande Traverse.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial.*<sup>6</sup>

By my last letter to the distinguished Prelate of New York, in which I gave my different missionary excursions during 1845-6 among several tribes of the Rocky Mountains, you have learned that I had arrived at the base of the Great Glacier, the source of the river du Trou, which is a tributary of the Athabasca, or Elk river.<sup>7</sup> I will now give to your Reverence the continuation of my arduous and difficult journey across the main chain of the Rocky Mountains and down the Columbia, on my return to my dear brethren in Oregon.

Toward the evening of the 6th of May, [1846] we discovered, at the distance of about three miles, the approach of two men on snow-shoes, who soon joined us. They proved to be the forerunners of the English brigade<sup>8</sup> which, in the spring of each year, goes from Fort Vancouver to York Factory, situated at the mouth of the river Nelson, near 58° north latitude. In the morning my little train was ready early; we proceeded, and after a march of eight miles we fell in with the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company. The time of our reunion was short, but interesting and joyful. The great melting of the snow had already begun, and we were both obliged to be on the alert

<sup>6</sup> Letter dated Boat Encampment on the Columbia, May 10, 1846.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. rivière à la Biche.

<sup>8</sup> The actual work of collecting furs necessarily took place at points remote from civilized markets. The American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company operated in the far-off country on the headwaters of the Missouri and to the south. Their base of supplies was at St. Louis. The Hudson Bay Company operated in the valleys of the Columbia and its tributaries. Their base of supplies was at Montreal. Annually, expeditions traveled the long distances from these bases to the fields of operation, carrying out supplies and bringing back the furs, and transacting the year's business between the companies and the partners in the field. The American Fur Company conducted its expeditions by steamboat; the Rocky Mountain Fur Company overland by caravan; and the Hudson Bay Company by lake, river, and land by what they called the annual "brigade."

to cross in due time the now swelling rapids and rivers. The news between travelers who meet in the mountains is quickly conveyed to one another. The leaders of the company were my old friends, Mr. Ermatinger, of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company, and two distinguished officers of the English army, Captains Ward and Vavasour,<sup>9</sup> whom I had the honor of entertaining last year at the Great Kalispel lake. Captain Ward is the gentleman who had the kindness to take charge of my letters for the States and for Europe.

Fifteen Indians of the Kettle Falls tribe accompanied him. Many of them had scaled the mountains with 150 pounds weight upon their backs. The worthy Captain Ward spoke many things in praise of them. He admired their honesty and civility, and above all, their sincere piety and great regularity in their religious duties; every morning and evening they were seen retiring a short distance from the camp, to sing one or two hymns and join in common prayer. "I hope," added the Captain, "I shall never forget the example which these poor but good savages have given me. During the time that they were with me I was much struck by their becoming deportment, and I have never seen more sincere piety than they exhibited."

The gentlemen of the English brigade were now at the end of their chief difficulties and troubles. They gladly threw away their snow-shoes to take horses for four days; at Fort Jasper they were to enter skiffs, to go to Fort Assiniboine, on the river Athabasca. There they would take horse again for Fort Edmonton or Augustus, on the Saskatchewan. They descend this river, which runs into Lake Winnipeg, traverse the lake, and finally follow the Nelson river

<sup>9</sup>"Two commissioners, Warre and Vavasour, were sent out in 1845 by the Hudson Bay Company to examine into McLoughlin's policy and proceedings, and the state of the country generally. They dispatched their report without showing it to McLoughlin, which hurt his feelings greatly, implying as it did that his conduct had been unfavorably criticised by the commissioners."—*Bancroft*.

to its mouth, the end of their long annual journey across the American continent. For myself, I had to try the snow-shoes for the first time in my life; by means of them, I had to ascend those frightful ramparts, the barriers of snow, which separate the Atlantic world from the Pacific Ocean and the waters of the Arctic. I have in my previous letters already told you that this is probably the most elevated point of the Rocky Mountains, where five great rivers derive their sources, viz. : the north branch of the Saskatchewan, flowing into Lake Winnipeg, the Athabasca and Peace rivers, uniting and flowing into Great Slave lake, which is discharged into the Northern ocean, by the Mackenzie, the most solitary of rivers. From the bosom of these mountains the Columbia and Frazer rivers also derive water from a thousand fountains and streams.

We had now seventy miles to travel on snow-shoes, in order to reach the boat encampment on the banks of the Columbia. We proposed to accomplish this in two days and a half. The most worthy and excellent Messrs. Rowand and Harriote, whose kindness at the Rocky Mountain House and Fort Augustus I shall ever acknowledge, were of opinion that it was absolutely impossible for me to accomplish the journey, on account of my corpulency, and they wished to dissuade me from attempting it. However, I thought I could remedy the inconvenience of my surplus weight by a vigorous fast of thirty days, which I cheerfully underwent. I found myself much lighter indeed, and started off somewhat encouraged, over snow sixteen feet deep. We went in single file — alternately ascending and descending — sometimes across plains piled up with avalanches — sometimes over lakes and rapids buried deeply under the snow — now on the side of a deep mountain — then across a forest of cypress trees, of which we could only see the tops. I cannot tell you the number of my summersets. I continually found myself embarrassed by my snow-shoes, or entangled in some branch of a tree. When falling, I spread my arms before me, as one naturally would do, to break the violence

of the fall; and upon deep snow the danger is not great — though I was often half buried, when I required the assistance of my companions, which was always tendered with great kindness and good humor.

We made thirty miles the first day, and then made preparations to encamp. Some pine trees were cut down and stripped of their branches, and these being laid on the snow furnished us with a bed, whilst a fire was lighted on a floor of green logs. To sleep thus — under the beautiful canopy of the starry heavens — in the midst of lofty and steep mountains — among sweet murmuring rills and roaring torrents — may appear strange to you, and to all lovers of rooms, rendered comfortable by stoves and feathers; but you may think differently after having come and breathed the pure air of the mountains, where in return coughs and colds are unknown. Come and make the trial, and you will say that it is easy to forget the fatigues of a long march, and find contentment and joy even upon the spread branches of pines, on which, after the Indian fashion, we extended ourselves and slept, wrapped up in buffalo robes.

The next morning we commenced the descent of what is called the Great Western Slope.<sup>10</sup> This took us five hours. The whole slope is covered with gigantic cedars and with pine trees of different species. Woe to the man who happens to have a heavy body or to make a false step. I say this from experience; for many times I found myself twenty or thirty feet from the point of my departure — happy indeed if, in the fall, I did not violently strike my head against the trunk of some great tree.

At the foot of the mountain an obstacle of a new kind presented itself. All the barriers of snow, the innumerable banks, which had stopped the water of the streams, lakes and torrents, were broken up during the night, and swelled considerably the Great Portage river, which is scarce more than a mile wide, and it meanders so remarkably in this

<sup>10</sup> Fr. La Grande Côte de l'Ouest.

straight valley, down which we traveled for a day and a half, that we were compelled to cross the said river not less than forty times, with the water frequently up to our shoulders. So great is its impetuosity, that we were obliged mutually to support ourselves to prevent being carried away by the current. We marched in our wet clothes during the rest of our sad route. The long soaking, joined to my great fatigue, swelled my limbs. All the nails of my feet came off, and the blood stained my moccasins or Indian shoes. Four times I found my strength gone, and I should certainly have perished in that frightful region if the courage and strength of my companions had not roused and aided me in my distress.

We saw "May-poles" all along the old encampments of the Portage. Each traveler who passes there for the first time selects his own. A young Canadian, with much kindness, dedicated one to me which was at least 120 feet in height, and which reared its lofty head above all the neighboring trees. Did I deserve it? He stripped it of all its branches, only leaving at the top a little crown; at the bottom my name and the date of the transit were written.

Moose, reindeer and mountain goats are frequently found in this region.

We left at last the valley of the Portage and passed through a thick and mountainous forest, where hoary pines lay prostrate by thousands — and where many a giant tree, in its full vigor, had been leveled to the ground by the raging tempest. On issuing from the forest, an extensive marsh presented itself, through which we had to plod, up to the knees in mud and water; this trouble was trifling compared to the past, and we were still more encouraged at the sight of a beautiful and verdant plain, where four reindeer were seen carousing, bouncing and jumping in the midst of plenty. No doubt they, as well as ourselves, had issued forth from the snowy and icy cliffs, and felt light-hearted and joyful at the delightful prospect of mountain and plain

at this season of the year. On approaching, a dozen guns were at once leveled against the innocent and timid creatures. I was pleased to observe, by the wonderful rapidity with which they used their legs, that no one had injured their noble and beautiful frames.

On the 10th, toward the middle of the day, we arrived at the Boat Encampment, on the bank of the Columbia, at the mouth of the Portage river. Those who have passed the Rocky Mountains at  $53^{\circ}$  of north latitude, during the great melting of the snows, know whether or not we merit the title of good travelers. It required all my strength to accomplish it, and I confess that I would not dare undertake it again.

After so many labors and dangers, we deserved a repast. Happily, we found at the encampment all the ingredients that were necessary for a feast — a bag of flour, a large ham, part of a reindeer, butter, cheese, sugar, and tea in abundance, which the gentlemen of the English brigade had charitably left behind. While some were employed calking and refitting the barge, others prepared the dinner; and in about an hour we found ourselves snugly seated and stretched out around the kettles and roasts, laughing and joking about the summersets on the mountains and the accidents on the Portage. I need not tell you that they described me as the most clumsy and awkward traveler in the band.

Three beautiful rivers unite at this place: the Columbia, coming from the southeast — the Portage river, from the northeast, and the Canoe river from the northwest. We were surrounded by a great number of magnificent mountains, covered with perpetual snow, and rising from twelve to sixteen thousand feet above the level of the ocean. The Hooker and the Brown are the highest, the latter measuring 16,000 feet.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial:*<sup>11</sup>

The Columbia at the Boat Encampment is 3,600 feet above the level of the sea. Having finished our meal, we launched the barge and rapidly descended the river, which was now swollen many feet above its usual level. Did not more serious avocations call him away, an admirer of nature would willingly linger in a region like this. The volcanic and basaltic islands — the range of picturesque mountains, whose bases came to bathe in the river, whilst their summits seemed to be struggling, in the giant efforts of the avalanche, to throw off the winding-sheet of winter, in order to give place to the new and beautiful verdure of the month of May, with its smiling and varied flowers — the thousand fountains which we could at one view behold, leaping out with soothing music from the shelves of perpendicular rocks bordering the river — all lent their aid to increase the beauty of the scenery of nature, which, in this region of the Columbia, seems to have put forth all her energy to display her grandeur and magnificence.

After some hours of descent we came to Martin's rapid, where a Canadian so called, together with his son, found a watery grave. Its roar is deafening, and the agitation of the water resembles that of a raging sea-storm. The whole bed of the river is here strewn with immense fragments of rocks. Guided by an expert Iroquois pilot, and aided with ten oars, the boat darted over the Great Rapids of the Columbia, dancing and leaping from wave to wave, with the rapidity of lightning.

At sunset we were at the Dalles<sup>12</sup> of the Dead. Here, in 1838, twelve unfortunate voyageurs were swallowed up in the river. For about two miles the waters are compressed between a range of perpendicular rocks, presenting innumerable crags, fissures and cliffs, through which the Co-

<sup>11</sup> Dated St. Paul's Station, near Colville, May 29, 1846.

<sup>12</sup> *Dalle* is an old French word, meaning a trough, and the name is given by the Canadian voyageurs to all contracted running waters, hemmed in by walls of rock.— *Author's Note.*

lumbia leaps with irresistible impetuosity, forming as it dashes along frightful whirlpools, where every passing object is swallowed and disappears. By means of two long ropes we dropped down our boat through the Dalle, and encamped for the night at its outlet.

On the 11th we continued our route at early dawn — the mountain scenery was hidden from our view, wrapped up in dense mist and fog, which were seen ascending in dense pillars, adding to the forming clouds above till the whole sky was overcast. Occasionally, as if to break upon the unusual monotony, would a fallow or reindeer be observed on the margin of the stream, or peeping with uplifted ears from a thicket, as the strange sound of oars or the Canadian song came stealing louder and louder upon them in their quiet abode — off they bounded, affrighted at the sight of men, so hateful, it appears, to the wild and timid creatures of the forest. In the course of this day we ran the place called the Little Dalles, and in the evening we encamped at the entrance of the Upper Lake.

This beautiful sheet of crystalline water, whilst the rising sun was tinting the tops of a thousand hills around, was most refreshing to the eye. It is about thirty miles long by four or five wide. Its borders are embellished by overhanging precipices and majestic peaks, which, rearing their white heads above the clouds, look down like venerable monarchs of the desert upon the great forests of pines and cedar surrounding the lake. The two highest peaks are called St. Peter and St. Paul.

Twenty Indian families, belonging to the station of St. Peter, were found encamped on the borders of the lake. I gladly accepted their invitation to visit them. It was the meeting of a father with his children, after ten months of absence and dangers. I dare say the joy was mutually sincere. The greater part of their tribe had been converted during the past year, at Kettle Falls. These families were absent at that time. I passed, therefore, several days among them, to instruct them in the duties and practices of religion.

They then received baptism, with all the marks of sincere piety and gratitude. Gregory, their chief, who had not ceased to exhort his people by word and example, had the happiness to receive baptism in 1838 from the hands of the Reverend Mr., now Archbishop, Blanchet. The worthy and respectable chief was now at the height of his joy, in seeing at last all his children brought under the standard of Jesus Christ. The tribe of these Lake Indians are a part of the Kettle Fall nation. They are very poor and subsist principally on fish and wild roots. As soon as we shall have more means at our disposal, we will supply them with implements of husbandry and with various seeds and roots, which I have no doubt will thrive well in their country; this will be a great assistance to these destitute people.

The second lake is about six miles distant from the first. It is of about the same length, but less wide. We passed under a perpendicular rock, where we beheld an innumerable number of arrows sticking out of the fissures. The Indians, when they ascend the lake, have a custom of lodging each an arrow into these crevices. The origin and cause of the custom is unknown to me. This is the reason why the first voyageurs called these lakes the Arrow lakes.

The mouth of the river McGilvray or Flatbow is near the outlet of the Lower Lake. It presents a beautiful situation for the establishment of a future reduction or mission, and I have already marked out a site for the construction of a church. About twenty miles lower, we passed the Flathead or Clark's river, which contributes largely to the Columbia. These two beautiful rivers derive a great portion of their waters from the same chain of the Rocky Mountains, from which a great number of the forks of the south branch of the Saskatchewan and of the Missouri are supplied. For a distance of about thirty miles from their junction with the Columbia are they obstructed by insurmountable falls and rapids. Among the many lakes connected with the Flathead river, three are very conspicuous, and measure from thirty to forty miles in length and from four

to six in width. Flathead lake receives a broad and beautiful stream, extending upward of 100 miles in a northwestern direction, through a most delightful valley, and is supplied by considerable torrents, coming from a great cluster of mountains connected immediately with the main chain, in which a great number of lakes lie imbedded. Clark's Fork or Flathead river passes through Pend d'Oreille lake. Lake Roothaan [Priest lake] is situated in the Pend d'Oreille and Flatbow mountains, and discharges itself by the Black-gown river [Priest river] into the Clark, twenty miles below the Kalispel lake. These three lovely lakes are covered with islands. The St. Mary's, or Bitter Root river, from the southeast, is the greatest tributary of Clark's Fork and the chief residence of the Flatheads. All these waters contain an abundance of fish, especially trout. The geography of the head of Clark's Fork is little known, as appears from the maps, the southeast branch, or the St. Mary's river, being only a small tributary compared to the main stream, coming from the northwest, and passing through the great Flathead lake.

Our barge was in great danger in the Dalles, some miles above Colville. I had left it, to go on foot, to avoid the dangerous passage. The young boatmen, notwithstanding my remonstrances, thought they could pass in safety. A whirlpool suddenly arrested their course and threatened to bury them beneath its angry waters. Their redoubled efforts proved ineffectual — I saw them borne on with an irresistible force to the engulfing centre — the bow of the boat descended already into the abyss and filled! I was on my knees upon the rock which overhung this frightful spectacle, surrounded by several Indians — we implored the aid of heaven in favor of our poor comrades — they seemed to be evidently lost — when the whirlpool filled, and threw them from its bosom, as if reluctantly yielding up the prey which it had so tenaciously held. We all gave heartfelt thanks to Almighty God for having delivered them from a danger so imminent.

From the outlet of the Lower Lake of the Columbia to Fort Colville, the aspect of the country is highly picturesque and interesting. The whole section, on both sides of the river, is well supplied with rivulets and streams. The soil is rather light, but it affords fine grazing; the mountains are not high — the forests are open — the bottom lands present here and there beautiful groves — the surface of the soil yields an abundant and luxuriant grass. The Guyelpitog or Sioushwaps [Kettle] river comes in from the west in sight of Fort Colville.

Toward the end of the month of May I arrived at Fort Colville. I found the nation of Skoyelpi or Kettle Falls already baptized by the Reverend Father Hoeken, who had continued to instruct them after my departure in the month of August of last year. They had built, to my great surprise, a small frame church, so much the more beautiful and agreeable to my eyes, as being their first attempt at architecture, and the exclusive work of the Indians. With a laudable pride they conducted me, as in triumph, to the humble and new temple of the Lord, and in favor of that good people, and for their perseverance in the faith, I there offered the august sacrifice of the altar.

The arrival of the good Father Nobili at Colville filled us with great joy and consolation. He had made missionary excursions over the greatest portion of New Caledonia. Everywhere the Indian tribes received him with open arms, and took great care to bring their little children to be baptized. Having made a retreat of eight days in the Reduction of St. Ignatius, and after a month of repose and preparation for a second expedition, he returned with renewed zeal and fervor to his dear Caledonians, accompanied by several laborers, and supplied with a dozen horses, loaded with implements of agriculture and carpentry.

As a token of my sincere gratitude, and to let you know that we have friends and benefactors in Oregon, I must here state to your Reverence that Father Nobili and myself were most hospitably entertained during our stay at Fort Col-

ville. The kindness of the Honorable Mr. Lewes<sup>13</sup> and family I shall never forget. The attention shown Father Nobili in the trading posts of New Caledonia is beyond all praise. Truly and deservedly has Commodore Wilkes stated "that the liberality and hospitality of all the gentlemen of the Honorable Hudson Bay Company are proverbial." Indeed, we experience this and participate of it on all occasions.

<sup>13</sup> John Lee Lewes, first with the Northwest Company in charge of the Hudson Bay Company's post on Mackenzie river, and afterward at Fort Colville; called by Bancroft "the fop of the Columbia district." He retired from the service in the course of the present year and went to Australia with the intention of settling, but preferred to return to the fur country, and ended his days on Red river.

## CHAPTER VI.<sup>1</sup>

### AMONG THE MISSIONS.

Proceeds to Fort Vancouver — Progress of mission work — Starts out again in July — Painful accident — Scenery of the Columbia — Wretchedness of natives — Old clothes and old fish — The Spokane plain again — Forty little lakes — Father Hoeken at St. Ignatius — Through the woods — The relish of life in the open air — Something about “medicine” — A magnificent view — St. Mary’s on the Bitter Root.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial.*<sup>2</sup>

I ACCEPTED the kind offer of Mr. Lewes, and took my seat in one of the barges of the Hudson Bay Company brigade, on its way to Fort Vancouver. We stopped at Fort Okinagan,<sup>3</sup> where I administered baptism to forty-three persons, chiefly children. Our passage was very pleasant and agreeable. I have little to add to what I have already stated in my preceding letters of last year respecting our residence at Saint Francis Xavier and the other Catholic establishments in the Willamette valley and vicinity. St. James’ Church at Vancouver, St. John’s in Oregon City, St. Mary’s at the Convent, and St. Francis Xavier’s chapel have all been opened for divine service. The new church among the Canadians of Grand Prairie, and the Cathedral of St. Paul, were fast progressing. The number of children in the Sis-

<sup>1</sup> This chapter follows the English text of the *Oregon Missions*, and comprises Letters XIX, XXI and part of XX of that work (Letters XVIII, XIX and part of XXII *Missions de l’Oregon*), published as letters to the Provincial of Missouri, Reverend J. O. Van de Velde, and dated as by notes inserted at the proper points.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated Fort Walla Walla, July 18, 1846.

<sup>3</sup> The trading-post at the mouth of the Okinagan river, established in 1811 by David Stuart, one of the Astorians who came in the Tonquin. Abandoned about 1862.

ters' school had greatly increased, and a change for the better already taken place among the little half-breed girls confided to their care. Sister Loyola, the Superior, appeared delighted with their present conduct. Two Protestant families, among the most respectable in Oregon, Dr. Long and lady and Judge Burnet and family, were received into the bosom of the Catholic Church in Oregon City. Archbishop Blanchet and companions were anxiously expected; may the Lord speed them, and grant them a happy passage on the boisterous ocean — a route which, it appears, they have selected in order to reach their destined new homes. Oh, how large is the vineyard! — the Island of Vancouver alone contains upward of 20,000 Indians, ready to receive our missionaries — it has just been made a bishopric, and the Reverend Mr. Demers appointed to it — and an extensive field awaits the laborers, among the numerous nations of the northwest coast. The visits paid to these various tribes, by the Black-gowns, and the affection and kindness with which they are received by the Indians, leave little doubt of the ultimate success of their holy enterprise.

In order to return to the upper missions, I started in the beginning of July [1846] from Fort Vancouver,<sup>4</sup> two days after the brigade of the Hudson Bay Company had left it. An accident, fortunately not attended with serious consequences, here occurred to me. A powder-horn exploded near me accidentally, scorching me severely and completely stripping the skin from my nose, cheeks and lips — leaving me to all appearances, after all my travels, a raw-faced mountaineer. I procured an Indian canoe, well manned,

<sup>4</sup> Fort Vancouver is the Hudson Bay Company's principal post west of the Rocky Mountains. It receives all the furs from the interior of the country and furnishes the supplies for the various posts. The company has the following establishments on the Columbia river: Forts Vancouver, George, Walla Walla, Okinagan, Colville, Boisé, Hall; on Frazer river and its branches, Forts Langley, Thompson, Alexandria, Chilcotin, Frazer, St. James, McLeod, Babine; along the northwest coast, Stickeen, Simpson, McLoughlin, Nisqually, Cowlitz, and Umpqua. — *Author's Note, French ed.*

and soon found myself during a thunder-storm in the great gap of the Cascade Mountains, through which the mighty Columbia winds its way. The sublime and the romantic appear to have made a grand effort for a magnificent display in this spot. On both sides of the stream perpendicular walls of rock rise in majestic boldness — small rills and rivulets, innumerable crystalline streams pursue their way; murmuring down on the steep declivities, they rush and leap from cascade to cascade, after a thousand gambols, adding at last their foaming tribute to the turbulent and powerful stream. The imposing mass of waters has here forced its way between a chain of volcanic towering mountains, advancing headlong with an irresistible impetuosity over rocky reefs and prostrate ruins, for a distance of about four miles; forming the dangerous, and indeed the last remarkable obstruction — the Grand Cascades of the Columbia. There is an interesting and very plausible Indian account of the formation of these far-famed cascades, on which so much has been said and written, so many conjectures regarding earth-slides, sinks or swells, caused by subterraneous volcanic agents. “Our grandfathers,” said an Indian to me, “remember the time when the waters passed here quietly and without obstruction, under a long range of towering and projecting rocks, which, unable to bear their weight any longer, crumbled down, thus stopping up and raising the bed of the river; then it overflowed the great forests of cedar and pine, which are still to be seen above the cascades.” Indeed, the traveler beholds with astonishment a great number of huge trunks of trees, still standing upright in water about twenty feet deep. No person, in my opinion, can form a just idea of the cause that produced these remarkable changes, without admitting the Indian narrative.

My baggage was soon conveyed to the upper end of the portage. The distance from the cascades to the dalles is about forty-five miles, and is without any obstacle. The mountain scenery on both sides of the river, with its clusters of shrubs, cedars and pines, is truly delightful, heightened

occasionally by the sight of the snow-capped Mounts Hood and St. Helens. A favorable breeze made us unfurl two blankets by way of sails, and as we were gliding rapidly up the stream we observed several islands of volcanic formation, where the Indians deposit their dead on scaffolds, or in little huts made of pieces of split cedar, frequently covered with mats and boards; great care is taken to hinder birds of prey, or the rapacious wolves, with their hyena stomachs and plundering propensities, from breaking in upon the abode of the dead.

The third day we arrived at the Great Dalles. Indians flock thither from different quarters of the interior, to attend, at this season of the year, to the salmon fisheries. This is their glorious time for rejoicing, gambling and feasting; the long lent is passed; they have at last assembled in the midst of abundance — all that the eye can see, or the nose smell, is fish, and nothing but fish. Piles of them are lying everywhere on the rocks, the Indian huts abound with them, and the dogs are dragging and fighting over the offal in all directions. Not less than 800 Indians were present on this occasion.

One who has seen them five years ago, poor and almost naked, and who beholds them now, discovers with a peculiar feeling of humor and delight the entire change in their external appearance, a complete metamorphosis, as Ovid would say. Their dresses are of the most grotesque character, regardless alike of their appropriateness to sex or condition of life. A masquerade character, as we understand it, will at least exhibit unity of design; but this Indian masquerade sets all unities at defiance. A stout, swarthy Indian steps proudly by you, apparently conscious of the dignity conferred on him by his new acquisitions — a roundabout much too small for him, a pair of tights with straps, with an intervening space showing the absence of linen, form his body dress, while an old-fashioned lady's night-cap with large frills, and if he be rich enough, a sailor's glazed cap carefully balanced above it, constitute his head-dress; a pair,

and sometimes half a pair of brogans, complete the ludicrous appearance of this Indian dandy. Some appear parading through the camp in the full dress of a wagoner, others in a mixture composed of the sailor's, the wagoner's and the lawyer's, arranged according to fancy; but the favorite article of ornamental dress appears to be the night-cap with its large frills; some again with only one article of dress. I have seen an old Indian showing off a pair of boots to the best advantage, as they formed the only article of his wardrobe then on his person. Indian squaws are seen attired in long calico gowns, little improved by the copious addition of fish oil, with which the taste or negligence of the present owners besmeared them; occasionally, if they can afford it, to this is superadded a vest, a flannel or great-coat.

The dalles at present form a kind of masquerading thoroughfare, where emigrants and Indians meet, it appears, for the purpose of affording mutual aid. When the Oregon emigrants arrive here, they are generally in want of provisions, horses, canoes, and guides — these wants the Indians supply, receiving in exchange the old traveling clothes of the doctors, lawyers, farmers, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, etc., that pass through the dalles on their westward route. Hence the motley collection of pants [*sic*], coats, boots of every form and size, comforters, caps and hats of every fashion.

Here I overtook Messrs. Lewes and Manson,<sup>5</sup> who kindly offered me a place in one of the barges of the company, which I gladly accepted. The transportation of their boats and goods had taken up a whole day. From the Great Dalles to the upper sources of the Columbia much care and attention are required in its navigation, for it presents a constant succession of rapids, falls, cascades and dalles. Men of great experience are here employed as pilots, and notwithstanding their skill and precaution no river probably

<sup>5</sup> Donald Manson, in the Hudson Bay Company service as early as 1818; retired about 1854 and settled at Champoeg.

on the globe, frequented as little, could tell of more disastrous accidents.

At the dalles you enter a barren region, where driftwood is brought into every encampment by the Indians, for which they gladly receive a piece of tobacco in return. In the absence of the savages, the tombs of the dead are sometimes shamefully pillaged by civilized Christian travelers, taking away the very boards that cover the dead bodies, and thus leaving them the prey of vultures and crows.

Indians linger on the Columbia as long as a salmon can be caught. Careless of the approaching winter, they do not lay in sufficient stock of provisions, and till late in the fall they may be seen picking up the dead and dying fishes which float in great numbers on the surface. In the immediate neighborhood of a camp the air is infected with the scent of salmon in a state of putrefaction; they are suspended on trees or on scaffolds, and to this unwholesome and detestable food has the improvident Indian recourse, when the days of his long lent commence.

You can scarcely form an idea of the deplorable condition of the poor petty tribes, scattered along the banks of the Columbia, of which the numbers visibly diminish from year to year. Imagine their dwellings, a few poor huts, constructed of rush, bark, bushes, or of pine branches, sometimes covered with skins or rags — around these miserable habitations lie scattered in profusion the bones of animals, and the offal of fishes of every tribe, amidst accumulated filth of every description. In the interior, you find roots piled up in a corner, skins hanging from cross-poles, and fish smoking over the fire, a few dying embers; an axe to cut wood being seldom found among them. The whole stock of kitchen utensils, drinking vessels, dishes, etc., are comprised in something like a fish-kettle, made of osier, and besmeared with gum — to boil this kettle stones are heated red hot and thrown into it. But the mess cooked in this way, can you guess what it is? No, not in twenty

trials — it is impossible to divine what the ingredients are that compose this outlandish soup!

But to pass from the material to the personal; what strange figures! faces thickly covered with grease and dirt — heads that have never felt a comb — hands! but such hands! a veritable pair of “jack of all trades,” fulfilling in rapid succession the varied functions of the comb, the pocket-handkerchief, the knife, fork and spoon — while eating, the process is loudly indicated by the crackling and discordant sounds that issue from the nose, mouth, throat, etc., a sight the bare recollection of which is enough to sicken any person. Thus you can form some idea of their personal miseries — miseries, alas! that faintly image another species infinitely more saddening; for what shall I say in attempting to describe their moral condition? There prevails among the greater part of them a kind of superstitious idolatry, (called medicine or juggling) that pays homage to the vilest animals, and even goes as far as human sacrifice. In the course of the last summer and almost before the faces of the Protestant ministers, a child was devoted to the *manes* of one of its companions, who died the day before. The victim was tied so cruelly that the cords entered its flesh, and exposed upon the rocks, where it would soon have perished had not a Mr. Perkins,<sup>6</sup> a humane man, succeeded, though with difficulty, in ransoming it. There is among them a degeneracy of morals which knows no stronger tie in conjugal obligations than the caprice of the moment — a vehement, inordinate passion for gambling, that is prolonged to the time of repose — a laziness which nothing can induce them to shake off but the love of play, or the pressing claim of hunger — they are, in fine, addicted to the vilest habits of gluttony, dissimulation, etc. Such is the wretched condition of the poor savage tribes along the Columbia. But amidst all this misery, there is fortunately one redeeming feature, a constant desire to discover some power superior to man;

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the Methodist missionary; see note, page 455.

this disposition renders them attentive to the least word that seems to convey the slightest knowledge of a Supreme Being, and hence the facility with which they believe anything that at all resembles the Word of God.

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*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial.*<sup>7</sup>

The eighth day after my departure from Fort Vancouver, I landed safely at Walla Walla, with the goods destined for the different missions. In a few days all was ready, and having thanked the good and kind-hearted Mr. McBride,<sup>8</sup> the superintendent of the fort, who had rendered me every assistance in his power, we soon found ourselves on the way to the mountains leading a band of pack mules and horses over a sandy dry plain, covered with bunch grass and wormwood. We made about sixteen miles without wood or water, and encamped for the night in a beautiful little meadow, watered by the Walla Walla river, where we found abundance of grass for our animals — these were soon unloaded and left free to graze at leisure; we next made a fire, put on the camp-kettle, stretched the bed, consisting of a buffalo-robe, and smoked together the friendly Indian pipe, whilst supper was preparing. We found ourselves at home and perfectly at ease in less than a quarter of an hour. The evening was clear and beautiful — not a cloud — our sleep, sound and refreshing, prepared us for an early start at dawn of day. We had a hot day's march, with pack animals, again without wood or water, over an undulating plain, before we could reach the crossing of the Nez Percés or Lewis Fork, whose source is in the angle of the Rocky and Snowy Mountains, between the forty-

<sup>7</sup> Dated St. Ignatius, near the Kalispel Bay, July 26, 1846; dated in French edition, July 17, 1847.

<sup>8</sup> Probably William McBean, who succeeded Archibald McKinlay at Walla Walla. Being a Catholic, he was the subject of serious and doubtless totally unfounded charges at the time of the Whitman massacre.

second and forty-fourth degrees, near the sources of the Rio Colorado, [Green River] the Platte, the Yellowstone, and the Missouri rivers. Its western course till it reaches the Blue Mountains, and hence its northern direction till it joins the Columbia, together with its principal tributaries, are sufficiently known to you and have been amply described already.

We found about a dozen Indian lodges called the Pa-looses, a portion of the Sapatán or Nez Percés tribe. We procured from the Indians here some fresh salmon, for which we made them ample return in powder and lead. But as the grass was withered and scanty, and the pilfering disposition of these Indians rather doubtful, we resolved on proceeding eight or ten miles farther, and encamped late in the evening on the Pavilion river. The Nez Percés and Spokane plain is at least a thousand feet elevated above the bed of the river. It is dry, stony, undulating, covered with bunch and nutritious grass, with prickly pear and wormwood. The basaltic and volcanic formations which extend through the whole of this region are really wonderful. We frequently passed ponds and small lakes embedded between walls of basaltic rocks — immense ranges of dark shining pentagonal pillars, as if forced from the bosom of the plain, extend for some miles, resembling not unfrequently forts and ancient ruined cities and castles. We encamped several times near small but beautiful lakes, where ducks and geese, with their young broods, were swimming in great numbers. The Indians frequent these regions in search of the bitter and camas roots, very abundant here. In every one of their old encampments we observed great quantities of prairie-turtle shells, a proof of their being numerous and serving as food for the savages. Pheasants or quails were very abundant — we daily killed what we wanted for our meals.

On the fifth day of our departure from Walla Walla, we reached the Spokane river, and found a good fording for our animals. You will see with pleasure the chart I have made of the headwaters of this river, which, though beauti-

ful and interesting, is yet, like all the other rivers in Oregon, almost an unbroken succession of rapids, falls and cascades, and of course ill-adapted in its present condition to the purposes of navigation. The two upper valleys of the Cœur d'Alène are beautiful, and of a rich mould; they are watered by two deep forks, running into the Cœur d'Alène lake, a fine sheet of water of about thirty miles in length by four or five broad, from which the river Spokane derives its source. I called the two upper forks the St. Joseph's and the St. Ignatius. They are formed by innumerable torrents descending from the Cœur d'Alène Mountains, a chain of the Rocky Mountains. The two upper valleys are about sixty or eighty miles long, and four or eight miles broad. I counted upward of forty little lakes in them. The whole neighborhood of the Spokane river affords very abundant grazing, and in many sections is tolerably well timbered with pines of different species.

On leaving the river we ascended by a steep Indian path. A few miles' ride across a pine forest brings you to a beautiful valley, leading to Colville, agreeably diversified by plains and forests, hemmed in by high wooded mountains, and by huge picturesque rocks towering their lofty heads over all the rest. Fountains and rivulets are here very numerous. After about thirty miles we arrived at the foot of the Kalispel mountain, in the neighborhood of St. Francis Regis, where already about seventy metis or half-breeds have collected to settle permanently. Several of them accompanied me across the mountain, the height of which is about 5,000 feet above the level of the plain. Its access is very easy on the western side; on the eastern, the narrow path winds its snake-like course through a steep and dense forest. After a march of about eight hours we arrived at the beautiful Kalispel Bay, on the margin of Lake De Boey, almost in sight of the Reduction of St. Ignatius.—My letter to Mrs. Parmentier,<sup>9</sup> which I insert here, will make you acquainted with the whole history of that mission.

<sup>9</sup> See p. 457.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial.*<sup>10</sup>

On the 27th of July, [1846] I bade farewell to Father Hoeken and his interesting little flock, consisting of about 500 Indians. I was accompanied by two Kalispels and some of the Cœur d'Alènes, who came to meet me. We had beautiful weather, and a path remarkably free from those obstructions so annoying to travelers in the mountains. Toward the middle of our day's journey, we reached a beautiful lake surrounded by hills, and a thick forest of larch. I have named it Lake de Nef, as a token of gratitude toward an illustrious Belgian, one of the greatest benefactors of the mission. It discharges itself through a narrow passage, forming a beautiful rapid, called the Tournhout-torrent, at the termination of which it joins its limpid waters to those of the river Spokane.

Next day the sun rose majestically, and everything gave promise of an agreeable day, but these fine appearances were gradually lost behind a thick bank of ominous reddish clouds, which, shortly after overspreading the sky, poured down such torrents of rain that everything on us was drenched as completely as if we had waded through a river. At the foot of the Great Rapids, we crossed the river Spokane, and continued our route over an extensive plain agreeably interspersed with thick groves of larch and pine, when toward sunset we encamped close by a refreshing fountain.

A few words descriptive of our encampments during wet weather may not be out of place. The tent erected in haste — saddles, bridles, baggage, etc., thrown into some sheltered spot — large heaps of larch branches or brushwood are cut down, and spread over the spot of ground destined for our repose — provision of as much dry wood as can be collected is now brought forth for the whole night; on this occasion we made a fire large enough to roast an ox. These preparations completed, our meal (dinner and sup-

<sup>10</sup> Letter dated Valley of St. Mary's, August 8, 1846.

per the same time), consisting of flour, camas roots, and some buffalo tallow, called *dépouille* by the Canadian mountaineers, is thrown into a large kettle nearly filled with water. The great heat obliging the cook to stand at a respectable distance from the fire, a long pole serves as a ladle to stir about the contents until the mixture has acquired the proper density, when a vigorous attack is made upon it after a singular fashion indeed. On the present occasion we were six in number, trusting to a single spoon, but necessity soon supplied the deficiency. Two of the company used pieces of bark; two others, scraps of leather; and the fifth a small turtle-shell. Grace being said, a circle is formed round the kettle, and the instruments plunge and replunge into it with as much regularity and address as a number of smiths' hammers plying at the anvils — a few moments, and the contents of the large kettle are gone, leaving not a vestige behind. We found this repast delicious, thanks to our keen appetites. Making due allowance for the tastes of others, "*de gustibus enim nil disputandum,*" I confess I have never enjoyed a feast more heartily than such as I have now described, prepared in the open air, after the Indian fashion. All the refined inventions of the art culinary, as sauces, pickles, preserves, pies, etc., designed to quicken or restore weak appetites, are here utterly useless. Loss of appetite, which among the wealthy forms the reigning complaint, furnishing abundant employment to apothecaries and doctors, is here unheard of. If these patients would have the courage to abandon for a time their high living and traverse the wilds of this region on horseback, breakfasting at daybreak and dining at sunset, after a ride of forty miles, I venture to predict that they will not need any refined incitements to relish as I did a simple dish prepared by the Indians.

Having dried our blankets and said night prayers, our repose was not the less sound for having fared so simply, or lain upon a rough couch of brushwood. We started early the next morning, and about mid-day arrived at the

Mission of the Sacred Heart, where I was received with the greatest cordiality by Fathers Joset and Point, with Brothers Magri and Lyons. All the Cœur d'Alènes of the neighborhood came to welcome me. The fervor and piety of these poor Indians filled me with great joy and consolation, especially when I considered how great the change wrought in them since their conversion to Christianity. The details of this conversion have, I believe, been published by Father Point, and, by the way, I may remark here that some incidents connected with my previous mission to this country are inserted in this letter. To these details I may add that these Indians, previous to their conversion, were notorious among the other tribes, on account, it is said, of their great power in juggling and other idolatrous practices. Indeed, they were addicted to superstitions the most absurd, blindly offering adoration to the vilest beasts and the most common objects. Now, they are the first to scoff at these ridiculous practices, adding at the same time, with much feeling and veneration, "God has had pity on us — he has opened our eyes — he is infinitely good to us." A single instance will serve to give you some idea of the objects of their worship and the facility with which they adopt their manitous or divinities. They related to me that the first white man they saw in their country wore a calico shirt, spotted all over with black and white, which to them appeared like the smallpox; he also wore a white coverlet. The Cœur d'Alènes imagined that the spotted shirt was the great manitou himself — the great master of that alarming disease, the smallpox — and that the white coverlet was the great manitou of the snow; that if they could obtain possession of these, and pay them divine honors, their nation would never afterward be visited by that dreadful scourge; and their winter hunts be rendered successful by an abundant fall of snow. They accordingly offered him in exchange for these several of their best horses. The bargain was eagerly closed by the white man. The spotted shirt and the white coverlet became thencefor-

ward objects of great veneration for many years. On grand solemnities, the two manitous were carried in procession to a lofty eminence, usually consecrated to the performance of their superstitious rites. They were then respectfully spread on the grass: the great medicine-pipe offered to them, with as much veneration as is customary with the Indians in presenting it to the sun, the fire, the earth and the water. The whole band of jugglers, or medicine-men, then intoned canticles of adoration to them. The service was generally terminated with a grand medicine dance, in which the performers exhibited the most hideous contortions and extravagant gestures, accompanied with a most unearthly howling.

The term *medicine* is commonly employed by the whites to express whatever regards the juggling, idolatrous practices of the savages; probably because the Indian, feeling his ignorance of the proper remedies in sickness, and almost wholly dependent upon chance for his subsistence, merely demands of his manitous some relief in these distressing situations. This something that the Indians call Power, is at times limited, say they, to the procuring of only one object, as the cure of some disease. Some other Power, again, is not so limited, it extends to many objects, as success in hunting, fishing, waging war and avenging injuries. All this, however, varies according to the degree of confidence reposed in it by the individual, the number of his passions or the intensity of his malice. Some of the Powers are looked upon, even by the savages themselves, as wicked in the extreme; the sole object of such Powers is to do evil. Moreover it is not at all times granted, even when those professing to be most powerful medicine-men earnestly desire it. It comes only during sleep, in a fainting fit, during a loud clap of thunder, or in the delirious excitement of some passion; but never without some definite purpose, as to foment dissensions, or exasperate to deeds of violence, or to obtain some corporal advantage; favors which are always purchased at the expense of the soul. Much exaggeration is, of course, clearly characteristic of those mis-

named effects of preternatural power. Most of those that came under my notice, and which the Indians attributed to preternatural agency, were the effects of causes purely natural. Notwithstanding these deplorable disorders of the soul, it is my greatest consolation to reflect that these superstitious practices, in consequence of the many palpable contradictions they admit, become a spiritual malady the least difficult to cure.

On the 5th of August, [1846] I left the Mission of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, accompanied by the Reverend Father Point. Three Indian families, desirous of visiting St. Mary's, served us for guides. Our journey for some days lay along the serpentine course of the river St. Ignatius,<sup>11</sup> in the valley of the North. The soil of this valley is for the most part rich, and well adapted to cultivation, but subject to frequent inundations. Grain and potatoes are here cultivated by the Indians with great success. Father Joset, assisted by the savages, has already enclosed and prepared for cultivation a large field, capable of affording sustenance to several Indian families. Our hopes, then, of seeing these poor Indians furnished with a plentiful supply of provisions and their wandering habits thereby checked, will, with the blessing of God, be realized at no very distant day. To attain the desirable object of uniting them in villages, and thus forming them to habits of industry, we need, however, more means than we possess at present — we are very much in want of seeds of various kinds, and of agricultural implements.

Before arriving at the snow-capped chain of mountains, which separates the Cœur d'Alènes from the Flatheads, we wound our way for two days through forests almost impenetrable and over immense beds of rock, always following the course of the river, except where its tortuous windings would lead us too circuitous a route. So tortuous indeed is its course here, that in less than eight hours we crossed it no less than forty-four times. The majestic cedars that

<sup>11</sup> Fr. St. Josse.

shade the gorge at this point are truly prodigious; most of them measure from twenty to thirty feet in circumference, with a proportionate height, and so numerous, that as the rays of the sun cannot penetrate the dense mass, perpetual night may be said, without exaggeration, to reign here. I doubt whether Lebanon can produce any more majestic. The death-like silence of this glen, broken only by the passing breeze, the occasional visit of some wild animal, or the constant murmuring of the rills from the rocky banks, impress the beholder with feelings of a most unearthly yet pleasing nature.

With much difficulty and fatigue we forced a passage through this dense mass of forest, stooping half the time upon the neck of the horse, to avoid the low thorny branches, so thickly crossed together that one is inclined, at first sight, to abandon all hope of wedging his way through them. Its termination brought us to the foot of the great chain of mountains. It occupied us nearly another day to ascend this by a narrow winding path, which is shaded by one of the finest forests in Oregon. Toward sunset we reached the top, where we pitched our camp within a few paces of one of those immense snow masses that perpetually shroud this lofty chain. Here we enjoyed a most magnificent view — the horizon for some hundred miles around presented a spectacle of surpassing grandeur: as far as the eye could reach, a long succession of mountains, towering cliffs and lofty pinnacles, exhibited their dazzling snow-capped summits to our astonished vision. The very silence of this vast wilderness strikes the beholder with feelings of deep sublimity; not even a breeze stirred to break the charm of this enchanting view. I shall never forget the splendor of the scene we witnessed, as the last rays of the setting sun were throwing their full lustre upon the myriads of pinnacles that ranged far away toward the distant horizon.

The descent on the southeastern side of this mountain is less abrupt, presenting slopes of rich verdure, adorned with a great variety of plants and flowers. This descent also

occupied us an entire day. We next arrived at a forest, a twin-sister, if I may be allowed the expression, of the one I have just described. Here the river St. Francis Regis meanders through innumerable hoary cedars, pine trees, and an impenetrable thicket of bushes of every species. With the happiest recollections, we finally encamped on the banks of the St. Mary's river, in the Flathead valley — the nursery of our first missionary operations in the Far West.

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## CHAPTER VII.<sup>1</sup>

### PEACE BETWEEN THE BLACKFEET AND FLATHEADS.

Progress of eighteen months at the mission — Irrigation — Ingenious inventions of Father Mengarini — The medicine of the Black-robés is strong — Crows looking for a fight — Shamefully defeated by Flatheads and Nez Percés — Deeds of arms of boys and women — The celebrated Mary Quille — Blackfeet convinced and bring children for baptism — Grand dance — De Smet's route.

*Reverend and Dear Father Provincial:*<sup>2</sup>

**A**FTER an absence of about eighteen months, employed in visiting the various distant tribes and extending among them the kingdom of Christ, I returned to the nursery, so to speak, of our apostolic labors in the Rocky Mountains. Judge of the delight I experienced, when I found the little log church we built five years ago about to be replaced by another, which will bear comparison with those in civilized countries, materials, everything ready to commence erecting it the moment they can procure some ropes to place the heavy timbers on the foundation. Another agreeable surprise, however, yet awaited me; a mill had been constructed, destined to contribute largely to the increasing wants of the surrounding country. It is contrived to discharge the twofold charitable object of feeding the hungry and sheltering the houseless. The flourmill grinds ten or twelve bushels in a day; and the sawmill furnishes an abund-

<sup>1</sup> This chapter follows the English text up to the point noted on page 588, and thereafter the French, which gives a fuller account. It covers Letters XXIII and XXIV, both *Oregon Missions* and *Missions de l'Orégon*, published as letters to the Provincial of Missouri and dated as by footnotes inserted at proper points in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Letter dated Flathead Camp, on the Yellowstone river, September 6, 1846.

ant supply of plank, posts, etc., for the public and private building of the nation settled here. Indeed, the location stood much in need of so useful a concern. The soil yields abundant crops of wheat, oats and potatoes — the rich prairie here is capable of supporting thousands of cattle. Two large rivulets, now almost useless, can, with a little labor, be made to irrigate the fields, gardens, and orchards of the village. The stock at present on this farm consists of about forty head of cattle, a fast-increasing herd of hogs and a prolific progeny of domestic fowl. In addition to the mill, twelve frame houses, of regular construction, have been put up. Hence you can form some idea of the temporal advantages enjoyed by the Flatheads of St. Mary's village.

St. Mary's, or Bitter Root valley, is one of the finest in the mountains, presenting, throughout its whole extent of about 200 miles, numerous grazing, but few arable tracts of land. Irrigation, either by natural or artificial means, is absolutely necessary to the cultivation of the soil, in consequence of the long summer drought that prevails in this region, commencing in April and ending only in October. This difficulty, however, if the country should be ever thickly settled, can be easily obviated, as the whole region is well supplied with numerous streams and rivulets. These remarks apply to the valleys contiguous to St. Mary's, the general aspect of them differing perhaps but slightly in regard to the heights of the mountains, the colossal dimensions of the rocks, or the vast extent of the plains.

After what has been said in my former letters in relation to religion, little now remains that has a direct reference to it; but you will learn with much pleasure, that the improvements made in the Flathead village afford the missionary stationed there great facilities for prosecuting successfully the grand object of his desires, viz., the eternal happiness of the poor benighted Indian tribes, placed beyond the reach of his immediate influence. The village is now the center of attraction to all the neighboring and many of the distant

tribes. The missionary always avails himself of these occasional visits to convey to them the glad tidings of salvation. Among the recent visitors were the head chief of the Snake Indians with his band of warriors; the Bannocks and Nez Percés, conducted by several of their chiefs,— even several bands of Blackfeet; beside these, there were also, on their return from the great hunt, almost the whole tribe of the Pend d'Oreilles, belonging to the station of St. Francis Borgia. These last in particular, the greater part of whom I baptized last year, may be said to rival the zeal of the Flat-heads in the practice of their religious duties.

After the festival of Easter, the abundant supply of provisions in the granaries and cellars of the village enabled the minister to invite all the visitors present to a feast, consisting of potatoes, parsnips, turnips, beets, beans, peas and a great variety of meats, of which the greater portion of the guests had never before tasted. Among the industrial products which are mainly owing to the skill and assiduity of their present pastor, Father Mengarini, I must not forget to mention a kind of sugar, extracted from the potato, and a non-intoxicating drink, as pleasant and nutritious as the pale beer of Europe, made from a mixture of barley and native roots.

Let us next turn to the improved condition of the people themselves. Polygamy — or rather a connection, if possible, still more loose — is now, thank God, entirely abolished among our newly-converted Indians; there is, consequently, an evident increase of population. The reckless abandonment of the helpless infant — the capricious discarding of wife and children — the wanton effusion of human blood — are no longer known amongst them. Our feelings are not outraged by the brutal practice, heretofore so commonly witnessed, of a father considering a horse a fair exchange for his daughter; the justice of allowing the young Indian maiden to choose her future partner for life is now universally allowed; — the requisite care of their offspring is regarded in its proper light, as a Christian duty; — attention

is paid to the wants of the sick;— changes of treatment, with the remedies administered according to our advice, have probably been the means, under Providence, of rescuing many from premature death. The long-cherished vindictive feelings which so frequently led to depopulating wars, are now supplanted by a Christian sense of justice, which, if unfortunately compelled to take up arms, does so only to repel unjust aggression or defend their inherent rights, but always with the fullest confidence in the protecting arm of heaven.

Indeed their unbounded confidence in the God of battle is well rewarded; a truth which the enemies of the Flatheads invariably acknowledge. “The medicine of the Black-robés,” (an expression synonymous with the true religion) “is,” say they, “the strongest of all.” Did time permit, I could adduce almost innumerable instances to confirm the belief universally entertained here, that Almighty God visibly protects them in the wars they are compelled to wage with the hostile tribes. A few of these, for the authenticity of which I can vouch, may suffice for the present.

In 1840, when threatened by a formidable band of Blackfeet, amounting to nearly 800 warriors, the Flatheads and Pend d’Oreilles, scarcely numbering sixty, betook themselves to prayer, imploring the aid of heaven, which alone could save them in the unequal contest. Confident of success, they rose from their knees in the presence of their enemies, and engaged the overwhelming odds against them. The battle lasted five days. The Blackfeet were defeated, leaving eighty warriors dead upon the field; while the Flatheads and Pend d’Oreilles sustained a loss of only one man, who, however, survived the battle four months, and had the happiness of receiving baptism the day before his death.

In 1842, four Pend d’Oreilles and a Cœur d’Alène were met and immediately attacked by a party of Blackfeet. At the first onset, the Blackfeet had to deplore the loss of their chief. Aroused by the noise of the musketry, the camp of the Pend d’Oreilles rushed to the assistance of

their companions, and, without losing a single man, completely routed the enemy. Their escape is the more remarkable, as, rushing into the intrenchments of the Blackfeet, they received a volley of shot poured in upon them by the enemy.

The Flatheads were again attacked, during the winter hunt of 1845, by a party of the Bannocks, which, though outnumbering them nearly three times, they soon put to flight, with the loss of three of the Bannock party. The Flatheads acknowledge that the Bannocks are the bravest of their enemies; yet this did not deter them, though but seven in number, from fighting a whole village of the latter that had rashly violated the rights of hospitality.

During the summer hunt of the same year, the united camp of Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles, when threatened, hesitated not a moment to engage with a band of Blackfeet four times their number. The latter, fearing the "medicine of the Black-robcs," skulked around their enemies, avoiding an open fight. The former, perceiving this, pretended flight, in order to draw the Blackfeet into the open plain: the snare succeeded; and the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles, suddenly wheeling, attacked and repulsed them with considerable loss, driving the enemy before them in hot pursuit, as they would a herd of buffaloes. Twenty-three Blackfeet warriors lay dead on the field after the engagement, while the Pend d'Oreilles lost but three, and the Flatheads only one.

I shall close these sketches of Indian warfare, so remarkably evincing, as they do, the special protection of heaven, with an account of an engagement which, as it was the occasion of my first interview with the Blackfeet, and by its consequences contributed much toward my favorable reception among them, will not, I trust, prove entirely devoid of interest, if given a little more in detail.

In 1846, while engaged in one of these hunting excursions, the camp of the Flatheads was reinforced by thirty lodges of the Nez Percés, and a dozen lodges of the Black-

feet at their own solicitation. The Flatheads encamped in the neighborhood of the Crows, purposely to renew the terms of peace, if the latter felt so disposed. The Crows, perceiving in the united camp the Nez Percés and Blackfeet, with whom they were at war, and knowing their own superiority both in numbers and bodily strength, (they are the most robust of the Indian tribes) rushed into it like a torrent, evidently more anxious to provoke a contest than to make overtures of peace. The calm remonstrances of the Flatheads and the wise admonitions of their own chief, were lost upon the now almost infuriated mutinous band of the Crows.

If the threatened outbreak had occurred at that moment, it is probable that the whole united camp would have been massacred in the hand-fight, for which evidently the Crows came prepared, with loaded guns and other destructive weapons, while the Flatheads and the others were totally unprovided. At this critical juncture, fortunately, indeed I may say providentially, my interpreter Gabriel and a Pend d'Oreille named Charles, forced their way breathless into the disordered camp, and announced the arrival of the Blackrobe who had visited them four years ago. The alarming scene they witnessed was indeed what they had expected, for as we traveled to overtake the Flathead camp at the place designed for their interview with the Crows, we perceived, from the marks of their daily encampments, that some Blackfeet and Pend d'Oreilles were with the Flatheads; we accordingly feared a collision would result from the interview. I therefore dispatched with all possible speed Gabriel and Charles to announce my arrival. Well did they execute the commission — they rode almost at full gallop during a whole day and night, performing in this short period a journey which occupied the camp fourteen days. This intelligence roused the Crow chiefs to an energetic exercise of their authority. They now seized the first missiles at hand, and enforced the weight of their arguments upon their mutinous subjects, as long as there was left in

the united camp the back of a Crow on which to inflict punishment. The word *amaraba*, which means "clear out," was used so much on this occasion that it has since become proverbial among us.

This forced separation, though it may have checked the present ebullition, could not be of long duration. It needed but a spark to rekindle their hostile dispositions into open war. The next day, as if to provoke a rupture, the disaffected Crows stole thirty horses from the Flatheads. Two innocent persons were unfortunately charged with the crime, and punished. The mistake being discovered, the *amende honorable* was made, but to no purpose. The Flatheads, aware of their dangerous position, employed the interval in fortifying their camp, stationing their women and children in a place of safety, and arming themselves for the contest. An immense cloud of dust in the neighborhood of the Crow camp at ten o'clock announced the expected attack. On they came with the impetuosity of an avalanche, until within musket shot of the advanced guard of the allied camp, who had just risen to their feet to listen to a few words addressed them by their chief, Stiettietlotso, and to meet the foe. "My friends," said Moses, (the name I gave him in baptism) "if it be the will of God, we shall conquer — if it be not his will, let us humbly submit to whatever it shall please his goodness to send us. Some of us must expect to fall in this contest: if there be any one here unprepared to die, let him retire; in the meanwhile let us constantly keep Him in mind." He had scarcely finished speaking, when the fire of the enemy was returned by his band, with such terrible effect as to make them shift their mode of attack into another, extremely fatiguing to their horses. After the battle had raged for some time in this way, Victor,<sup>3</sup> the grand chief of the Flatheads, perceiving the embarrassed position of the enemy, cried out: "Now, my men, mount your best horses, and charge them." The manœuvre was successful.

<sup>3</sup> For an interesting anecdote of Victor and Pope Gregory XVI, see p. 1341.

The Crows fled in great disorder, the Flatheads abandoning the pursuit only at sundown, when they had driven the enemy two miles from their camp.

Fourteen warriors of the Crows fell in the engagement and nine were severely wounded, as we subsequently learned from three Blackfeet prisoners, who availed themselves of their capturers' defeat to recover their liberty. On the part of the allied camp, only one was killed, the son of a Nez Percé chief, who fell by the hand of a Crow chief, in so cowardly a manner, that the indignation of the allied camp was at once raised into immediate action — it was, in fact, the first shot fired and the first blood drawn on either side; the boy was yet quite a child. Besides this loss, though the engagement lasted for several hours, only three were wounded, two of them so slightly that by application of the remedies I brought with me, they recovered in a short time; the third died a few days after my arrival in the camp.

This defeat was the more mortifying to the Crows, as they had been continually boasting of their superior prowess in war, and taunting their enemies with the most insulting, opprobrious epithets. They had besides forcibly and most unjustly drawn on the engagement.

Indeed, I look upon the miraculous escape of our Christian warriors, in this fierce contest, as further evidence of the peculiar protection of heaven; especially when I consider the numerous instances of individual bravery, perhaps I should say reckless daring, displayed on the part of the allied camp. The son of a Flathead chief named Raphael, quite a youth, burning to engage in the contest, requested his father to let him have his best horse. To this the father reluctantly consented, as the boy had been rather weak from sickness. When mounted, off he bounded like an arrow from the bow, and the superior mettle of his steed soon brought him close upon the heels of a large Crow chief, who, turning his head round to notice his pursuer, pulled up his horse to punish the temerity of the boy, at the same time bending to escape

the arrow then leveled at him. The boy must have shot the arrow with enormous force, for it entered under the lower left rib, the barb passing out under the right shoulder, leaving nothing but the feathers to be seen where it entered. The chief fell dead. In an instant a volley was poured in upon the boy — his horse fell perfectly riddled, with the rider under him. He was stunned by the fall, and lay to all appearances dead. According to the custom of the Indians, of inflicting a heavy blow upon the dead body of their enemy, he received while in this position a severe stroke from each individual of the several bands of Crows that passed him. He was taken up half dead by his own tribe, when they passed in pursuit of the enemy.

The ardor and impetuosity of the young men belonging to the Flathead camp amazed the oldest warriors present, and formed the theme of universal admiration, as well as the dread of their enemies. Even the women of the Flatheads mingled in the fray. One, the mother of seven children, conducted her own sons into the battle-field. Having perceived that the horse of her eldest son was breaking down in a single combat with a Crow, she threw herself between the combatants, and with a knife put the Crow to flight. Another, a young woman, perceiving that the quivers of her party were nearly exhausted, coolly collected, amidst a shower of arrows, those that lay scattered around her, and brought them to replenish the nearly exhausted store. The celebrated Mary Quille,<sup>4</sup> already distinguished in numerous battles, pursued, with axe in hand, a Crow, and having failed to come up with him, returned, saying: "I thought that these great talkers were men. I was mistaken: it is not worth while even for women to attempt to chase them."

The little party of Blackfeet, animated by a spirit of revenge for the loss of half their tribe, massacred the preceding year by the Crows, and probably influenced by a feeling of

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Marie Quilax. No clew is found in Father De Smet's writings as to the term "celebrated" here used.

their safety while they fought in company with the Flathead Christians, did signal service in the combat.

In the meantime, Gabriel and Charles, fearing the threatened outbreak, immediately started back to meet me and hasten my arrival, my presence being considered necessary to prevent the effusion of blood. I arrived at the Flathead camp the day after the battle. I found everything ready to repel a second attack, should that be attempted. I immediately sent an express to the Crows, to announce my arrival, and at the same time to convey to them the great desire I had to see them, especially for the purpose of effecting a reconciliation between the contending parties. But it appeared that after having buried their dead, they retreated precipitately; so that no account of their destination could be had. My express told me that there must have been excessive grief in the camp of the Crows, as the usual marks of it could be traced in every direction, such as the dis severed joints of fingers, and the numerous stains of blood, caused by the wounds which the relatives of the deceased inflict upon themselves on such occasions.

Shortly after my arrival, the Blackfeet came in a body to my lodge, to express in a manner truly eloquent their admiration of the Flatheads, with whom in future they desired to live on terms of the closest friendship. "To their prayers," said they, "must this extraordinary victory be attributed. While the battle lasted, we saw their old men, their women and children, on their knees, imploring the aid of heaven; the Flatheads did not lose a single man — one only fell, a young Nez Percé, and another mortally wounded. But the Nez Percé did not pray. We prayed morning and evening with the Flatheads, and heard the instructions of the chiefs." They then begged of me in their own affecting way to take pity on them and be charitable to them: they now determined to hear the words of the Great Manitou of the whites, and to follow the course which the Redeemer had marked out on earth. Having addressed them on the

nature of the life they had proposed to adopt, they all without exception presented their children for baptism, to the number of eighty.

The day after this sacred ceremony, they called on me, requesting to be allowed to express in their own way the excess of joy which they felt on account of this twofold victory. On returning from the late field of battle, the warriors, at the head of whom was a young chief, chanted songs of triumph, accompanied with the beating of drums; at each beat they sent forth a wild and piercing shout; then followed the song, and so on alternately;—wild as the music was, it was not without harmony. It continued thus during almost the whole of our route. We marched up the right bank of the Yellowstone river, having on our left a chain of mountains resembling those old fortresses told of in the histories of ancient chivalry. We had scarcely arrived at the encampment, when the Blackfeet commenced, under the shade of a beautiful cluster of pines, their arrangements for a dance, insisting, at the same time, upon showing the Black-robcs how highly they valued their presence among them, and how gratified they would be to have them witness this display. There was, indeed, nothing in it that could give occasion to offended modesty to turn aside and blush. I need not tell you it was not the polka, the waltz, or anything resembling the dances of modern civilized life. The women alone figure in it, old and young; from the youngest child capable of walking, to the oldest matron present. Among them I have seen several old women upward of eighty years, whose feeble limbs required the aid of a staff in their movements through the dance. Almost all appeared in the best costume of the warriors, which, however, was worn over their own dress, a sort of tunic they always wear, and which contributed also not a little to the modesty of their appearance. Some carried the arms that had done most execution in battle, but the greater part held a green bough in the hand. In proportion as the dresses increase in singularity, the colors in variety, and the jingling of the bells

in sound, in the same degree is the effect upon the rude spectator heightened. The whole figure is surmounted by a casket of plumes, which by the regular movements of the individual is made to harmonize with the song, and seems to add much gracefulness to the whole scene. To lose nothing of so grand a spectacle, the Indians mount their horses, or climb the neighboring trees. The dance itself consists of a little jump, more or less lively, according to the beat of the drum. This is beaten only by the men, and all unite in the song. The women take the treble, the men the bass. To break the monotony, or lend some new interest to the scene, occasionally a sudden, piercing scream is added. If the dance languishes, haranguers and those most skilful in grimaces come to its aid. As in jumping the dancers tend toward a common centre, it often happens that the ranks become too close, then they fall back in good order to form a large circle, and commence anew in better style.

After the dance followed the presentation of the calumet. It is borne by the wife of the chief, accompanied by two other women, on the breast of one of whom rests the head of the pipe, and upon that of the other the stem handsomely adorned with feathers. The most distinguished personage of the nation precedes the calumet-bearers and conducts them around the circle of dancers. The object, probably, of the last part of the ceremony, the termination of the rejoicings, is to indicate that the best fruit of the victory they celebrate is the peace which follows. To establish this peace upon a better foundation is a thought constantly uppermost in my mind. May God grant that our efforts to plant the crop of peace among these wild children of the forest be not unavailing; I earnestly recommend these poor souls to the prayers of the faithful.

Having thus, more fully perhaps than the limits of a single letter would seem to justify, redeemed the promise given in my last, of recounting some of the advantages, spiritual and temporal, which the Flatheads enjoy, it may now be proper to resume the course of events up to the present date. On

the 16th of August we left St. Mary's by a mountain gap, called the "Devil's gate," [Hell Gate; Fr. Porte de l'Enfer] a name which it has probably received from the fact of its forming the principal entrance of the marauding parties of the Blackfeet. We encamped the first night, at the foot of the [little] Blackfoot forks. Innumerable rivulets and several beautiful lakes contribute largely to this river. Toward its head, to the northeast, there is an easy pass for cars [carts?] and wagons. The valley we ascended is watered by a beautiful stream called the Cart river, so called because it was through this valley we wound our way in former days, [1841] with all our baggage, to the spot where St. Mary's now stands. We crossed the mountains in the vicinity of the Arrowstone Fork, another easy pass, and descended a tributary of the Jefferson [Big Hole river] as far as its outlet, through rather a wild, broken and mountainous country, with here and there an extensive, open plain, the ordinary resort of innumerable herds of buffalo. The seventh day found us encamped in the immense plain through which the forks of the Missouri diverge, ascending to the source at the very top of the main chain of the Rocky Mountains.

This region is still infested by grizzly bears. We killed four in an hour. We met also at every step buffalo, deer, sheep and wild goats. But it is the especial haunt of marauders, assassins and robbers from the various tribes. In traveling through these wilds, great care is to be had in order to avoid the sudden attack of some of those straggling war-parties that infest this neighborhood purposely to search for scalps, plunder and the fame of some daring exploit. We halted every evening for a few hours, to take a bite, as the trapper would say, and to give some food and rest to our animals. When it was quite dark, we would kindle a brisk fire as if to last until morning; then under cover of the night, proceed on our journey for about ten miles, to some unsuspected place, thus eluding our enemies, should any have followed in our track or be lurking in the neighborhood, awaiting the midnight hour to execute their mur-

derous designs. From the three forks we went easterly, crossing by an easy pass the mountain chain which separates the headwaters of the Missouri from the Yellowstone river, a distance of about forty miles. We followed in the track of the Flathead camp for several days, when I sent Gabriel, my interpreter, with a Pend d'Oreille Indian in advance to discover what direction the camp had taken, and to bring back speedy news regarding their movements; and also to learn the dispositions of the Crows, whom I designed to visit. Four days later I was met by a few Flatheads on their way to find me, when I was apprised of the treachery of the Crows, and the severe chastisement they had so deservedly received. I traveled the whole of that night, and arrived next day in the allied camp, as I have already informed you. Having failed to obtain the desired interview with the Crows, our attention will be now turned toward the Blackfeet, with whose favorable disposition to receive the gospel you are already acquainted. The result of this determination will form the subject of my next letter.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THREE WEEKS IN A BLACKFOOT CAMP.

Travel with allied camps — All sick from drinking bad water — Lost son found — Misbehavior of Nez Percés — Missionaries leave with the Blackfeet — Death of Nicholas, the first Blackfoot convert — Pantomime entertainment by a Blackfoot artist — Piegans come in and Flatheads rejoin them — Blackfoot hymn composed around the fire — A trial of faith in the matter of horses — Enemies reconciled.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial:*<sup>1</sup>

**Y**OU are already acquainted with our determination to accompany the Blackfeet in returning to their country. In the sequel of this letter you will learn with pleasure how far Almighty God has blessed our humble efforts in carrying this resolution into effect. After the battle described in my letter from the Yellowstone camp, the Crows, it appears, fled to the Wind River Mountains, determined, however, to avenge themselves on the Blackfeet, whom they now designed to follow into their own country. The latter, probably through fear of this assault, resolved to remain with the Flathead camp until it reached the headwaters of the Muscle-shell river. In leaving the Yellowstone our direction lay toward the north,<sup>2</sup> through a broken and undulating, dry and woodless country, destitute of any water fit to drink — stagnant pools of brackish water being the only kind found here to satiate the thirst. We were all sick for several days from this cause. Only a few straggling bulls were seen or killed, scarcely sufficient, indeed, to supply the wants of our numerous camp. The great variety of matter incidental to this journey with the united Indian camp will appear, perhaps, more satisfactory if given in the

<sup>1</sup> Letter date Fort Lewis or Maragnon, September 26, 1846.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. northwest.

same order in which it was entered in my diary; I therefore present you with an extract from it:—

Sept. 8th, 1846. The elements of discord existing between the Nez Percés and Blackfeet give every appearance of an open rupture. The Nez Percés being evidently in the wrong, the Flatheads, following our example, endeavor to convince them of the impropriety of their conduct; but to no purpose, the principal men among them refusing, for the second time, to smoke the calumet of peace.

9th. Toward night a touching incident occurred in our lodge. A Nez Percé chief, who declares himself our friend, entered, accompanied by three Blackfeet, a warrior, an interpreter, and a young man about twenty years of age. This youth, when about one year old, lost both his parents; his mother, a captive among the Blackfeet, died the first days of her captivity; his father, whose country is far distant from the Blackfeet, is altogether lost to him. The poor orphan became the adopted child of a Blackfoot woman, who brought him up as she would her own offspring. The adopted son grew up, imbibing all the notions and customs of his new friends, knowing no other relations than those around him. To-day, the woman whom he believed to be his real mother, declared to him that she was not; and that his father, whom he had not seen since he was one year old, was now sitting beside him. "Who is my father?" he anxiously inquired. "There," said the woman, pointing to the Nez Percé chief, who entered the lodge with him. The doubts of the father were soon removed, as he hastily stripped the youth's garments from his back, and there discovered the mark of a burn received in the parental lodge while yet an infant. The sudden burst of feeling elicited from these children of nature at this unexpected meeting, can be better imagined than described. The chief has no grown children, he is therefore the more eloquent in endeavoring to persuade his son to return to his native country, presenting him, at the same time, with one of the best and most beautiful of his steeds. I joined to the entreaties

of the father the strongest motives I could urge. The son, whose heart is divided between nature and grace, begged to be allowed to bid farewell to the companions and friends of his youth, who were now absent — he could not, he declared, thus abruptly leave her who, with motherly care and anxiety, had watched over him so many years, and whom he had always so tenderly loved and looked upon as his mother. “Now that the Black-robcs are with us,” he said, “I desire to be of the happy number of those who are about to introduce them to my friends, and to listen to the words of the Great Spirit, whom they have come to announce. After that, but not before, shall I follow my father.”

10th. The Nez Percés announce their determination of leaving the united camp. The Flatheads, who dread more the presence of a friend capable of injuring their souls, than that of an enemy who can only hurt the body, are excessively rejoiced at this announcement. The Blackfeet also are highly pleased to see them go. The separation took place about eight o'clock; but they had gone only a short distance from the camp, when, fearing an attack from the Crows, they rejoined the main body, determined to remain as long as the great hunt shall last. To avoid the outbreak, evidently threatened by the ill-will of the Nez Percés, the Blackfeet have resolved to leave the camp on the morrow. This day I baptized a Nez Percé, who had been shot in the late battle with the Crows — he cannot survive much longer.

11th. Farewell to the Flatheads. All came to shake hands with us, the grief of their hearts was depicted in their countenances; we all perceived how deeply they felt the separation. A great number of their cavaliers accompany us for a considerable distance; six go as far as our encampment, not less than twenty-five miles.

Our course lay through an extensive level plain, at the very base of the Muscle-shell Mountains. These rise abruptly from the plain around, resembling broken, elevated

islands in the midst of the ocean, and their tops tufted with a heavy growth of cedar and pine. While admiring the singular appearance of the scenery, my attention is called off to a very distressing accident. An old Indian is seen falling from his horse, receiving in the fall a severe wound between his eyes; he remains senseless, all efforts to revive him are fruitless. It was the old Blackfoot chief, Nicholas, whom I baptized five years ago;<sup>3</sup> he acted ever since the part of a most effective missionary, in preparing the way for the introduction of the gospel among his tribe. Today he entered what he called his own country, chanting hymns of praise and thanksgiving in the happy anticipation of soon presenting us to his brethren. He dies! not even a sigh escapes him. Oh, how profound are the designs of God. Happily he leaves a son worthy of so excellent a sire. His attachment to religion equals that of his father. Having resided several years among the Flatheads, he has acquired a perfect knowledge of their language — acting in the capacity of interpreter, he has already rendered me considerable assistance. Notwithstanding his great grief, he performs the last sad offices near the tomb of his father with the composure and firmness of a Christian. It is customary among the Blackfeet to express their grief by wailings and lacerations of the body, calculated only to afflict those around, though intended by them as a mark of respect toward the lamented dead. The son of Nicholas, himself a chief and a great brave, knowing the Christian practice, passes the night in prayer, with his wife and children, near the funeral couch of his father. His friends and brother Piegans (pagan in name and in fact), would now and then gather around him, and kneeling beside the mourner, pour forth, Christian-like, many a pious ejaculation in behalf of their deceased chieftain. The remains of the venerable chief were placed in the grave by the hands of his own son, and over his tomb the emblem of salvation was raised — the cross of the Saviour, whose words were now for the

<sup>3</sup> See *ante*, p. 338.

first time announced to the lonely tribes of this long-be-nighted wilderness. At the very moment the last prayers of the funeral service were uttered, "May he rest in peace," a busy stir breaks the death-like silence of the surrounding crowd of Indians. A Flathead approached in full gallop, announcing the pleasing intelligence that two Blackfeet had reached their camp, and informed them that the tribe of Nicholas was within two days' march of us.<sup>4</sup>

The 12th, the day of Nicholas' burial, some of the hunters are sent out to look for game; for scarcity was making itself felt in the camp. One of these scouts soon spies in the distance immense herds of buffalo, appearing as little black dots. He returns toward camp to announce the glad news and mounts a high hill, whence he can be seen, standing on his horse, holding the stock of his gun high in the air; it is a signal to announce the presence of the animals. Then the chief proclaims a great hunt; the hunters rope their best running horses, which are jumping and prancing with joy. We start at a gallop; but when they are about to rush upon their prey, the horsemen stop, to recite, after the example of the Flatheads, three Ave Marias, in honor of the Holy Virgin. (Some of them know it in Flathead.) Can I express the joy I felt at hearing this prayer under these circumstances? I shall not try; pious souls will feel it sufficiently. The prayer ended, the hunters get to horse again and pursue the animals, which lead them to a great distance. Each killed one, two or three, according to the strength of his horse. There was an abundant supper in every lodge and all the fires were surrounded with numerous beefsteaks; mine was garnished with a wreath of tongues, humps and kidneys, which the hunters had reserved for the Black-robos, and which we shared like brothers with all who came to call.

After supper a splendid evening entertainment, given in our lodge by a Blackfoot, so good, so sensible and at the

<sup>4</sup>From this point to the close of the next chapter the French narrative is followed, as being more complete.

same time so original, that it was a real pleasure in every respect to us to hear him. All communication was by signs. Here are some of the observations he had made during his stay in the Flathead camp. "When we arrived," he said, "we had plenty of meat. The Flatheads and the Nez Percés were short: they visited us and we gave them to eat according to custom. The Flatheads, before they would touch anything, put their hands to their foreheads, made the sign of the cross, then a good prayer; whereas the Nez Percés fell upon the food like starved animals. Sunday the Flatheads sat quiet in their lodges, thought only of praying to God and encouraging one another in well-doing; while the Nez Percés put on their fine clothes and scattered here and there, for more harm than good. I noticed especially that the Nez Percés maintained no such reserve toward our young people as did the Flatheads; so, in the fight with the Crows, it was only the Nez Percés who had any losses to mourn; I saw by this that the white men's God is good to the good; but also that when he chooses, he knows how to find the wicked, to punish them as they deserve."

The astonishing successes of the Flatheads, in the wars that have been forced on them the last three years, have confirmed their enemies in the belief that they have held of late, that the medicine of the Black-robés is stronger than theirs.

To return to our Blackfoot observer, he ended his pantomime by giving us to understand that he liked two things very much: play and drink; but that notwithstanding he would not be the last to leave these delights, a resolve which he frequently renews since his children were baptized. Two Piegans have come to camp with the news that their band is in the neighborhood.

Sunday, 13th. We are obliged to move our camp farther; for in the place where we have passed the night there is nothing to make a fire of but buffalo manure, and the rain that is falling prevents our making use of it. The fine rain that sprinkles us as we proceed soon changes to a kind of

snow likest to hail, and so sharp that one can hardly have his hands bare. The chief who went ahead has started a good fire for us. The three little children of Sata, Nicholas' son, have come to sit by us. Hardly had little Antoine's hands seen the fire, when he runs to pull from a cherry tree near by a branch full of cherries, which he brings to his sister Adèle; but she passes them on to her younger sister Marie; a moment later, seeing a little unbaptized Blackfoot eating cherries, she said to her brother: "Did you see him? He didn't pray before eating." — After a long fatiguing march, we passed the night in a poplar grove on the banks of Judith river.

The bad weather prevents the two camps from coming together; the reunion will be only the more notable, for to-morrow is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The Blackfoot chief asks whether it will not be grievous to us to see them testify their joy in their manner, namely, by painting their faces and dancing and singing at a great rate.— My answer was, "Do your best to show your friends and brothers that your hearts are glad."

We learn that the head chief of the Piegans, called Big Lake, himself admonished his people to listen well when the Black-robles were there; an occurrence the more remarkable because he scarcely ever speaks save through the mouth of another, who is called Tail Bearer (*Grosse Toque*) by reason of the enormous *toque* that he wears on his forehead. The *toque* among the Blackfeet is a tail, seven or eight feet long, made of horse and buffalo hair, interwoven with their own. But instead of floating behind in the ordinary way, this tail is located upon the party's forehead and stands out spirally, something like a rhinoceros horn. Such a tail among the Blackfeet is a mark of great distinction and bravery; the longer the tail, the greater courage must the bearer display upon occasion.

Akasia, another Piegan chief, who was met two years ago by a Flathead war party, and whom the Flatheads let go, out of respect to their missionary (Father Point) comes

to see us this afternoon with one of his wives. "As soon as I learned of your approach," he said to us, after shaking hands, "I set out to see you." Since his encounter with the Flatheads he has made no war upon them.— He wears a *toque*, and has besides courage and character which rightfully earns him the esteem of his tribe. I feel confident that such a man will be one of the first to come over entirely to us. After praying and smoking with us, he went away again, toward sunset, to make ready against to-morrow's reunion.

On the 14th, a hitch.— The Flathead camp that we left four days ago is only nine or ten miles from ours; they have sent word to that of Big Lake that they are coming to have a talk. In the latter there is a division of opinion, of which we are the innocent cause; Big Lake is for putting off the interview until after the Black-robcs have been met, while his aide-de-camp, Tail Bearer, claims that the interview should have the preference; he yields, however, to Big Lake's judgment, and about ten o'clock word is brought to us that he is not far away. All the horsemen of the camp, more prompt than we, are off already, but they are waiting on a hill for us to take the lead. Then they form in a very long single line behind us; we advance into a lovely and very smooth plain, rending the air with our yells and songs of joy. At the agreed signal, the discharge of all the guns, we alight. Tail Bearer advances first, followed by all the tribe, to shake hands with us and bid us welcome in the most affectionate manner. After him comes Big Lake with some of his braves. The calumet is presented immediately; and after this symbol of peace, brotherhood and good harmony has gone around a few times, passing from mouth to mouth, tongues are loosened as if by magic, and everybody begins telling the news. Then I address them a little preparatory discourse, to dispose their minds and hearts to listen attentively to the gospel.

They respond with a loud voice to this appeal and express the satisfaction and pleasure that it has been to them to

listen to the Black-robos.<sup>5</sup> We were still conversing, when the approach of the Flathead camp was announced. It came up even more cordially than that of Big Lake; neither is this anything to wonder at; the savage can open his heart, but he wishes to know to whom he is opening it. Soon the unconstrained manners of our neophytes spread to the Blackfeet, and before the day was over old and young, Blackfeet and Flatheads, almost all were testifying the same pleasure at seeing us amongst them. After the evening prayers, recited in the Flathead and Blackfoot tongues, I made them a little address, taking for my text this happy reunion and the friendly and peaceable spirit that seemed to animate both nations. Oh! how touching a sight it was! What a consoling triumph for Religion, to see united under the cross these warriors, whose scars told of so many bloody battles with each other; these warriors who had never met save in mortal hatred, to drown in blood the hate and vengeance that they had sworn each other. To-day, on their knees, mingling together, having only one heart and one soul, they address their prayers to the Master of Life, calling him for the first time their common Father and listening eagerly to his holy word.

The head men of both nations came together that evening in my lodge; Victor, head chief of the Flatheads, by the simplicity and smoothness of his conversation gains the good will of his hearers entirely. He begins by telling some

<sup>5</sup> "On one occasion, while on a missionary excursion to the Blackfeet, Father De Smet was treated to a bit of romance. He had addressed through his interpreter a gathering of these savages, who sat on the side of a hill, the chiefs on the ridge and the common crowd below, all attentive to his instruction. When he had ended, one of the chiefs came down to shake hands with him, saluting him in very good English, telling him at the same time that he had a rather poor interpreter. 'These people,' said the chief, 'are deeply interested in what you have been preaching to them, but your interpreter has not put it before them in the right way.' 'But you, sir, please, where did you learn English?' asked Father De Smet, amazed and bewildered with astonishment. 'In Ireland, faith,' replied the Blackfoot chief.'"—*Palladino*.

of his warlike adventures; but, as it is easy to see, much less with the intention of exalting himself than to show forth the protection that the true God always grants to those who devote themselves to his service. The Blackfeet, who suffered in the last fight with the Crows, are pleased to confirm his account, and add further edifying details of things they have seen in the Flathead camp. The sign of the cross is especially exalted, by those who have already given their hearts to the true God, as a certain pledge of victory; and to-day (September 14th) is the Exaltation of the holy cross.

On the 15th, the Octave of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin, the new disciples of the cross took part at a solemn mass. I performed it in the open air, under a bower of green boughs, the work of the Indians, to implore the blessings of heaven upon this great desert and the wandering tribes that roam over it, praying that they may be joined in the bonds of peace. Flatheads, Nez Percés, Piegans, Bloods, Grosventres and Blackfeet of different tribes, to the number of more than 2,000, surrounded the humble altar that had been raised in the desert to the living God, upon which the victim without spot was offered for them. The single-minded harmony and joy that seem to animate the Flatheads and the representatives of the various tribes of Blackfeet, are truly unheard of; one would say that their ancient quarrels are long forgotten; this is remarkable, because it is a duty of an Indian to cherish in his heart, even to his last breath, a desire of vengeance upon his enemies. Will this peace last? Let us pray the Lord to strengthen their good dispositions and grant them perseverance. Already the question of baptizing all the Piegan children, as was done with those of the Little Robes, is raised; but for the sake of the businesses and pleasures of the day, the ceremony is deferred to another day.

Sept. 16th. The Flathead chiefs speak so cordially and well before the Blackfoot chiefs that the hearts of most are won, as may easily be seen. Not so with the Nez Percés,

whose turbulent humor has only been repressed by the example of the Flatheads. At this second separation, the Flatheads evince the same affection for us as at the first. Their chiefs are the last to leave the camp, that everything may go off amicably and in order. That evening, the Blackfeet gather around our fire and we all busy ourselves in composing a chant. The subject of this composition is the consecration of their persons to him who has alone given being to all that exists.

Here is the first strophe and the refrain, which will serve at the same time as a sample of their language.

Apistotokié Nina  
 Pikannié to-kanakos;  
 Akwa spemóki tzagkoma  
 Agziéwa ziekamotos.<sup>6</sup>

Sept. 17th. Nothing very noteworthy happened. After dinner, a visit from two Blackfeet (Bloods?) of those who pass for the worst of all. They inform us that their people will be enchanted to see us; that we need not have a shadow of a fear for our persons; that already some sixty children, who have been baptized by a Black-robe who came

<sup>6</sup> As probably the first bit of verse composed in the language of the Blackfeet, this stanza may have some little literary interest. Competent authorities declare it to be very good Blackfoot, except that the last word should more properly be "ka-mo-tan-i." It is said to mean something like this:

God Almighty;  
 Piegans are all his children.  
 He is going to help us on earth;  
 If you are good, he will save your soul.

Father De Smet gave the following rhymed version, which he called a "traduction littérale:"

O Grand Esprit! notre Père,  
 Regarde en pitié tes enfants;  
 Ils seront saints sur la terre,  
 Si tu soutiens leurs pas tremblants.

from Red river, are wearing crosses at their necks. Making preparations for the baptism of the little Piegans.

Sept. 18th. Various news. The Nez Percés, yielding to the frequently expressed desire of the Flatheads, have at length parted from them. Two Grosventre Blackfeet have been killed by the Crows. Seven Piegan lodges have been followed by a large party of Crees. It is not known what has become of them. A chief comes to announce to us that the Blackfeet of every tribe are gathering about Fort Lewis; that this fort is daily expecting three Mackinaw boats with a large shipment from St. Louis. I am assured that there is no liquor (always the cause of most Indian troubles) in this year's shipment, and that this infamous traffic is to be discontinued from now on. About two in the afternoon a great hunt.

Sept. 20th. Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Baptism of more than 100 children and two old men, with all the customary ceremonies. To describe this day would be only to repeat what has already been said in other letters.

Sept. 21st. Return of a war-party of the Blood family of Blackfeet from a Crow camp, from which they took twenty-seven horses. The leaders, one of whom is a son and the other a brother of the head chief, are particularly friendly toward the Black-robos. The second long ago forsook the worship that the others still render to the sun and moon. He assures us that we will be welcome in his tribe, in which there are already a great number of baptized children.

Sept. 22d. A feast, given in my lodge, to the newcomers. It is preceded by the baptism of an old Piegan, formerly head chief of his tribe; he only resigned his post, in favor of his brother, called Big Lake, because his great age and still greater modesty led him to think it would be best. Besides he continues to exert a most fortunate influence upon his people by his great natural eloquence. He it is, probably, to whom the Piegans owe what those of Little Robe owe to their chief; to pass rightfully for the

most tractable of all the Blackfeet. One very rare, perhaps unique thing; he has never had but one wife, with whom he has always lived in peace. He received in baptism the name of Ignatius Xavier, and wears the medal of these saints upon his breast. Let us hope that the beginnings of grace which his nation has received in him may not be long without bringing forth fruits of salvation for the remainder.

After dinner, an unusual token of joy. The Indians draw apart and dance in very choice costumes, which have not been seen before since our arrival. Plumes in profusion, ribbons of all colors, all kinds of designs in porcupine-quill embroidery, necklaces of glass and porcelain, little bells on the skirts of their robes, everything comes out for this dance. The most remarkable head-dress is a lofty bonnet of *quillon* feathers (a kind of eagle), the emblem of the Indian warrior; the arrangement of it recalls what the first Indians of South America are supposed to have worn. A thousand voices join in songs of rejoicing, accompanied with the sound of drums, tambourines and the repeated firing of all the guns in camp.

The Catholic prayers have been translated and are recited every morning and evening. Some already know what they must believe and have the faith. May the works soon be added and take deep root in their hearts! Sata,<sup>7</sup> our Flathead-Blackfoot interpreter, is an apostle. After each interpretation, he sums up his discourse; and these reviews, coming from the fullness of his heart, are never without their effect. Still the word Sata differs but little in meaning from our word Satan — and since names, among the Indians, are usually personally descriptive, one may draw conclusions, from such a name given to a Blackfoot, as to the power of grace that has brought him to the point where he now is.

<sup>7</sup> This Indian acted as guide to Charles Larpenteur, in his unsuccessful attempt to reach the Flatheads in the fall of 1848. Larpenteur speaks of him as "a small Indian named Sata, a half-breed Flathead and Blackfoot."

Sept. 23d. Nothing noteworthy save a trial of the faith of the new catechumens. This is a theft of two horses, stolen from their camp by a stranger, habitually residing in the Flathead camp. From time to time, some individuals from west of the mountains have forgotten what they ought to be; but a few very rare misdeeds, loudly disapproved by the conduct of the whole people, only bring out more brightly the good spirit which animates the mass. This theft, too, is to a certain extent excusable on account of the critical position the thief found himself in. He had planned to go with us to the Blood Blackfoot camp, and we were already a long way from that of the Flatheads, when he learned that the Bloods had declared "That they would kill any Flathead who had the misfortune to set foot among them." Here-upon the poor man, who did not wish to die yet, and who had only a very thin horse to escape death, left the latter and simply took two others that were fit to flee from the threatened danger on. Besides, these horses will be sent back, with or without his consent, to their owner as soon as the thing is known. It will not be the first instance of such restitution.

Sept. 24th. Our Lady of Mercy. The missionaries, accompanied by a large number of Indians, ride on ahead of the camp to reach Fort Lewis or Maragnon, which is only a few miles away. As we ride, the Piegan Little Chief dismounts, asks me to do the same and invites me to smoke, which is the invariable prelude to any serious affair. "There is a quarrel," he said, "between me and a chief of the Bloods. I shall settle it at the fort. In a few minutes I shall see my mortal enemy, who for a long time has threatened to take my life. He is famous for his courage, but even more for the badness of his heart. He murdered by treachery a Nez Percé who was under my protection, while he was smoking my pipe, eating my food and resting under the sacred asylum of my tent. I would have been forever dishonored if I had not taken prompt vengeance for this shameful and detestable act, and washed the stain from

my tribe with blood. I shot the murderer at arm's length and in his own lodge. He did not die. His wound is healed now. He is waiting to kill me. I am not afraid, I am a chief too. Black-robe, I have heard your word, and I have new feelings in my heart. I would like to make peace with my enemy; but his heart is so sore that he will not hear of any arrangement. My brother has done all that he could, but he still keeps his resolution of shedding my blood. This is what I will do; I will offer him a horse to cover up his wound. If he is satisfied, it is good. If not I shall kill him."

The Black-robos, as may be guessed, were of opinion that everything ought to be tried before coming to the latter alternative. I even offered myself as mediator between them, and we made a vow to the Holy Virgin, that the affair might be settled amicably. For, as I had never witnessed the spilling of one drop of human blood, I felt assured that Almighty God would spare me the painful sight on this present occasion. We rode on. Little Chief and his companions prepare their arrows and load their guns. When we are within sight of the fort, two Blackfeet come out in haste to meet us; they tell Little Chief that if he or any of his men come nearer, their lives are in danger. They return at once to announce our arrival. Soon the great bell of the fort is heard. In honor of whom? It is the priests to whom this honor is addressed; for the defenders of the fort are French, or Spanish, or Canadians, that is to say, nearly all Catholics. Paying no heed to the advice we have received, we start for the fort at a gallop. The gates were opened to us at once and all the whites saluted us with the greatest cordiality, despite the absence of the commandant, who came in a few minutes later to add still further to the civilities with which we were greeted. After the first compliments, two horses are brought up to us, and we repair to an island in the Missouri, upon which are a dozen lodges of the Blood Blackfeet, and in the midst of them that of the murderer in question. The extreme cleanliness that pre-

veiled in it showed that it had been prepared to receive us. We were introduced first; after us Little Chief the Piegan and his companions, Omakzikinne or Big Lake, Onisetâstamik or White Bull, Masteisttamok or Crow Bull, Minépoassin or Chief's Word, Eketzo or Big Roller, Sata or the Wicked and Akaniaki or Bruised with Blows; next the Blood Blackfeet, and last of all the murderous chief, whose features sufficiently betrayed the vengeful feelings that were boiling in his heart.

I explained the motives of my visit and pleaded strongly in favor of reconciliation, at the same time declaring my determination not to leave the lodge until it was accomplished. The Blackfoot chief listened attentively, and then made a very apt reply; his last words were: "All is forgotten. How could my heart be bad, after what the Black-robe has said!" These reassuring words gave rise to several short speeches from the assembly, which shows that there is eloquence everywhere when the heart speaks.

Little Chief's address closed with an act that moved me much; he went up to him who had been his most cruel enemy, and after embracing him tenderly gave him, beside the promised horse, a fair robe adorned with porcupine quills and pearls, which he threw over him on the spot. The pipe of peace was at once lighted to seal the agreement, went round the assembly several times, and all blew their smoke upward in a spirit of thanksgiving. Unnecessary to say that after the smoking all withdrew with their hearts full of a joy which it is easier to feel than to describe.

I recommend these poor Blackfeet in a very especial wise to your holy sacrifices and your prayers.

## CHAPTER IX.<sup>1</sup>

### RETURN TO ST. LOUIS.

De Smet leaves Point among Blackfeet and starts for the States — Fort Benton to Kansas City by skiff — Beasts and birds — Bad Lands — Elkhorn Steeple — Their boat sinks — Various encounters with Indians — Making progress with the Sioux — Mormon encampments — Meets President Young — New town of St. Joseph — Driven from river by ice.

**A**FTER maturely weighing the various plans which might be most useful for the conversion and civilization of these tribes, it was decided that Father Point<sup>2</sup> should stay among the Blackfeet, to prepare the way for an establishment and to prosecute the instruction and conversion of that people, while I should descend the river to St. Louis, to inform our superiors of the state of the missions and the necessity of increasing the number of missionaries, and to plead the cause of the Blackfeet with them. It was on the 28th of September [1846] that I said farewell to my

<sup>1</sup> This chapter follows the French text of Letter XXVI, *Missions de l'Orégon*, and corresponds in part to the latter portion of Letter XXIV, *Oregon Missions*, printed as addressed to the Provincial of Missouri from the St. Louis University, January 1, 1847.

<sup>2</sup> *Further history of the Blackfeet Missions.*— Father Point remained among the Blackfeet through the ensuing winter, but in the spring of 1847 left Fort Lewis for Canada, in compliance with orders issued three years before by his superiors in Europe, which had been that length of time in reaching him. No further efforts were made in behalf of the Blackfeet until 1859, in April of which year Father Adrien Hoeken came among them. He established a mission on the Teton river, near the present town of Choteau. This was abandoned in March, 1860, for a site on Sun river, which was occupied until the following August, when Father Hoeken returned to the States. The Mission of St. Peter's was founded that same year by Fathers Giorda and Imoda and has been maintained to the present time, with an interruption between the years 1866 and 1874.

worthy and zealous companion, to the gentlemen of the fort and their good employees, all of whom had showed me much civility and kindness, and to those of the Blackfeet also who were present, who had not ceased to give me sincere evidences of their attachment. Our departure was saluted by the discharge of the guns of the fort and a large number of small arms. Amid a thousand good wishes for a successful voyage, we launched our bark upon the rapid current of the Missouri, at about 900 Flemish leagues (2,850 miles) [2,285] from the mouth of the river. It was noon when we lost sight of the fort. We soon passed Shonkin creek [la Rivière du Chantier]<sup>3</sup> and camped twenty-five miles further down, near Bird island.

The next day, as we passed between two ranges of high and abrupt bluffs, on which several large herds of bighorn or mountain sheep were grazing, we surprised an old buck, large and fat, which our hunter secured; the first victim sacrificed to our necessities on the Missouri. His antlers were about three feet long and eighteen inches in circumference at their bases. The habits of the mountain sheep are not like those of any other creature. He chooses for his favorite dwelling the ruggedest spots of the inaccessible mountains. The cold of winter drives him down into one of the numerous valleys [parks] where the verdure of spring rarely fades, but he returns as the season advances to the snow-covered tops of the mountains. After passing the Marias and Sandy rivers, where we saw in immense plains countless herds of buffalo, and several times grizzly bears came within rifle range, we entered a very remarkable region, where formations of yellow sandstone are presented on both sides of the river, exhibiting most fantastic shapes and fissures and offering to the astonished imagination a vast variety of comparisons; think of urns of all figures and forms; of round and square tables of all dimensions; of pil-

<sup>3</sup> Shonkin is a corruption of *Chantier*, boat yard. The Fort Benton or Fort Lewis boat yard was at the mouth of this stream.

lared pulpits, fantastically carved; thousands of rocky excrescences, in the forms of big and little mushrooms; then come altars with their candelabra, forts, castles and miniature cities. It is among these strange shapes that the Eagle, Judith and Dog rivers enter the stream.

Early in the morning of the 1st of October, we found ourselves in the place called the Bad Lands, from which we emerged toward evening and made our camp on Big island [la Grande Ile]. For our supper we had the choice pieces of a fine blacktailed deer. The day after, a large male of the same species supplied our rustic table, in the place called la Mauvaise Anse (Bad Bend or Cove), where we passed the night. All the region along the river traversed to-day is rugged, sterile and much cut up by ravines. In the course of the 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th we passed successively the Beauchamp, Musselshell [Coquille], Fourchette [?Puchet], Big Dry and Milk rivers.

In these five days my men killed seven fine does, four very fat buffalo cows, five bustards, [wild turkeys] one black-tailed deer, a wolverine for fun, as his flesh is of no value; and a grizzly bear out of pure malice. He, however, tried to be even with us; after being shot twice he made a furious leap from a height of twenty feet, meaning to fall upon our skiff and rend us in return; luckily he missed the boat and found himself rolling in the river, but without renouncing his vengeance. As he came swimming after us, my two men reloaded their guns and shot him at arms' length, killing him this time. The grizzly is the king of animals here; all recognize his supremacy. The wolf and the panther dare not go near him, nor touch what belongs to him, not even the carcass of his prey, which he has buried with stones and earth. Still he always takes flight at the sight or smell of man; the eye of man has a magical power over him, as over all other animals; it is rare for him to attack any one, unless he is wounded. When he has been struck by a ball, he rushes in rage toward the spot

whence the shot came. Woe to the hunter whom he meets then, unless he is well prepared for mortal combat! The *carcajou* [wolverine] is an animal that is found only in the Rocky Mountains; at least that is my belief. It appears to be of a special genus, and partakes of the natures of the wolf and bear. It has prodigious strength.

The great buffalo herds are invariably accompanied or followed by bands of wolves of various species. The white and tawny kinds are most common. They devour the carcasses of buffalo that die of sickness or as a result of wounds or accidents; and lacking them they kill others as they need them. They display much boldness and sagacity in their rapacious operations, and seem to act in concert and as if by understanding. First they post themselves at proper distances in a line in the direction the victim is supposed to take; then two or three charge into the middle of the herd, cut out the fattest and drive it toward the spot where their companions are waiting. The victim then runs between two ranks of wolves. As it goes on, fresh bands join in the chase, until at last, exhausted by fatigue, it stops and becomes their prey. They hamstring it first to prevent its escape, and then devour it alive.

At other times they practice a still more cunning stratagem; they urge their prey up some steep place, beyond which lies a deep ravine or precipice. There they form a half circle about it, closing in continually and redoubling their threats and howls. The poor buffalo, placed between two fires, hesitates a moment at sight of the abyss; but soon, bewildered by the yelping and baying, it attempts the only way to escape from its assailants, jumps off and falls crushed at the bottom of the ravine. Then our highwaymen also go down by the roundabout way, and partake together of the fruit of their industry.

On the 8th of October, we passed within sight of a very remarkable tower, in the middle of a fine plain in the neigh-

borhood of Porcupine creek.<sup>4</sup> Several thousand elk-horns, piled one upon another, form this singular structure. I could not learn what caused the erection of such a strange monument, nor when and by whom it was built. Herds of elk and deer are very numerous here.

On the 9th and 10th we passed the Poplar and Big Muddy rivers. My hunters continued their ravages among the animals. They killed one bull merely for the sake of his tongue, hump and marrowbones, a very fat black bear (the most delicate of his kind), a red-tailed deer, several ducks and bustards, which were passing in thousands, flying southeasterly and announcing the approach of winter. All the way down from Fort Lewis we had observed beaver works everywhere on the river. These interesting and laborious animals multiply exceedingly in these regions, where the trappers let them alone to avoid the war-parties which roam here incessantly.

On the 11th, we arrived at Fort Union, near the mouth of the Yellowstone and 600 miles from Fort Lewis; we have therefore made about fifty miles a day. The gentlemen of the fort received us with much politeness and affability. We accepted with pleasure and thankfulness the hospitality they offered us, and rested there for a day, in which time I baptized five half-breed children. I started out on the 13th with my two companions. Buffalo appeared in herds on all sides, and we saw bear, deer, elk and antelope at every turn of the river; there is little danger of having to fast at this season of the year. On the 15th, our desire to proceed in spite of a violent wind was calmed all at once by a wave

<sup>4</sup> Maximilian of Wied visited the Elkhorn Steeple July 11, 1833, and gives a picture of it among his plates. He says it was a propitiatory or medicine pile, erected by Blackfeet war or hunting parties from the antlers and buffalo horns with which the prairie was littered, and that they indicated the strength of their parties with red marks on the horns. It stood 800 yards from the river and was sixteen to eighteen feet high and twelve to fifteen through. The fate of this curious relic is told by Father De Smet in a letter. See p. 1372.

that filled our skiff and sent us to the bottom of the river. Fortunately the river was only five feet deep. We contented ourselves therefore with waiting for a more favorable wind and drying our garments, the only ones we possessed, and warming our stiffened limbs. After dinner the wind changed, and we came on down gaily enough, and the next day we made up our lost time; with the aid of sails, we covered a distance of sixty to seventy miles. On the 17th, we met seven lodges of Assiniboins, who received us civilly into their little camp, invited us to a feast and at our departure offered us abundant provisions. The same day eight Grosventres of the Missouri hailed us, with all the marks of respect and friendship, insisting upon our taking a big pile of buffalo tongues. The buffalo continue very numerous; neither is there any lack of grizzly bears, which are all the time drawing the fire of my companions. We camped at about the middle of the first great bend of the Missouri.

On the 18th a favorable wind encouraged us to hoist our sails again; we made about ten knots an hour and at dawn of the next day reached Fort Berthold, where we were politely received and treated by Mr. Bruyère. The Grosventres have their main village here; the most of them were off on their winter hunt. They build their lodges of earth like the Kansas and Osages. I was invited to a feast by those who had stayed to keep the village; this is an invariable token of their respect and good will. They are in general friendly to the whites and famous for their bravery and their courage in war. They have vast fields of maize, pumpkins and sweet potatoes which they till with care.

On the 20th, several bands of Indians call to us from the shore and make signs for us to come to them. The best thing to do in such cases is to obey, and you seldom have cause to repent of this small condescension; you accept the calumet; you furnish something to fill it with; you smoke one or two rounds with them and in their manner; both sides exchange little items of news; if they see that you are without provisions, they hasten to give you the choice pieces

from their hunt; then you embrace and part friends. To refuse to come, when you are on their premises and they call you, would irritate them and expose you to great dangers. After this we continue our way in peace, and camp for the night at the mouth of Knife river. Here a real and grave danger awaited us, from which we came off nicely. We made a big fire, for it was cold in the open air, and it was discovered by a band of Indians, armed to the teeth; they had come close to us, under cover of the darkness, without our perceiving them. Fortunately the chief recognized my cross and black robe by the firelight; he ran to me, threw away his hatchet, embraced and hugged me, crying "Ah! how near you were to starting for the spirit land! We thought you were far away; we took you for an enemy." Then they all put their two hands over their mouths, an expressive token of their great astonishment. All this was done in less time than it takes to write it. I thanked them from the bottom of my heart; we passed the evening agreeably enough; the calumet was presented and bound the knots of friendship yet more closely; afterward a cup of well-sweetened coffee, with buffalo hump and tongues roasted on the spit, put all these warriors in such an excessively good humor that they honored us with a song and dance. They belonged to the tribe of the Aricaras, a meeting with whom in the desert is always dreaded by the white men; for they are thieves and murderers. They promised me solemnly at leaving that in future they would always greet the whites calumet in hand. Next day we breakfasted at Fort Madison or Mandan, with the amiable Mr. Des Autels.

Some hours after we started on again, we passed under a scalp, tied to the end of a long pole, swinging over the river. It was probably a sacrifice to the sun, to obtain other scalps or a good hunt. Soon we came in front of the winter quarters of the Aricaras, encamped and fortified in a fair grove of poplars on the river bank. A great number of Indians all together, with shouts and gestures, invited us to come over. We made a great showing of zeal with our paddles,

and they received us very cordially and invited us to several feasts; but as we could not spare the time for such a delay they showed their liberality by giving us tongues, humps and other parts of buffalo, in so great a quantity that we could not get half of it in our skiff. Though it was late, we decided to continue our journey and camp some way below the village, especially to avoid having to spend the night in feasting. We were much delayed in the five following days by adverse winds, which prevented our progress often enough. On the morning of the 26th we came to the encampment of Mr. Goulé, the American Fur Company's clerk in the neighborhood of the *Butes au Grés* or Sandstone Buttes. There I baptized several half-breed children.

Taking advantage of favorable weather, we came on four days and nights without stopping, and early in the morning of the 30th we reached Fort Pierre, where is the main warehouse for furs and supplies of the American Company. During this run we had passed by several fine rivers that empty into the Missouri, such as the Grand, the Little Cheyenne, the Moreau and the Big Cheyenne. Fort Pierre is 700 [586] miles from Fort Union. Mr. Picotte, the head of the company on the Missouri, received us with singular politeness and cordiality. He forced me to accept his hospitality in the fort for three days; I profited by the delay to announce the word of God to a great number of Sioux and to baptize fifty of their small children. Mr. Picotte on his side had a larger, more comfortable boat built for me, which he filled with all kinds of provisions and even of sweet-meats. I can never sufficiently express my gratitude to him. May the Lord give him credit for his great charity toward me, and reward him some day as he deserves! I will add here, as a token of my sincere gratitude, that at all the American Company's trading-posts those gentlemen have shown me liberality, cordiality and charity far beyond my expectation or needs.

The Sioux tribe, in the midst of which I found myself at this time, is perhaps the largest of all the North American tribes.

It occupies a territory stretching from the St. Peter's river on the Mississippi to the Missouri, and thence to the sources of the two great branches of the Platte. Authors differ as to the number of the Sioux, but they are supposed to be from 60,000 to 80,000. They are divided into several tribes, all speaking the same tongue with slight differences. Such are the Brûlés, the Ogallalas, the Yanktons, the Yanktonnais, the Piankishaws, the Minneconjous, the Blackfoot Sioux, the Santees, the Broken Bows, the Assiniboins, the Hunkpapas, the Unkepatines [?], the Saoyns, etc.

The word Sioux is of Canadian origin; it is derived from the word *Soûl* or drunken. This name has been given them by reason of their passion for spirituous liquors and because of their propensity for intoxication. The name that they give themselves, and by which they are known among the other nations, is *Dacotha*, meaning cut-throat. A few missionaries would find a great deal of work here and would gather a fine harvest. The good savages never stopped giving me evidence of the lively desire that they feel to hear the word and embrace the religion of the Great Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

Fort Pierre is 1,500 miles from St. Louis; we left it on the 3d of November, rather late in the afternoon; but after going a few miles we perceived that our new skiff was leaking all over; we had to stop for repairs. We drew it ashore therefore opposite the company's great farm, on Fleury island. While my companions were working on the skiff, I made war on the chickens with great success; of course by the recommendation of Mr. Picotte. We soon left this island and its inhabitants, and went on and camped at the mouth of Chapelle creek.

It was stormy all day on the 4th; we had a head wind and could only advance slowly in consequence.

<sup>5</sup> The word Sioux comes from an enigmatical name, said by some to mean "enemies" in some Chipewayan dialect, brought back by Nicolet from his travels of 1634-5, and by him spelled Naduesiu. "Dakota" is believed to mean "confederated." The notion of cutting the throat was, however, that by which the Sioux were designated in the sign language.

On the 5th I visited Fort Bouis and there baptized thirteen little half-breeds. The weather had cleared up, and we took advantage of a favorable wind to cover the entire Great Bend of the Missouri, which is thirty-six miles in length, whereas the tongue of land at its base is only three miles wide.

On the 6th I visited Mr. [Colin] Campbell at Fort Look-out, where a great number of Sioux were encamped. In their presence I baptized sixteen half-breed children; afterward I held a council with the principal chiefs and braves, to the number of about thirty. I gave them some details of the conversion of the Rocky Mountain tribes, and of my recent visit to the Blackfeet. "And you Sioux," I said finally, "would you receive a Black-robe who should come to live in your plains and dwell in the midst of you? Would your hearts open to his word? Would you willingly follow the trail that the son of the Master of Life, Jesus Christ, came to mark on earth, and in which he wishes to have all the nations walk? The Flatheads, the Kalispels, the Stietshoi, the Skoyelpi, the nations of New Caledonia have all received the word of God; they are walking the trail that leads to heaven! They have thrown aside all that is bad; they have buried the hatchet; they have forsaken drink, which makes the Sioux mad and unhappy; they have renounced thievery and depredations. Sioux, speak; I am listening. I will take your words to the great chiefs of the Black-robos (the Bishop and the Reverend Father General). Speak; if your words are good, I will plead your cause before them. I love you sincerely; I would like to see you happy, practicing and loving the Great Spirit's word. Speak the words of your hearts."

After a few minutes' consultation and the usual ceremonies of the calumet, the Great Orator rose, and having shaken hands with me and with all his companions as well, he said: "Black-robe, I speak in the name of the chiefs and braves; the words that you announce from the Master of Life are fair; we love them; we hear them to-day for the

first time. Black-robe, you are only passing by our land; to-morrow we will hear your voice no more; we shall be, as we have always been, children who have no father to guide them, like the Wistonwish (prairie dogs) who have their lodges in the ground and know nothing. Black-robe, come and set up your lodge with ours; my heart tells me that you will be listened to. We are evil, we have bad hearts; but those who bring the good word have never got as far as to us. Come, then, Black-robe, and the Dacotha will listen to you, and our young men will learn to have sense."

Later that day I baptized four children of two Canadians married to Indian women, living nine miles from the fort.<sup>6</sup>

Nothing noteworthy occurred during the three following days. The forests of oak and poplar which adorn the banks increase in vigor and extent as we descend; game is rare; accordingly we only saw six lodges of Indians. On the 10th we passed the mouth of the river *L'eau qui court* [Niobrara]; it rises in a little lake at the foot of the Black Hills. The swiftness of its current earns it the name it bears. It is here, on the banks of this fair river two miles above its mouth and in the midst of the desert, that some hundred families belonging to the sect of Mormons have taken refuge, to find shelter from the unjust persecutions which other sectarians of the United States have made them suffer for several years past. Three times already their enemies have burned their homes and hunted them down like wild beasts.

On the 13th we came with a favorable wind to Fort Vermillion, 400 miles from Fort Pierre, where Mr. Hamilton liberally supplied us with provisions. Here I baptized seven half-breed children. On the 14th we saw a Mormon on the shore; but he fled at our approach. After that we met two Canadians, who had killed several fine wild turkeys, which

<sup>6</sup> Here Father De Smet introduces, in his French version, the scalp story told by Rufus B. Sage in Chapter X of his *Life in the Rocky Mountains*, which he credits to "a recent traveler."

they offered me; I gave them in return some coffee and sugar, very scarce articles in that country.

A simple grave, but remarkable for him whom it contains, appeared in sight on the 16th. It draws the attention of all travelers upon the Upper Missouri, and gives occasion for many cruel and terrible Indian anecdotes. It is the grave of Blackbird, head chief of the Omahas, renowned for the ascendancy which he had acquired over his tribe and the neighboring nations; but even more for the cruelties he practiced to reach the supreme power.<sup>7</sup>

On the 18th we found ourselves within view of the old Council Bluffs, which was once a great military post. Since my last voyage in 1842, the river has made considerable changes here, and has dug itself a new bed in various places. Council Bluffs, which was then on the edge of the river, is now more than three miles from it. During the day we saw the ruins of several old trading-houses. Not far from there, in a vast and beautiful plain, is a temporary establishment of the Mormons, driven out from their city of Nauvoo on the Mississippi; there are more than 10,000 of them here. I was introduced to their president, Mr. Young, an affable and very polite gentleman. He pressed me very earnestly to remain a few days, an invitation which my limited time did not permit me to accept. The unheard-of persecutions and atrocious sufferings endured by these unhappy people will furnish a sad page to the history of the great valley of the West. Sunset of this same day found me encamped in the upper Potawatomi country [at Sarpy's trading post]. There I met several of my old friends and neophytes, among them the chief Patakojec, who told me the long legend of the ideas and religious traditions of the Potawatomies. It shall furnish matter for my next letter.

The 20th, 21st and 22d were fine days. I visited my old

<sup>7</sup> Here Father De Smet repeats the story of Blackbird, as given in his letter of 1838. See *Lewis & Clark*, Aug. 10, 1804; *Long*, Vol. I, p. 204; *Catlin*, Vol. II, p. 5; *Astoria*, Chap. XVI; *Cooke, Scenes & Adv.*, Chap. XVIII.

friends in Bellevue, the good Mr. Papin and others. We passed the Papillon, Mosquito and Platte rivers and encamped near Table creek. Farther down we passed the Nishnabotna, the two Nodaways and the Tarkio. A range of hills, called the Blacksnares, appear in sight soon after passing the mouth of the Tarkio. Several places are still pointed out which bear recent traces of bloody fights between the roving tribes of the region. King Hill, one of the highest of the chain, was the scene of their last grand battle; it is covered with human bones, and a line of mounds may be perceived in the form of ramparts and fortifications. On that occasion the whole tribe of the Blacksnares was destroyed, and only the hills have transmitted their name and sorrows to posterity. The Sauks and Iowas succeeded to the Blacksnares, and they have now ceded this fair and fertile portion of their territory to the United States. Eastward and at the foot of these hills stands the town of St. Joseph. We reached there on the 23d, and paid a visit to the respectable curate, Reverend Mr. Scanlan. In 1842 St. Joseph did not exist; there was only a single family there. To-day there are 350 houses, two churches, a city hall, and a jail; it is in the most prosperous condition. Its population is composed of Americans, French Creoles, Irish, and Germans.

On the 28th I arrived at Westport. Here ice began to run in the river and a great quantity of snow fell. I therefore had to take the stage to St. Louis, which place I reached on the 10th of December.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Father De Smet disagrees with himself about the mode of conveyance from Westport to St. Louis, and the date of reaching the latter place. Both the English and French narrative of the journey say that he traveled by stage, the French account placing his arrival on December 10th. Both the manuscript itineraries—the English from the Linton Album and the French from Letter Book No. 4—say that he went by steamboat, the French account stating that he took it at Leavenworth, that it was the last boat of the season, and that it arrived in St. Louis about December 1st.

## PART IV.

THE GREAT COUNCIL OF 1851 AND PRECEDING EVENTS.

*Itinerary from 1847 to 1851 inclusive.*

1847.

**F**ATHER DE SMET returned early in January from New Orleans — Was then sent to Europe on business of the Province — Traveled via Washington, Philadelphia, and New York — Crossed the Atlantic (sixth time) — Landed in Liverpool — Went to London and thence to Antwerp — Thence to Termonde — Visited Paris and returned to Belgium. No dates given.

Distance traveled, 7.705 miles.

1848.

Early in the year Father De Smet started on a tour of the principal cities of Holland and Belgium soliciting funds and enlisting recruits for the missions — Embarked at Ostend and crossed to England — Re-embarked at Liverpool and crossed the Atlantic (seventh time) to New York — Visited Washington and Albany, returning each time to New York — Went to St. Louis via Albany, Troy, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Lake Erie to Sandusky, by rail to Cincinnati, by steamboat to St. Louis.

Under orders of his superior, Father De Smet left St. Louis about the middle of August for a tour of the Sioux country on missionary duty — Traveled by steamer to Council Bluffs — Thence by land to Fort Pierre, visiting the various tribes en route — Explored the Bad Lands of White river — Visited nearly all the Sioux tribes — About the end of October he took a skiff at the mouth of Little Medicine river and started for St. Louis — Forced by the ice

to abandon boat about fifty miles above St. Joseph — Took wagon and overtook last steamboat of season between St. Joseph and Kansas City — Arrived in St. Louis late in December.

Few dates given.

Distance traveled, 9,772 miles.

1849.

Early in the spring Father De Smet, in the capacity of Socius, left on his inspection of the colleges at Louisville, Bardstown and Cincinnati.

After their return to St. Louis, they set out in August to visit several of the Indian missions — Ascended the Missouri to Westport — Thence overland via Fort Scott to the Osage Mission of St. Hieronimo on the Neosho river — Thence visited the Miami, Shawanoes and other tribes — “ Followed for some time the great Santa Fe Route ” on their way to St. Mary’s Mission in the valley of the Kansas — Then returned to Westport and thence to St. Louis, visiting the various towns on the way.

Distance traveled, 2,766 miles.

1850.

Early in the spring Father De Smet went to Chicago and return on affairs of the Province — Then he visited, with the Father Provincial, their establishments at Louisville, Bardstown, Cincinnati and Chillicothe — “ Toward the end of summer ” Father De Smet and the Father Provincial went to New Orleans on business of the Society — Visited several places on the way — Visited Springhill College near Mobile, Alabama, and returned to New Orleans about the end of the year.

Distance traveled, 4,191 miles.

1851.

Returned with the Father Provincial from New Orleans to St. Louis in January.

“ The Government having resolved to hold a grand council of all the tribes of the upper Missouri, the Father Provincial (F. Elet), at the urgent request of D. D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, sent Reverend Father Christian Hoeken and myself to join the expedition with a view of rendering any assistance in our power in furthering the views of the Government among the tribes with whom I had become acquainted. The opportunity, at the same time, was favorable to announce the consoling word of God to the poor benighted savages of these distant regions. On the 7th of June we left St. Louis on board the steamer *St. Ange*, bound for Fort Union near the mouth of the Yellowstone river.”

June 10th cholera broke out on board and Father Hoeken died of it on the 19th, near the mouth of Little Sioux river, about half way between the modern Omaha and Sioux City — The boat stopped on its way among the several tribes to give Father De Smet an opportunity of consulting with them, and he made numerous horseback trips to their various camps — Arrived at Fort Union July 14th.

July 31st Father De Smet, accompanied by Major Culbertson and thirty-two Indian chiefs of the Assiniboin, Crow, Minnetaree and Aricara tribes, set out for the council ground on the Platte river near Fort Laramie — Crossed the high country west of the Yellowstone river to Fort Alexander on the left bank of this stream opposite the mouth of the Rosebud, where they arrived August 11th — Resumed their journey August 17th, crossed the Yellowstone and ascended the Rosebud to its source — Left the valley of the Rosebud August 22d and crossed over to the valley of the Tongue river — Left Tongue river next day and entered the watershed of Powder river in the valley of Piney Fork — Passed Lake De Smet (named on this occasion) on the 24th — Reached Powder river August 27th — Crossed the divide between the Powder and Platte rivers September 1st, and next day reached the Oregon and California road on the north bank of the Platte at the

Red Buttes — Arrived at Fort Laramie on September 10th, and at the council ground, “thirty-seven miles below Fort Laramie,” at the mouth of Horse creek, on the 11th.

Here Father De Smet remained, assisting at the council, and giving religious instructions to the Indians, until September 24th, when he left for St. Louis in company with Messrs. D. D. Mitchell, Robert Campbell, Thomas Fitzpatrick and others — Traveled by the usual route to Fort Kearney, where they parted company, Father De Smet and Major Fitzpatrick, with a deputation of Indians, branching off to visit St. Mary’s Mission on the Kansas river — October 15th Father De Smet reached Kansas City where he took steamer and reached St. Louis on the 21st of the same month.

Distance traveled, 5,457 miles.

## CHAPTER I.<sup>1</sup>

### EXPEDITION TO THE SIOUX — 1848.

The Sioux mission still under consideration — Nebraska vacant between the Platte and Niobrara — Hardships of land travel — Heat, insects, lack of water — Bad Lands — First meeting with the Poncas — The designs of Providence for America — Meets the Sioux at Fort Pierre — The Red Fish affair — Indians and idiots — Medals and medicine — Little encouragement for missionary work among the Sioux — Downstream in the fall by skiff, wagon and steamboat.

**A** TRANSIENT visit to some tribes of Sioux, on the upper Missouri, on my way back from the Rocky Mountains, [1846] left in me an ardent desire to see those poor Indians again. I was anxious to judge more maturely of their disposition, and ascertain with greater certainty what hopes might be entertained from the establishment of a mission among them. During the course of last summer, my superiors granted me this truly consoling privilege.

In order to reach their villages, I was obliged to ascend the Missouri as far as Bellevue (a village situated in the territory of the Otoes, 610 [665] miles from St. Louis), and then pursue my journey on horseback, over immense prairies, for about twenty-five days. An excursion through

<sup>1</sup> This chapter comprises Letters II, III, IV and V of the *Western Missions and Missionaries*, which are Letters I, II, III and IV of the *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*. The English text is mainly followed. The narrative of this expedition appears among Father De Smet's papers as a letter to an unnamed lady, written prior to January 1, 1849. It was published early in 1849 as a series of six letters to the Archbishop of Baltimore, in the *Baltimore Catholic Magazine*, and in July, 1850, in the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, as a series of four letters to the Central Council of Lyons and Paris and the Directors of the Work, dated St. Louis University, June, 1849. It was thus printed in the *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres* and thence translated for the *Western Missions and Missionaries*.

the magnificent plains of the great American desert, and, above all, in the vicinity of this noble river, which descends in innumerable torrents from the Rocky Mountains, offers undoubtedly many charms, and might afford material for descriptions replete with interest; but it would be a theme on which I have had predecessors, and, moreover, it would be giving the letters which I have the honor to address you an extent quite beyond what I dare assume. I will content myself with a sketch by Mr. Nicollet, my own experience enabling me to appreciate the exact fidelity of his picture.

“Consider the boundless extent of a prairie — scan one by one its undulations, and borne as it were from wave to wave, from valley to hill-top, find yourself in presence of the limitless plain which is spread out before you; journey onward — hours, days and weeks will succeed each other, and emotions of ever-varying delight will captivate the mind, while the spectacle of inexhaustible wealth and new beauties will fascinate the eye. Without doubt there will be moments in which the ardors of a burning sun, and the privation of pure water capable of allaying thirst, will force you to remember that the best of earthly joys have their hidden thorn; but these trials are rare and brief. A gentle breeze almost continually refreshes the atmosphere in these vast plains, and the surface is so uniform as to baffle a surprise from the most crafty enemy. The route is one field of verdure, enameled with odoriferous wild-flowers, whose brilliant beauty has no witness but the azure firmament. It is particularly during summer that the aspect of the prairies breathes gayety, grace and life, and if there be any one moment in which they may excite all the sympathies of the traveler, it is when an Indian hunter, in pursuit of the deer or bison, animates this immense solitude with his presence and motions. I pity the man whose heart remains unaffected before so ravishing a spectacle!”

My land journey commenced at Bellevue, nine miles beyond the Nebraska or Platte river, thence to the mouth of the Niobrara or *L'Eau-qui-court*, ten days' march. We

met not a single Indian, and no vestige of human habitation greeted the eye. But ever and anon we distinguished small artificial mounds, erected by the hand of man; irregular heaps of stones, and tombs containing the mortal remains of Indians, carefully wrapped in buffalo robes. At times a solitary post marked the spot where some brave had fallen in the field of battle — where reposed, perhaps, some ancient Nestor of the desert. These monuments, though with no epitaph to attest lofty deeds or transmit names to posterity, are a tribute of a feeling heart — a mute testimony of the respect the Indian bears to the memory of a father or a friend, and of the value he attaches to the glory of his ancestors. Some herds of bison and dense flocks of deer, of several species, that fled at our approach, alone beguiled the tedium of the march.

It is customary to encamp in places where the grass is fresh, which is generally on the border of a stream or pond of clear water. Care must also be taken for the safety of the horses during the night. To prevent all accident, they are hobbled — *enfargé*, as the Canadian voyagers say — that is, the two fore-legs are tied together, so as to prevent their straying too far from the camp. Two or three men remain on guard against any surprise from the Indians, too justly renowned as the most expert of horse-thieves. These sentinels also protect us against the bears and wolves which infest the wilderness, and incessantly prowl in the neighborhood of camps. Horses, on perceiving them, take fright and fly, unless the necessary precautions have been taken, and it sometimes happens that the most careful measures prove futile. Thus we, one day, lost a superb stallion of great value. Every evening he was tied to a post, with a long and heavy halter, but in a fright, caused by the approach of wolves, he darted forward with such velocity after the other horses as they rushed by him, that on reaching the end of his halter he broke his neck.

In so long a march, through regions so singularly various, two great inconveniences are sometimes experienced —

want of water and of wood. More than once we had no other fuel than the dry bison-dung, and three times at our camping ground water failed us. This is a hard trial for man and horse, especially after traveling all day under the burning sun of the month of August. Another kind of torment, still less supportable when the heat is most intense, is the appearance of fantastical rivers and lakes in the verge of the horizon, seeming to invite the weary traveler to advance and refresh his wasted strength upon their banks. Fatigue and thirst picture in the distance verdure, shade and coolness awaiting him. The illusion increases the desire of quenching your burning thirst. You hasten onward to reach the goal. Hour succeeds hour; the deceitful mirage heightens in brilliancy, and the panting, exhausted traveler presses on without a suspicion that the phantom flies before him. In an open, elevated region, where the atmosphere is in continual agitation, this effect may be easily produced by the reverberation of the sun's rays from the surface of these vast prairies, throwing the various tints of the verdure upon the deep blue of the firmament.

Besides the difficulties arising from the nature of the ground, there are others which summer always brings with its myriads of insects. Among these, the most to be dreaded is the *gad-fly*, the sting of which will make the gentlest horse bound with rage. Happily for the horse in these plains, Providence has bestowed upon him a defender as skilful as devoted; the starling, unalarmed by the presence of man, which, wheeling ever about the rider, lights on the back of the horse or on his load, to dart with wonderful skill upon the malicious insect which is about to attack his traveling companion.

For ourselves, we were obliged to wage continual war upon the swarms of mosquitoes and their allies the gnats. The latter teased us by day, the former, more cowardly, attacked us by night. These famished enemies, the product of the stagnant waters and decaying plants, at the approach of a convoy rush from their infected abodes, and accom-

pany it with their plaintive buzzing, to the spot where the traveler seeks in vain a brief repose after the heat and hardships of the day. The winged tribe at once sound the trump of war, and darting on their tired victim, sting, harass and pursue him until they have assuaged their sanguinary fury, and obliged the unfortunate traveler, already sweltering with heat, to seek a stifling shelter under a buffalo robe or a thick blanket. One day I found myself the object of attack of a swarm of winged ants. They came upon me with such furious impetuosity that in a few seconds I was totally covered. Then I waved my handkerchief about my head, and soon got my horse to leave far behind us this phalanx of black insects, which filled a space of about a quarter of a mile.<sup>2</sup>

To those who pass their days amid the quiet of domestic joys, surrounded by all the delicacies that abundance can produce, a journey through the prairies may appear a sad realization of human misery and suffering; but to the man that elevates his thoughts above earthly and passing things, in order to devote himself to the many unfortunate souls who will love and serve the true God when they know him, such a one can perceive in these privations, in even greater perils and difficulties which may be encountered, only slight annoyances, which he will prefer to all the delights of indolence or the dangers of wealth. He has meditated the sublime words of our Lord: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away;" he recollects that a God become man—"although he was without sin bore the weight." His sufferings finally teach him that it is through tribulations and sacrifices that he can enter the kingdom of heaven and conduct thereto those who may desire to range themselves and die beneath the banner of the cross.

In my last letter I spoke of the annoyance resulting from the continual attacks and buzzing of the mosquitoes and

<sup>2</sup>In the history of western explorations there is scarcely an explorer who has not left on record experiences like this.

*brûlots*. I must add to this harsh music the more fearful and more disagreeable noise of the rattlesnake. These reptiles are frequently met in the region styled *Mauvaises-Terres* or Bad Lands, a very remarkable plateau, of which I will hereafter give a description — and where the Little Missouri [Teton or Bad river], the Mankizita-Watpa or Terre-Blanche, [White river] and the Niobrara take their rise. Here also are found the many-hued chameleon, the hideous lizard, the horned frog, known by the perhaps more classical name of salamander, and several varieties of small tortoise. I witnessed a singular trait of the instinct of a rattlesnake. The reptile was basking in the sun, surrounded by eight or ten little ones. As soon as she perceived me, she gave the rattle, opened her throat wide, and in an instant the whole brood descended. I withdrew some seconds, and then returned; the young ones had come forth from their living tomb, to which my presence quickly obliged them to seek refuge anew.

The unbroken, arid soil of the Bad Lands, which will ever baffle the most energetic and persevering labor, boasts, however, of several millions of townships, full of life and movement — I mean the villages of the prairie dog — the site of each one of which extends over an area of several square miles of smooth table land, on which the grass is very short and thin. The instincts of this remarkable animal (which bears some resemblance to the squirrel) are at once curious and amusing. The grass which springs up in the neighborhood of their dwellings they tear up by the roots; but their vandalism has its exceptions. They seem to respect and spare certain flowers which generally surround their little abodes, and give them a much more agreeable look. These proved to be the *Hedcoma hirta*, the *Solanum triflorum*, the *Lupinus pusillus*, the *Erigeron divaricatum*, *Dysodia chrysanthemoides*, *Ellisia nyctagenea*, and the *Panicum virgatum*.

They pile up the earth around their dwellings about two feet above the surface of the soil, thus protecting them-

selves against the inundations which, in the rainy seasons or at the melting of the snows, would engulf them and their little hopes. Guided by instinctive foresight, they carefully gather all the straws which are scattered over the plain and carry them into their subterranean asylums, to protect them against the rigors of winter. At the approach of a horseman, alarm is rapidly communicated to all the citizens of this singular republic. All quit their habitations, and with head erect, the ears pricked up with anxiety, and a troubled stare, remain standing at the entrance of their abodes or at the opening of their conical hills. After a momentary silence, they break forth into one loud and repeated chorus of shrill barking. For some minutes life, motion and restless agitation reign throughout the extensive field they occupy; but at the first gun-shot all is tranquil, every animal disappearing like a flash. A kind of small owl and the rattlesnake appear to entertain amicable relations with the prairie-dog, and are commonly found at the entrance of their lodges, and in the general fight the three seek safety in the same asylum. The motives and nature of this singular sympathy are unknown. The wolf and the fox are their greatest enemies.

The Indian word Mankizita-Watpa, commonly translated White Earth river, signifies, more literally, Smoking Land river; and in this region there are incontestable and numerous indications that subterranean and volcanic fires have passed there. The water of the river is strongly impregnated with a whitish slime. We encamped on its shore. A heavy rain had recently washed all the ravines and dry beds of the rivulets and torrents, which are abundant throughout the Bad Lands, consequently the water was very similar to thin mud. What was to be done? We must either use this water to prepare our evening repast, or retire without tea or broth. This is no easy sacrifice in the desert, after riding on horseback for ten or eleven hours in the scorching sun. After many fruitless efforts to purify the water, we were obliged to use it as it was. Hunger

and thirst make us less dainty. The mixture of mud, tea and sugar was, after all, palatable to our famished stomachs. We set out a pailful of this water to settle over night, and in the morning found it three-quarters full of pure mud. On the morrow we traveled all day and found a delicious spring, where we camped all night.

The Bad Lands, in the portions which are traversed by the Mankizita-Watpa, are the most extraordinary of any I have met in my journeys through the wilderness. The action of the rains, snow and winds upon the argillaceous soil is scarcely credible; and the combined influence of these elements renders it the theatre of most singular scenery. Viewed at a distance, these lands exhibit the appearance of extensive villages and ancient castles, but under forms so extraordinary, and so capricious a style of architecture, that we might consider them as appertaining to some new world, or ages far remote. Here a majestic Gothic tower, surrounded with turrets, rises in noble grandeur, and there enormous and lofty columns seem reared to support the vault of heaven. Farther on you may descry a fort beaten by the tempest and surrounded by mantellated walls; its hoary parapets appear to have endured, during many successive ages, the assaults of tempest, earthquake and thunder. Cupolas of colossal proportions, and pyramids which recall the gigantic labors of ancient Egypt, rise around. The atmospherical agents work upon them with such effect that probably two consecutive years do not pass without reforming or destroying these strange constructions. This clayey soil hardens easily in the sun, is of a grayish hue, or occasionally of a sparkling white; it is easily softened when mixed with water. The Mankizita-Watpa is the great drain of the streams of this country, and corresponds admirably to the name bestowed upon it by the Indians.

The industry of the settler will never succeed in cultivating and planting this fluctuating and sterile soil — no harvest ever crown his efforts. But though it offers no interest to the farmer, and little to the botanist, the geolo-

gist and naturalist may find abundant material for study and illustration; for here are found curious remains of the mastodon (the largest of known quadrupeds), mingled with those of the mountain-hare. I have seen well-preserved skulls, horns and tortoises, so large that two men could hardly raise them. All of these bore the distinct impress of their primitive nature.

It remains for me to give some details concerning the Indian tribes that I was able to visit. In none of my preceding voyages had I met the Poncas; this time I found the whole of this nation assembled at the mouth of the Niobrara — their favorite haunt during the fruit season and the gathering of the corn harvest. The manner in which they accosted my traveling companions augured little good, and was near being attended with disastrous consequences. It appears, indeed, that they meditated an attack upon the little troop of white men who, numbering but fifteen, escorted a wagon filled with merchandise for the Fur Company. They intended, at least, to pillage the convoy and kill one of the travelers, under pretext that he came from the country of the Pawnees, where one of their warriors had lost his life. I will present you here the laconic formula of reasoning of one of these barbarians, while in the act of taking aim at his victim. "My brother was killed by a Pawnee; thou art a notorious friend of the Pawnees! I must avenge his death, or recover the debt (value of his body) in horses or in blankets!" To this degree, unfortunately, has the idea of justice sunk in the Indian mind. Has an Indian fallen by the hand of a white man, every brave of that tribe considers himself justified in retaliating upon the first white man he chances to meet, without regard to his country or the part of the world from which he may come. I was in advance, but at the first signal of alarm I faced the point of danger. At once the air resounded with reiterated cries of "The Black-robe has come! The Black-robe has come!" Surprise and curiosity arrest the work of pillage. The chiefs ask an explanation,

and order the spoilers to keep respectfully off, and restore what they had already stolen; then they press around me to shake hands (a ceremony somewhat lengthy, for they were about 600 in number), and conduct us in triumph to our encampment on the shore of the Niobrara. In my turn I made a little distribution of tobacco, which they appeared to appreciate more than anything else. The calumet is smoked in token of fraternal good feeling, and passed from mouth to mouth: they lavish upon me as well as upon my companions the most touching marks of kindness and respect. Such was the happy conclusion of a meeting which at first inspired us with such just fears. But the merciful views of Providence extended further.

They besought me to visit their village, four miles from our camp, in order to pass the night with them. I accepted the invitation the more willingly, as it would afford me an opportunity of announcing the truths of Faith. In fact I lost no time, and shortly after my arrival the whole tribe, numbering more than 1,000 persons, surrounded the "Black-robe." This was the first time that the Poncas had heard Jesus Christ preached by the mouth of his minister. The holy eagerness and attention which they lent to my words induced me to prolong my instructions until late in the night. The next day I baptized their little ones, and when the time of separation arrived they besought me with the greatest earnestness to renew my visit, and to fix my residence among them. "We will cheerfully listen to the Words of the Great Spirit," said they, "and submit to all his commands that you manifest to us." Until their wishes can be gratified, I considered myself happy to find among them a Catholic half-breed, tolerably well instructed in his religion, who promised me to serve as catechist.

This extraordinary attention on the part of the Indians, and their avidity to hear the Word of God, must appear surprising in a people which seems to unite all intellectual and moral miseries. But the Spirit of the Lord breathes where it will. His graces and his light prompt and aid

men whom ignorance, rather than a perverse and disordered will, renders vicious. Moreover, that same Spirit which obliged the most rebellious to cry with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" can also soften the most obdurate hearts, warm the coldest, and produce peace, justice and joy where before reigned iniquity, trouble and disorder. The great respect and the marked attention which the poor Indians testify on all occasions to the missionary who appears among them to announce the gospel, are a source of much consolation and encouragement to him. He discovers the finger of God in the spontaneous manifestations of good will offered by these poor creatures.

The language of the Poncas differs little from that of the Otoes, the Kansas and the Osages. Of intrepid and tried courage, they have, notwithstanding the paucity of their numbers, made themselves feared by their more numerous neighbors. They may with justice be styled the Flatheads of the Plains, on account of their bravery. Although attached by taste to the wandering life, they have begun to cultivate some fields of corn, of pumpkins and potatoes.<sup>3</sup>

Here, then, is a portion of the vineyard as yet untilled, but which only waits for a generous, charitable hand to cause it to yield fruits worthy of the dews of heaven. Can the Lord refuse his grace and his assistance to the apostolic man, who abandons all the advantages of civilized life in order to teach, in the midst of every species of privation, the salutary and consoling words of the gospel? When I reflect upon the hopes that may be justly entertained of the Indian tribes of the North and West of the United States, I cannot refrain from blessing the bounty and mercy of God, and trembling at the consideration of the terrible judgments of his justice. While Europe, shaken to the centre by the incessant efforts of learned impiety, appears to have strength or vigor only to shake off the divine yoke which the blood

<sup>3</sup> The later story of the Poncas the curious reader may find told in Mrs. Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*.

of Jesus Christ has rendered "sweet and easy," the forlorn inhabitant of the far-distant wilderness lifts his suppliant hands to heaven, and in all the sincerity of his heart asks to know the true Faith, and to be directed in the path of true happiness. While in the heart of Catholicity the priests of the Most High sink under oppression,<sup>4</sup> Providence, impenetrable in its views, is secretly preparing for them the vast solitudes of another hemisphere. There, perhaps, the Divine Master will fix his sanctuary, and choose to himself new worshippers whose simple hearts will offer him only an oblation of gratitude and love.

It is time to pass to the Sioux, whose territory I reached a few days after my visit to the Poncas. Mr. [Colin] Campbell, one of the best interpreters in the country, generously offered to accompany me to the different tribes of this nation. His acquaintance with the country and the manners of the Indians, as well as the respect and friendship which the latter entertain for him, greatly facilitated my relations with them. I must also add, as a tribute of well-merited gratitude, that the officers of Fort Bouis and of Fort Pierre received me with the most delicate hospitality, and that the concurrence of their influence aided powerfully to render my intercourse with the savages easier and more profitable.

I have several times observed, in former letters, that the Indians inhabiting the valley of the Upper Missouri are generally more cruel than those sojourning west of the Rocky Mountains. Probably this arises from their almost incessant wars, which inflame them with a love of plunder and a thirst for vengeance. At the epoch of my visit to the Sioux, a troop of these barbarians were returning from a war against the Omahas, with thirty-two human scalps torn from defenseless old men, and from women and children whose husbands and fathers were off hunting. When they

<sup>4</sup> The allusion is to the revolutionary occurrences of 1848 in Rome, which compelled Pope Pius IX to take refuge in Gaeta.

See, in connection with the hint contained in this sentence, the anecdote of the Flathead chief, related on page 1341.

re-enter their villages, after the combat, it is their custom to attach these horrible trophies of their shameful victory to the points of their lances or to the bits of their horses. At the sight of these spoils the whole tribe shouts with joy, and every one considers it the highest gratification to assist at the Scalp Dance and Feast — which is celebrated amid the most discordant yells and fearful gestures. They plant a post daubed with vermilion in the midst of the camp; the warriors surround it, flourishing in their hands the bloody scalps which they have brought back from the field of battle; each one howls his war-song to the lugubrious tone of a large drum; then giving in turn his stroke of the tomahawk on the post, he proclaims the victims that his hatchet has immolated, and exhibits ostentatiously the scars of the wounds which he has received.

Such is, even at the present day, the degraded condition of the unfortunate Indian. They never take the field without endeavoring to draw down the favor of the Great Spirit, either by diabolical rites or by rigorous fasts, macerations, and other corporeal austerities. They even go so far as to cut off joints of the fingers and toes. Add to the thick shade of heathen darkness a shocking deprivation of manners, and you will have a faint idea of the lamentable position of these wretched tribes. Yet these same men welcomed me with open arms, as a messenger from the Great Spirit! A vivid emotion, depicted in every countenance, accompanied their respectful attention to my discourse, while I instructed them in the great truths of religion.

An event which occurred two days after my arrival at Fort Pierre, contributed much to augment their confidence in me. I give it as it occurred. The tribe of the Ogallalas had entered in a hostile manner on the lands of their neighbors, the Absarokas (or Crows), and had attacked them. The latter defended themselves bravely, routed their aggressors, and killed ten or twelve warriors. They had even employed a mode of repulsion which covered the tribe that experienced its effects with immortal disgrace: they

pursued the Ogallalas with rods and clubs. This, according to them, signifies "that their adversaries were worth neither the lead nor powder that would be expended in killing them." So shameful a defeat discourages the Indian, and he no longer dares appear before such an enemy.

In this affair, the chief of the vanquished nation, named Red Fish, lost his daughter, who was carried off by the Crows into captivity. Melancholy and humbled, he deserted the wigwams of his tribe, which loss of honor and the death of so many of its warriors had overwhelmed with mourning and desolation. He presented himself at Fort Pierre on the morrow of my arrival. The object of his journey was to obtain the liberty of his daughter, through the mediation of the officers of the fort; he offered eighty fine buffalo robes and his best horses for her ransom. In his visit to me, grasping my hand firmly in his, with tears coursing down his cheeks, and heart-broken with grief, he thus addressed me, while sobs often interrupted his utterance: "Black-gown, I am a most unhappy father! I have lost my beloved daughter. Pity me, for I have learned that the medicine of the Black-gown (prayer) is powerful before the Great Spirit. Speak to the Master of Life in my favor, and I will still preserve hope of seeing my child."

To these few words, which the emotion of the aged man rendered singularly eloquent, I replied that I sympathized with his sorrow, but that he must himself prepare the way for the blessing of heaven — and that by virtuous deeds he might obtain from the Great Spirit the accomplishment of his desires. I added that without doubt the Master of Life had been offended by this unjust attack upon the Crows, of which he himself had been the chief instigator, in his position as Head Chief, and that to himself solely he must attribute the misfortune of his child and all the other miseries which had resulted from that expedition. I exhorted him to abandon in future all unprovoked attacks upon his neighbors, and to persuade his tribe to hearken to the orders of the Great Spirit, which I had come to announce to them.

I concluded by speaking to him of the mercy of God, who always hears the voice of the afflicted when they love and serve him. I also promised him the assistance of my prayers, and he on his part agreed to follow my counsels.

Red Fish returned soon after to his nation and collected all the principal chiefs, in order to communicate to them what had passed at the fort, and in particular his conversation with me, the Black-robe, concerning his daughter. At that very moment a cry of joy was heard in the extremity of the camp. They ran up from all sides to ask the cause; at length the good tidings are announced, that the captive daughter has escaped safe and sound from her enemies. The old chieftain scarcely dares to believe what he hears. He rises, and on leaving his cabin he has the unspeakable consolation of beholding once more his beloved child, whom Providence had restored. Imagine, if possible, his astonishment and delight, shared with him by his tribe. Every hand was lifted to heaven to thank the Great Spirit for the deliverance of the prisoner. The report flew quickly from village to village, and this coincidence, that divine Providence permitted for the good of the Ogallalas, was to them a certain proof of the great power of Christian prayer, and will, I hope, contribute to confirm these poor Indians in their good dispositions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The adventures of the daughter of Red Fish are thus related in a later letter, found in the third Belgian edition of Father De Smet's writings.—“From the time of her capture by the Crows, the girl had passed her nights with her hands and feet tied by leather straps to pegs, strongly driven in the ground. On the night following the mass offered at Fort Pierre, a *woman* untied her bonds, gave her a little bundle containing food and several pairs of moccasins, and told her in a low voice ‘to get up and start out for her camp, where her father was waiting for her.’ She traveled all that night. At day-break, she hid in a hollow tree on the bank of a river. A few hours later a band of young warriors, following her trail, breathing vengeance and uttering frightful yells, crossed the river precisely at the hollow tree. They looked in vain for the tracks of their destined victim on the farther bank, and finally returned to camp, much puzzled by the mysterious escape of the young enemy. When night

The number of half-breed and Indian children baptized among the Sioux amounts to several hundred. I conferred the same sacrament upon six adults far advanced in years, two of whom were over ninety, and dwelt in a little hut of buffalo skins, in which a poor fire with difficulty imparted a little warmth to their members, chilled and stiffened with age. They received me with great joy. I spoke to them of the Great Spirit, of the necessity of baptism, of the future life, of the blessed or miserable eternity which must follow this state of being. They listened with avidity to the instructions which I repeated during several days, and, in fine, received the sacrament of regeneration. They were never weary of telling me again and again that they had never ceased to love the Great Spirit, and that, being ignorant of more suitable prayers, they had daily offered him the first fruits of the calumet!

This recalls to my mind a fact, insignificant in itself, which nevertheless proved a source of genuine consolation to me. On my arrival in the nation of the Brûlés, I was singularly surprised to find myself followed by a youth about fifteen years of age, whom my presence seemed to afford a degree of pleasure which it would be difficult for me to describe. The little kind encouragement by which I responded to his manifestation of contentment, so effectually conciliated his affection for me, that the efforts and threats even of the savages who surrounded me could not remove him any length of time from my person. Scarcely had they taken him from my side by violence, when another path brought him back; he even penetrated into the grand council of the chiefs, in which the expeditious diplomacy of the Brûlés agitated the questions of which my arrival among them required a solution. Night came on, and terminating the deliberations of the assembly, obliged me to withdraw

came on the poor girl resumed her journey and walked several days and nights in succession with very little rest. At last she reached her father's camp, a few minutes after he arrived on his return from Fort Pierre."

from my new friend. His narrow and flattened brow, his silly stare and extraordinary gestures, gave me to understand that he was of the number of those beings whose want of reason is a safeguard against the loss of innocence, and I resolved to regenerate him on the morrow in the salutary waters of baptism. I therefore caused the whole tribe to be collected, and after giving them a clear explanation of the blessings of the sacrament that I was going to confer, I caused them to understand the happiness that was in reserve for all eternity to a being apparently so vile, and who had hitherto been only an object of their contempt, or at least of their compassion. These few words produced a profound impression upon my new auditory, and were followed by numerous petitions for the grace belonging to the Great Spirit, like my poor friend Paschal (this was the name of the little idiot), who is now treated with respect almost amounting to veneration throughout his whole tribe. But not being able to remain with them longer than a few days, I contented myself with baptizing a great number of their children; and giving the others a hope that later we would return and visit them, and that we could then instruct them and grant, in a more useful manner, the favor which they solicited.

There is a custom existing among the Indians which is excessively fatiguing to the stranger or to the missionary who visits one of their villages. As soon as he arrives, a succession of grand banquets is given in his honor, and Indian politeness exacts that he accept all these invitations — and the savage prepares without delay the best and most delicate that he has. The fat dog, which with them replaces the fatted calf, is the most acceptable dish, and is reserved for great occasions. After this succeed buffalo tongues, ribs, etc., etc., and a great variety of fruits, grain and roots.

In every camp which I visited I was conducted ceremoniously from banquet to banquet by the leading chiefs. Everywhere I was presented with a dish so filled with their delicacies that each portion would have sufficed me during

several days. All must be consumed. This would be impossible were it not for the allowance of the blessed privilege of conducting one or two *eat*ers with us. In some of the Sioux camps the guests are permitted just to touch the dish, and then take it home to their cabins.

In the various camps which I visited, I presented each one of the great chiefs with a medal of our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX. On this occasion I explained to them the high position of the Great Chief of all the Black-robés — the respect, the veneration and the love that all the nations faithful to the Great Spirit testify to his vicar on earth, etc., etc. They immediately brought the calumet, and after having offered it first to the Master of Life, imploring his blessing, the savages, in their engaging simplicity, presented it to his visible representative, entreating me to make known to him the esteem and love which they bear to him, and the ardent desire they entertain to listen to the Black-robés sent in his name.

When distributing medals to the Indians, these explanations become necessary; for, being naturally inclined to superstition, they often treat those objects with more than respect. A Sioux chief gave me a singular proof of this. While I was suspending the medal of Pius IX. to his neck, he testified an extraordinary joy and gratitude. "I will place it," said he, "with my War-Manitou; it will render me as prudent in councils during peace, as the other has rendered me strong in battle." I asked an explanation of these words. He at once opened a little box and drew forth from it a package, carefully wrapped up in buckskin. He unrolled it, and, to my great surprise, I saw a colored picture of General Diebitsch,<sup>6</sup> in full uniform and mounted on a beautiful war-horse. For years the Russian had been the Manitou of war to the Sioux chief; he invoked him and offered him his calumet, before all his enterprises against his enemies, and attributed to him the success of the many victories he had gained. I endeavored to disabuse the poor

<sup>6</sup> A Russian officer who served in the Napoleonic wars.

Indian of his strange devotion, and have reason to hope that my efforts were not useless.

As stated already, I was sent to the Sioux tribes to sound their dispositions in a moral and religious point of view. The little account that I have the honor of presenting you discloses the result of my visit. What I have narrated touching these inhabitants of the desert offers little encouragement to the missionary. There is an immense difference between them and the Flatheads and numerous other nations that occupy the regions west of the Rocky Mountains. These first children of my apostolate have given me consolations that I should vainly seek among the Sioux. Would, then, a mission with the latter prove destitute of success? The little experience that I have been able to acquire, and my residence among them, inspire me to trust more confidently in him who holds in his hands the most obdurate hearts and the most refractory wills. I hope that in the course of this year something may be done in favor of these degraded Indians, so long left without the aid of religion. The same happiness will be granted to the Blackfeet, who already count 1,100 neophytes. The pious Associates of the Propagation of the Faith may contribute greatly to the accomplishment of this holy work by their fervent prayers.

I quitted the uplands of the Niobrara and the Mankizita toward the end of October, 1848, before the season of rain and snow. These places are the temporary abodes to which the different tribes of Sioux repair in autumn for the purpose of hunting the wild animals, which abound at that time, and thus providing themselves with hides and meat for the approaching winter. The consumption of skins in Missouri<sup>7</sup> must be immense, for all Indians use them for constructing their huts, as well as for the harness of their horses and their own clothing. Last year 110,000 buffalo robes, with skins of elk, gazelle, deer, bighorn, otter, beaver, etc., and 25,000 salted tongues, were received in the ware-

<sup>7</sup> Fr. dans le Missouri.

houses of St. Louis. This may give you an idea of the extraordinary number of buffaloes killed, and of the extent of the vast wilderness which furnishes pasturage to these animals.

We set off in a skiff from Fort Bouis, which is near the mouth of the Little Medicine river. Our trip was delightful. The weather proved magnificent, and the two shores of the Missouri, teeming at this season with an extraordinary quantity of every species of game, offered the most graceful and varying spectacle, while it opened a vast field to the greediness and skill of our hunters.

At Council Bluffs, the sky, which had been hitherto clear and serene, suddenly changed, to give place to wind and tempest, and thick clouds of snow, which accompanied us during two days. We took refuge in a dense forest, in order to defend ourselves from the inclemency of the storm. The wild honey which we found there was our principal resource, one poplar alone, which we felled, furnishing us with more than we needed.

We made but little progress during ten days, on account of head winds, rain and snow. Before arriving at the mouth of the Big Tarkio, the Missouri was so covered with floating ice that, in our frail bark, we were exposed to the greatest danger, especially from the many sawyers with which the bed of the river is thickly set, and which discover or conceal their menacing heads on every side. These are trees, or trunks of trees, which the river uproots and washes from its banks, and whose roots get firmly fastened in the muddy bed of the river. As there are no dikes or embankments which can hinder the river from overflowing, it often happens that whole forests are uprooted and swallowed in its waves. These create great embarrassment and obstacles to its navigation.

Prudence forced us to abandon our boat. I therefore hired a farmer's wagon, which brought us safe and sound to St. Joseph, after a drive of two days through a great forest which skirts the Missouri. The steamer *Highland*

*Mary*, which I hoped to meet there, had departed on the eve of my arrival, and thus the opportunity of a prompt return to St. Louis appeared lost to me. I resolved, however, to exert myself to the utmost to overtake the boat: this to many would appear folly; the idea of running after a high-pressure steamboat certainly does appear quite ridiculous. But I relied upon the numerous delays of the boat at the different sand-banks, which were more likely to take place, also, as the season was advancing. I calculated well; in twenty-four hours I was on board at Fort Leavenworth.

For four months I had been night and day exposed to the open air, and, as in all my other excursions, with no bed but a buffalo robe. Yet my health had been uninterruptedly good, not even suffering from the slightest attack of cold; but scarcely was I subjected, for one day, to the heat of the stove in the cabin of the steamboat, when I was seized with a violent sore throat—it being my first indisposition through the whole of my long journey.

At length, after four months' absence, I arrived without other accident at the University of St. Louis, where, enjoying with my brethren the charms of the community life, I soon forgot the little fatigues of my expedition.

## CHAPTER II.<sup>1</sup>

### EN ROUTE TO THE GREAT COUNCIL.<sup>2</sup>

Up river with Christian Hoeken — High water — Cholera — Death of Father Hoeken — Beauties of the Upper Missouri — The Indian Question — Emptiness of the country — Smallpox among the Sioux — De Smet ministers to the victims — Cholera among the Aricaras — Remnant of the Mandan village — Fort Union.

#### *St. Louis to Fort Union.*

ON the 7th of June, [1851] accompanied by Father Christian Hoeken, I embarked at this place on board the steamer *St. Ange*,<sup>3</sup> to go to the Rocky Mountains. The boat ran to Fort Union, which is about three miles above the mouth of the river Yellowstone, on the northern side, and about 2,000 miles northwest of St. Louis. Several pas-

<sup>1</sup> Comprises Letters II and III, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*.

<sup>2</sup> Father De Smet's original narrative of the Journey of 1851 was written in six parts in English, and completed prior to December 26, 1851. He then translated it into French (invoking the aid of his friend, Father Verhaegen, to purge it of "Anglicisms and Flandricisms") in the form of six letters addressed to Father Terwecoren, of Brussels, and dated between the 16th and 30th of January, 1852. The first three of these were transmitted to the Father General for his approval on February 10, 1852, and the remaining three on the 23d. The series appeared in the *Précis Historiques* and were afterwards published as Letters II to VII, Second Series of the *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*. They were thence translated into English, and appear as Letters II to VII, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. This English text is followed for the most part in the present work.

<sup>3</sup> The owner and master of the boat was the distinguished Missouri river pilot and navigator, Joseph La Barge. Captain La Barge was a dear and intimate friend of Father De Smet, and always lent the aid of his boats to the Catholic missionary enterprises. Captain La Barge was born in 1815 and died in 1899.

sengers, members of the American Fur Company, set out on the same occasion, intending to repair to the different trading posts established among the Indians of the upper Missouri. They took with them about eighty men; these were principally Canadians, some were Americans, some Irish, German, Swiss and Italians, and several "*Français de France*," a title which is given them here to distinguish them from the Franco-Americans. They went in quest of earthly wealth; Father Hoeken and I in search of heavenly treasures — to the conquest of souls.

We had had a wet spring. Up to the moment of our departure the rain had been excessive; the snows and ice, which had collected in heaps during the rigorous season of the more northern regions, detaching themselves and dissolving, in a very short time swelled the thousand and thousand tributaries of the mighty Mississippi. These rivers, one after the other, precipitated their torrents into the "Father of Waters," and so swelled it that it overflowed, rolling its muddy billows from upland to upland, over a surface of eight, fifteen, and in several places of twenty miles in width. No longer knowing any bounds, the river, usually so grave and sublime, disappeared. Beneath its waters also vanished the verdure of the smiling plains, the stately forests and the varied spring flowers which so delight the eye of the traveler. A vast lake now covered all this space; and the immense volume of water, which went on continually enlarging, carried ruin and desolation among the numerous habitations which covered the lowlands on either shore. We could see the torrent descending with the violence and rapidity of an avalanche, overturning and sweeping everything with its angry waves.

In ordinary times, the sawyers and sand-banks are the principal obstacles to navigation in the western waters; they had now entirely disappeared, and gave the pilot no anxiety. But other dangers had taken their place; the whole face of the waters seemed covered with wrecks; houses, barns, stables, fences of fields and gardens, were borne away in

confusion, with thousands of uprooted trees — wood piled on the shore and lumber-yards were all afloat. In the midst of these floating masses, whose dangerous contact we could not always avoid, the *St. Ange* used her whole power of steam to stem an almost irresistible current. Several times the boat was carried down; twice, especially, it was a regular contest between the river and the steamer. The latter, for a good quarter of an hour, lay as if motionless in the midst of the angry waters, but thanks to the quantity of tar and resin with which her furnaces were charged, she at last triumphed.

Amid such fearful dangers, the remembrance of the object of the missionary's voyage sustains and animates him; he knows that he is in the hands of him who can "command the winds and the sea," and that rarely has heaven permitted that a vessel bearing missionaries should perish.

The inundations of the rivers, the continual rains of spring and the sudden transitions from heat to cold are, in this climate, sure precursors of malignant fevers. The cholera appears to assume an epidemic type in these regions. Disease in many forms soon appeared on board the *St. Ange*. From the moment of its advent a mournful silence took the place of the rude shouts and boisterous conversations of our travelers. Six days had hardly elapsed from our departure, when the boat resembled a floating hospital. We were 500 miles from St. Louis when the cholera broke out in the steamer. On the tenth a clerk<sup>4</sup> of the American Fur Company, vigorous and in the prime of manhood, was suddenly seized with all the symptoms of cholera, and expired after a few hours' illness. The following days several others were attacked with the same malady, and in a short time thirteen fell victims to the epidemic.

A bilious attack confined me to my bed nearly ten days. Good Father Hoeken devoted himself to the sick night and day, with a zeal at once heroic and indefatigable. He visited them; he assisted them in their sufferings; he prepared

<sup>4</sup> Lewis Willcocks, of New York.

and administered remedies; he rubbed the cholera patients with camphor; he heard the confessions of the dying, and lavished upon them the consolations of religion. He then went and blessed their graves on the bank of the river, and buried them with the prayers and ceremonies prescribed by the Roman ritual. This beloved brother had naturally a hardy constitution, and was habituated to a life of privation; but the journeys and continued labors of the mission among the Indians had greatly weakened it, and his assiduous and fatiguing attentions to the sick completely exhausted him. In vain I warned him, begging him to spare himself; his zeal silenced every other consideration; instead of taking precautions against exposure, he seemed to delight in it. It gave me pain to see him fulfilling this heroic work of charity alone; but I was in such a state of debility that I was incapable of offering him the least help. On the 18th, fears were entertained that my illness was assuming the form of cholera. I requested Father Hoeken to hear my confession and give me extreme unction, but at the very moment he was called to another sick person, who was in extremity. He replied, going, "I see no immediate danger for you; to-morrow we will see." He had assisted three dying ones that day. Alas! never shall I forget the scene that occurred some hours later. Father Hoeken's cabin was next to mine.

Between one and two o'clock at night, when all on board were calm and silent, and the sick in their wakefulness heard naught but the sighs and moans of their fellow-sufferers, the voice of Father Hoeken was suddenly heard. He was calling me to his assistance. Awaking from a deep sleep, I recognized his voice, and dragged myself to his pillow. Ah me! I found him ill, and even in extremity. He asked me to hear his confession: I at once acquiesced in his desire. Dr. Evans, a physician of great experience and of remarkable charity, endeavored to relieve him, and watched by him, but his cares and remedies proved fruitless. I administered extreme unction: he responded to all the prayers with a self-possession and piety which increased the esteem

that all on board had conceived for him. I could see him sinking. As I was myself in so alarming a state, and fearing that I might be taken away at any moment, and thus share his last abode in this land of pilgrimage and exile, I besought him to hear my confession, if he were yet capable of listening to me. I knelt, bathed in tears, by the dying couch of my brother in Christ — of my faithful friend — of my sole companion in the lonely desert. To him in his agony, I, sick and almost dying, made my confession. Strength forsook him: soon also he lost the power of speech, although he remained sensible to what was passing around him. Resigning myself to God's holy will, I recited the prayers of the agonizing with the formula of the plenary indulgence, which the Church grants at the hour of death. Father Hoeken, ripe for heaven, surrendered his pure soul into the hands of his Divine Redeemer on the 19th of June, 1851, twelve days after our departure from St. Louis. Who would then have foretold it? So ardent were his desires to labor for the glory of God, that he sighed for the wilderness — he thirsted for the salvation of souls! Alas! how many projects annihilated! In any other enterprise it would have proved sufficient motive for discontinuing a perilous journey; but the desire of procuring God's glory endows man with strength that nature denies him.

Father Christian Hoeken was born in Upper Brabant. He was only forty-three years old at his death. The last fifteen years of his life were passed among the Indians, who had conceived the most profound veneration for him. He was all to them — their father in Christ, their physician in illness, their counsel in difficulties, their sincere and faithful friend. When he could share anything with his poor neophytes, he rejoiced with all the simplicity of a child. His only consolation was to be among them. He was an active instrument in the hands of God to announce his holy word to thousands of pagans. The churches that he built and the fervent congregations of Indians that he collected and formed, attest his fervor and the apostolic zeal which

animated him. His holy death crowned all his labors. A martyr of charity, he exercised his sacred ministry to his very agony. Sad, but salutary, will ever be the remembrance of that last solemn and affecting hour. What friends could ever offer or take a more touching or more religious farewell?

The passengers were deeply moved at the sight of the lifeless corpse of him who had so lately been "all to all," according to the language of the apostle. Their kind father quitted them at the moment in which his services seemed to be the most necessary. I shall always remember with deep gratitude the solicitude evinced by the passengers to the reverend father in his dying moments. My resolution not to leave the body of the pious missionary in the desert was unanimously approved. A decent coffin, very thick, and tarred within, was prepared to receive his mortal remains: a temporary grave was dug in a beautiful forest, in the vicinity of the mouth of the Little Sioux, and the burial was performed with all the ceremonies of the Church, in the evening of the 19th of June, all on board assisting.

About a month after, on her return, as the *St. Ange* passed near the venerated tomb, the coffin was exhumed, put on board of the boat, and transported to the novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Florissant. There repose the mortal remains of Father Hoeken, with those of his brethren. His death, so precious in the sight of God, saddened the hearts of the passengers, but for many it was a salutary sorrow. A great number had not approached the tribunal of penance during long years; immediately after the funeral, they repaired one after another to my cabin to confess.

Five more passengers were also fatally attacked, but received before expiring the consolations of my ministry. The languor and weakness to which the fever had reduced me quitted me insensibly: after a lapse of some days I found myself perfectly recovered, so that I was able to celebrate mass on board and devote my whole time to the sick.

As the boat ascended the river and penetrated farther

into the country, attaining the higher and more open portions of the Indian territory, the epidemic gradually disappeared. We could again give a little time to the contemplation of the beauties of the wilderness, to reflections on the future of these interesting solitudes—above all, of their poor, despised inhabitants. I will describe them in my future letters. They will inform you whatever striking or edifying events happened in my relations with the Indians during the long and dangerous journey which I have just terminated.

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The mouth of the river Platte, or Nebraska, is the point of division between the Upper and Lower Missouri. To the early navigators on the river it was a kind of equinoctial, where, as at sea, the Neptunian tribute was exacted of all *pork-caters* (*mangeurs de lard*), as all were styled who visited the desert for the first time. No one could escape.

The flat country or the valley of the Lower Missouri, is covered with dense forests extending from the bank of the river to the high hills that skirt it on either side at from four to six miles. The forests are successively replaced by flourishing cities, fine villages and thousands of beautiful farms. This alluvial soil is probably unequaled on the earth for the richness of some of its productions. The wood is in great demand. As the country is settled and trade becomes more important, steam-mills increase and prepare all kinds of timber and boards; the steamboats, too, consume immense quantities of wood.

Between the Nebraska and the Wasécha, or Vermillion, for about 400 miles the forests are vast and beautiful, often intersected by rich prairies of turf and verdure. This contrast delights the traveler. Every time he enters the desert he cannot refrain from admiring this succession of forests and plains, this series of hills which encircle them and present such a variety of forms,—here and there covered with trees and underwood of a thousand kinds, sometimes

rising, bold, rugged cliffs, to the height of 100 or 200 feet, and then noble plains ascending gradually, with scattered groves, so pleasing to the sight that art seems to have crowned the work of Nature. We wonder that we do not see farms, barns and fences. Surely one just from Europe would think himself on the demesne of some great lord, and would be amazed at not seeing the mansion and its appurtenances.

Nature seems to have lavished its gifts on this region; and without being a prophet, I can predict a future far unlike the past for this desert. The words of the Psalmist will be soon applied — “The earth was created for the abode of man, and to manifest the glory and perfection of the Lord.”

These plains, naturally so rich and verdant, seem to invite the husbandman to run the furrow, and promise an ample reward to the slightest toil. Heavy forests await the woodman, and rocks the stonecutter. The sound of the axe and hammer will echo in this wilderness; broad farms, with orchard and vineyard, alive with domestic animals and poultry, will cover these desert plains to provide for thick-coming cities, which will rise as if by enchantment with dome and tower, church and college, school and house, hospital and asylum.

I speak here principally of the region from the mouth of the river Kansas to that of the Niobrara or *Eau qui coule*,<sup>5</sup> and extending beyond the Black Hills, continuing along their crest to the Rocky Mountains, thence it follows southwardly the already existing limits of Utah, New Mexico and Texas. This region contains several large rivers, with numerous tributaries, the principal of which are the Platte, the two rivers just named, and the head waters of the Arkansas, Osage and Red. These present the greatest inducements to civilization.

Will not the President of the Republic, like some of his

<sup>5</sup> An interesting variation of the usual name, *Eau qui court*.

predecessors, pluck some plumes from the Indian eagle, once the emblem of their greatness and power, to place them in the crown composed of the trophies of his administration? In the limits which I trace he will find an extent of country vast enough to be represented by three or four stars more of the first magnitude, which will enhance the lustre of the galaxy of the flag of the Union. This great territory will hold an immense population, destined to form several great and flourishing states.

But then, what will become of the Indians, who have already come from afar to abide in this land? What will become of the aborigines, who have possessed it from time immemorial? This is indeed a thorny question, awakening gloomy ideas in the observer's mind, if he has followed the encroaching policy of the States in regard to the Indian. I have remarked with pleasure one ray of hope in the future for these poor and wretched tribes. They readily send their children to school; they make rapid progress in agriculture, and even in several of the most necessary mechanical arts; they carefully raise poultry and domestic animals. We may then hope that the sad remnant of these numerous nations, who once covered America, now reduced to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow (for they can no longer subsist by hunting), will find an asylum, a permanent abode, and will be incorporated with all the rights of citizens of the Union. It is their only remaining chance of well-being; humanity and justice seem to demand it for them. If they are again repelled and banished farther inland, they will perish infallibly. The Indians who refuse to submit or accept the definitive arrangement, alone favorable to them, would resume the wandering life of the plains, and close their sad existence as the bison and other animals on which they live, vanish.

In the neighborhood of the Mankizita, or White-earth river, the hills are blackened, and evidently owe this appearance to subterraneous fires. The soil is light and sterile for about a hundred miles; the high hills have little verdure,

and the bottom or valley is very narrow. Some of the hills may even be called mountains.

The islands of the Missouri are, in general, well wooded, and present on all sides most agreeable views. On some is found the red cedar, the most durable wood of the country, lasting longer than any other when plunged in water or buried in earth. If we except the space between the Niobrara and Mankizita, where the low prairies are rare, and where the upland is almost entirely unwooded, this district has many fine sites, which seem to invite the pioneer and say "The time is not far off; here you will raise your cabin and till your field." Coal is also very abundant, and will supply the failure of the forests.

From the Mankizita to the great bend of the Missouri, and thence to Fort Mandan, and even about the mouth of the Yellowstone, on both banks, the country is very fine; the fertile soil gives most abundant crops. Here and there on the banks of the great rivers the forests are pretty fine, while in the upland plains, as you recede from the river, the country is destitute of trees and even of bushes.

In my visits to the Indian tribes, I have several times traversed the immense plains of the West. I have traveled over various sections, from the frontiers to the Pacific, and from the Hudson Bay territory, along the Saskatchewan and Athabasca, to Great Salt Lake, now the headquarters of the Mormons. Every time that I have traveled over these plains, I have found myself amid a painful void; Europe's thousands of poor, who cry for bread and wander without shelter or hope, often occur to my thoughts. "Unhappy poor," I often cry, "why are ye not here? Your industry and toil would end your sorrows. Here you might rear a smiling home, and reap in plenty the fruit of your toil." Yes, this void exists; and when I say it must be filled by an industrious and persevering population, I concur with the experience of all travelers.

It would be impossible for me to describe the sombre silence that reigns in this vast desert. You may pass weeks

there, on the march, without meeting a living soul. And yet we become habituated to it — like it. Solitude seems to give scope to man's intellectual faculties; the mind seems more vigorous, the thought clearer. It has always seemed to me that when one travels over the plains, he feels more inclined to prayer, meditation, confidence in God, more disposed to resign himself into the hands of him who alone is our refuge amid perils, and who alone can provide for all our wants. Doubtless the removal of all bustle and business, the constant dangers to which we are exposed from wild animals and enemies, liable to be met at every step, contribute to this.

It has often been remarked that the songs of the birds are more sweet and agreeable here than in the forests of the east. This phenomenon is capriciously attributed to the effects of society. From the scarcity of wood, the birds are forced to perch on the same tree, or seek the same grove, and thus teach each other. It is commonly supposed that the birds in Europe are better singers than those in America: can this be attributed to any other cause than that just given?

If you would have an idea of the topography, vastness and extent of our western plains, imagine France, Germany, Belgium changed into one single prairie, along water-courses, and intersected here and there by a wood of small extent, or by a very small forest.

You will excuse these little digressions on the localities I have traversed. They will show, withal, to our unbelievers in Europe, that science and civilization may find their account in voyages undertaken for the good of souls and the glory of the Church. And then, too, all these fair and varied objects make us incessantly bless heaven and say, with the Psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

At last we reached the Great Bend, where the boat came to land opposite a camp of Yanktons, a powerful tribe of the Sioux nation. As soon as these Indians perceived us,

they broke out into cries of joy, and honored our arrival by several volleys of musketry. Their women had prepared a great quantity of dry wood; we accepted it thankfully, and they received in return a present of tobacco, lead, flour, coffee and sugar — the articles they prize most.

The Indians gave us the sad tidings of the ravages which the smallpox was then causing at Post Bouis and its neighborhood, near Little Medicine river, which empties into the Missouri at the upper bay of the Great Bend. This bend is thirty-six miles in circumference, while it is only four miles across by land. At my request the captain put me ashore, and two hours after I was among the sick. I baptized all the little children who had not yet been fortunate enough to receive that sacrament. I spent the night with them, giving them all the consolation in my power. Some believed that the disease resembled the great plague in London. The survivors long retained black spots. Even during this contagious disease, the Indians retained their old custom of giving a last abode to the dead by placing the body, wrapped in a blanket or buffalo-robe, on scaffolds raised eight or ten feet above the plain. They left them thus exposed to the burning heat of a July sun, the most intense of the year. The pestilential exhalations of these corpses infected the air for miles around.

They showed me in their camp a little orphan boy who had been attacked, and who, given up, had been turned out of the lodge in the midst of the night, during a fearful rain, by his adoptive father, a cruel and unfeeling man. He was still alive in the morning, when a Canadian perceived him, and, like the good Samaritan, carried him to his hut and lavished the most constant care on him. I had the pleasure to see him recovering, and to baptize him.

Some days after I was at Fort Pierre, situated on the shore, south of the Missouri, about 1,500 miles above St. Louis, and near the mouth of the Shicka, or Bad river. The influenza had existed for some time in the fort, and a panic had seized many at the news that the smallpox was

in the neighborhood and the cholera on board. In fact, immediately after we started, the last broke out and carried off many. The Indians, awe-struck at the approach of danger from this implacable scourge, were overjoyed at my presence; the children of the whites and of the Indians encamped around the fort were presented to me, to the number of eighty-two,<sup>6</sup> to be regenerated in the holy waters of baptism.

The same inquietude reigned at the post of the Aricaras. Some couriers had announced the approach of the boat, and spread alarm by reporting that there were contagious diseases on board. But when the people saw that all were well, their fears vanished, and they welcomed the boat with the usual demonstrations on such occasions. Cries of joy burst from 2,000 mouths; volleys of cannon and musketry rolled echoing over the plains. The scene was beautiful and imposing. The fort stands on a high hill, nearly a hundred feet above the level of the river. A long row of Indians, in their gayest costumes, their faces daubed with various colors, lined the shore.

I had galloped on in advance of the boat, to have time to instruct the half-breeds and Canadians and baptize all their children. I spent two days among them. A great number of Indians, learning of my arrival at the fort, came to shake hands with me from respect, and to bid me welcome. At the same time they earnestly begged me to grant their little children the same benefit of baptism that I had granted the half-breed children. I yielded eagerly to their wishes, in consequence of the great danger in which they were. The number of baptisms was about 200. Not long after, I heard that the cholera had swept through the village of the Aricaras, and that many of the children had fallen victims. What a consolation, that by the sacrament I unlocked the gates of heaven to them!

We now bade farewell to the officers of the fort, to plunge farther into the desert. Ere long we passed the Mandan

<sup>6</sup> Fr. 182.



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village, composed of large huts covered with earth. This once numerous nation is now reduced to a few families, the only survivors of the smallpox of 1838 [1837]. Their village lies 1,800 miles above the mouth of the Missouri, 200 below the mouth of the Yellowstone. Some days after, we stopped at Fort Berthold, to land some goods at the great village of the Minnetarees, or Osier tribe, nicknamed the Grosventres of the Missouri. Their cabins are built like those of the Aricaras and Mandans. Four forks, or rather four forked trees, set in the ground about twenty feet apart, form a square. These are joined on top by cross-pieces, over which other pieces are laid obliquely, leaving a great opening in the centre, to admit air and give vent to the smoke; these pieces are woven together with osiers: the whole is covered with hay and earth—not with turf, however. An opening is made on one side to receive the door, which consists of a bison-skin. Before the door is a sort of alley, ten or fifteen feet long, inclosed by pickets, and easily defended in case of attack. In the middle of the lodge, under the upper opening which admits the light, a hole about a foot deep is dug to answer as a fireplace. Around the lodge there are beds, one, two or three feet from the floor, with doe-skins as curtains. The whole village is surrounded by a high and strong palisade of large trees, squared.

The Minnetarees raise Indian-corn, squashes, beans and potatoes. The other permanent villages on the Missouri are those of the Osages, Omahas, Poncas, Pawnees, Aricaras and Mandans. The Minnetarees are of the same stock as the Crows, and speak about the same language. They say that they separated in consequence of a dispute between two chiefs, over a bison that both claimed to have killed on a hunt.

The great chief of the latter [Minnetaree] village, called Four Bears, is the most civil and affable Indian that I met on the Missouri. He begged me to baptize his two little boys and several members of his family. All the children

of this tribe had been baptized by Reverend Mr. Belcour, a zealous and untiring missionary of the Vicariate Apostolic of Red River, which is under the jurisdiction of Monseigneur Provencher. Reverend Mr. Belcour has visited these tribes several times, and met with great success in disposing them in favor of our holy religion. I learned, to my consolation, that in all probability a mission would be soon established there, with one or two resident priests, under the direction of Monseigneur Provencher.<sup>7</sup>

The place is admirably well chosen, and the benefits of religion will easily spread thence among the neighboring nations, such as the Mandans, Aricaras and Assiniboins. These tribes evince great eagerness to hear the word of God and to be instructed in our holy faith, whenever a Catholic missionary visits them. In Europe, the preachers and catechists must use a thousand means to win auditors; here men call priests to instruct them. They are eager for this nourishment of the soul, this word of God, that so many others despise! What an awful account of this heavenly benefit must be one day rendered by men of all ages, especially the young, for whom religious teaching abounds in the churches, colleges and schools of Europe!

On the 14th of July, the steamboat *St. Ange* reached our destination, Fort Union. This post is situated at 48° North latitude. I had then to make all my preparations and take all my precautions for my long journey on land. Yet, withal, I found time to instruct and baptize twenty-nine little children, between Fort Union and Fort William, which are only three miles apart. I said mass daily at the fort, and gave an instruction.

<sup>7</sup> Bishop Provencher died in 1853, after thirty-five years spent in the Red River country.

## CHAPTER III.<sup>1</sup>

### EN ROUTE TO THE GREAT COUNCIL.

Friendly aid from Culbertson—Starts on 800-mile journey across country—No perceptible trail—Storms and mosquitoes—Skunk-meat—Volcanic country—The plains appetite—Geologic curiosities—Colter's Hell—Bridger's tale of the Yellowstone Park—De Smet's cure for snake-bites—Fort Alexander and the Rosebud—Signs of enemies—Lack of water—Lake De Smet—Misled by straggling Crows—The great Oregon Trail—Fort Laramie—Campbell and Mitchell—Ten thousand Indians assembled.

#### *Fort Union to Fort Laramie.*

THE whole forenoon of the 31st of July, the day on which the Church celebrates the Feast of St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus, was employed in making preparations for our journey into the interior of the country. Mr. [Alexander] Culbertson,<sup>2</sup> superintendent of the forts on the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, is a distinguished man, endowed with a mild, benevolent and charitable temper, though if need be intrepid and courageous. He has always given me marks of kindness and friendship, but most particularly in this last tour. Being at the head of our troop, he was able to aid me in my project.

We numbered thirty-two persons; the greater part were Assiniboins, Minnetarees and Crows, who were repairing to the great Indian council to be held in the vicinity of Fort

<sup>1</sup> Comprises Letters IV and V, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Culbertson, next to Kenneth McKenzie, the most important of the American Fur Company traders on the Missouri. His principal activities were at Fort Union and at the trading posts at the head of navigation from which finally came Fort Benton. He was born in May, 1809, and died at Orleans, Mo., August 27, 1879.—*American Fur Trade of the Far West*, p. 388.

Laramie, and by the same route that we had chosen, which was scarcely less than 800 miles in length. Two four-wheeled wagons and two carts, for transporting our provisions and our baggage, composed our whole convoy. The four vehicles were in all probability the first that had ever crossed this unoccupied waste. There is not the slightest perceptible vestige of a beaten track between Fort Union and the Red Buttes, which are on the route to Oregon, and 161 miles west of Fort Laramie.

Having dined, we crossed the river with our baggage. Following the course of one of the little tributaries of the Yellowstone, we advanced about six miles. We had with us a skillful hunter of the Blackfeet tribe, and he made a happy commencement by bringing us two fine deer as the first fruits of his ability. The mosquitoes attacked us on all sides, leaving us no repose. We were forced to combat them continually with branches, handkerchiefs and smoke. The last is the most efficacious weapon for dissipating these sanguinary insects, but it is at the same time the most difficult for the traveler to support. Night came on, and brought with it a terrible storm. The thunder rolled above our heads and the clouds discharged torrents of water.

On the 1st of August, at six o'clock in the morning, we resumed our route. We took all possible precaution to avoid meeting any hostile band. The Indians who accompanied us kept their eyes on the earth to discover any recent tracks of an enemy. An extraordinary experience gives them an admirable tact in detecting trails which are imperceptible to others. The foes that our traveling companions dreaded most in the section we were about to traverse, were the Blackfeet and the Sioux. After breakfasting in the neighborhood of the source of the Fox river, we journeyed from morning till night over hilly and undulating plains, bounded by ranges of hills which stretch from the Yellowstone to the Missouri.

From time to time we descried promontories in the distance, which serve as guides to the traveler. At the close

of the day we pitched our camp at the base of the Tetons of the Yellowstone. These Tetons derive their name from a group of lofty hills situated in one of those delightful valleys which are numerous in these parts, and which, being surrounded by trees and shrubbery of various kinds, form a most agreeable contrast to the plains that we had just left behind, so destitute of wood and water. Wild fruit, such as plums, cherries, gooseberries, service-berries, buffalo-berries, or *Shepherdia angelica*, abound. Among the vegetables and roots we noticed the *Psoralea esculenta*, or breadroot; its white apple and its charming white, oval blossom, nearly three inches in circumference, are universally found in this uncultivated solitude, and would deserve a place in a garden of choice plants; the savages value it highly. The wild onion and the sweet onion bear handsome flowers; these plants would undoubtedly improve with culture. The roots of the water-arrow (*Sagittaria rigida*), and those of the wild Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria borealis*), are equally prized by the Indians, who call them *Swan potatoes*. The earth pea and bean are also delicious and nourishing roots, found commonly in low and alluvial lands. The above-named roots form a considerable portion of the sustenance of these Indians during winter. They seek them in the places where the mice and other little animals, in particular the ground-squirrel, have piled them in heaps.

The mosquitoes tormented us greatly during the day. They especially worried our horses and mules, which were literally covered with them. For us, we had taken measures against their attacks by wearing big gloves in spite of the heat, and covering our heads with sacks formed of coarse gauze.

The distance between the Tetons and Fort Union is about thirty miles. We saw very few deer; from time to time an antelope or buck was roused from repose and fled at our approach. Traces of several kinds of bear, especially the grizzly bear, are very common; the latter are found in the

woody places and along the streams and rivulets. We succeeded in killing three, not without great effort and danger. Our hunter brought us two fine fat antelopes, which were soon dressed and served up for our supper. One of the Indians killed a skunk (*Mephitis Americana*). The strong odor of this animal is intolerable to the whites; the savages, on the contrary, appear to like it, and deem its flesh exquisite. How true is the proverb: *De gustibus non disputandum!* — there is no accounting for tastes.<sup>3</sup>

On the 2d of August we set out at break of day, and were fanned by a refreshing breeze. The country through which we progressed was full of interest: the valleys were covered with a luxuriant verdure, intermingled with flowers of various hues. Groves of cottonwood, elm and ash, as well as groups of service-trees and cherry-trees, offered themselves along the beds of dry rivers and streamlets. We ascended step by step the hills which separate the waters of the Missouri from those of the Yellowstone, like so many insuperable barriers furrowed with profound ravines. We triumphed over these obstacles with great difficulty, and at length attained the summit of the hills. There a most magnificent spectacle unrolled itself before our eyes. Nature has accumulated in this spot a great variety of her most fantastical caprices. On one side is displayed a succession of beautiful prairies, here and there interrupted with groves of stunted trees and shrubs, terminating in verdant hills dotted with groups of cedar and pine; on the other are shapeless heaps of red and white clay and piles of stones, which, viewed at a distance, resemble brick-kilns, from their peculiar color: although thrown together without any apparent order, they add much interest to the landscape.

The region through which we passed for several days

<sup>3</sup> Father De Smet's usual charitable spirit toward novel articles of food deserts him when he comes to the flesh of the skunk. Yet there seems to be no doubt that it is sweet and wholesome meat and that it was often used. Among early travelers who make mention of it are Bradbury, Long, Gregg, Irving and Fremont.

furnished evident proofs that it has been strongly volcanic, even at a very recent date, for the surface is still covered with lava and scorixæ. I counted as many as seventy conical hills, from 20 to 150 feet in height, grouped in one single plain and in the space of from four to five miles: they had evidently gone through the ordeal of fire. Some of these hills were composed of cinders that the earth in her fiery convulsions appeared to have vomited from her center. Several times, after having gained some miles on the heights, we found ourselves suddenly facing an almost perpendicular descent, formed of rock and white clay, down which we had to let our vehicles by hand. We then entered into a chain of valleys and fertile prairies watered by springs and rivulets, and embellished with the cottonwood, elm, ash, cedar and pine; in other places the summits of the hills are remarkable for their beauty, and the rich undulating plains for their abundant verdure.

On the fourth day of our march we descried thousands of buffalo; the whole space between the Missouri and the Yellowstone was covered as far as the eye could reach. Hitherto the mosquitoes had greatly tormented us, but now they entirely vanished. We sought the cause of this phenomenon. The Indians told us that the absence of our winged enemies was owing to the prodigious number of buffalo which were grazing in the neighboring plains, and which attracted these insects. In fact, we saw these noble animals throwing the earth on their bodies by means of their horns and feet, or rolling themselves in the sand and dust, and thus filling the air with clouds, in the endeavor to rid themselves of their vexatious followers. The lot of these animals appeared bad enough, for they were pursued day and night. During a whole week we heard their bellowings like the noise of distant thunder, or like the murmurs of the ocean waves beating against the shore. It may be said that it is the country in which the buffalo and herds of deer are generally found in the greatest abundance. A good hunter might easily kill here, in the course of a day, several cows,

deer, a mountain-goat, a red-tailed and a black-tailed buck, an antelope, hares and rabbits. He might fire twice upon a grizzly bear, and perhaps meet a gray and a silver fox. To this list of animals we may add the beaver, otter, badger, prairie-dog, and several kinds of wild fowl, principally pheasants and grouse. It is easy to see that our hunters could take their choice. In truth, we regaled ourselves with what was most delicate, and left a great quantity of flesh in the plains for the benefit of the vultures [turkey-buzzards] and wolves, whose howlings and rejoicings already resounded on every side.

An Assiniboin gave us a singular proof of his dexterity in the chase; I cannot forbear mentioning it. Alone and on foot, he stealthily approached a large herd of buffalo cows. As soon as he was near enough to them to allow of their hearing him, he began to imitate the cry of a young calf. At once the cows ran toward the place of concealment of the ingenious hunter, and he killed one of them. The troop, alarmed, withdrew hastily and in great disorder. He reloaded his rifle and renewed his cry; the cows stopped, returned as if by enchantment, and he killed a second. The Assiniboin assured us that he could easily have taken more by the same stratagem, but thinking two cows were enough for us, he suffered the rest to go.

Travelers in these upper regions enjoy an excellent appetite. I have been more than once astonished at the enormous quantity of meat that a man is capable of consuming without injury to his health; it would hardly be credited in Europe. One and even two buffalo tongues, a side of venison or other meat, and some additional trifles, are not considered a large portion for one meal.

On the 7th of August we crossed lands intersected with numerous ravines and dried streams. The soil was much lighter than that we last trod; it was covered with a species of wild artemisia, or wormwood — an infallible mark of sterility. The aspect of all the ravines, shores and beds of rivers and streams, as well as that of every eminence, proves

that there are numerous veins of mineral coal in this section. The observations that I made on the quality of the soil induce me to believe that these deposits of coal extend as far as the numerous coal mines which exist in the territories watered by the Saskatchewan and Athabasca lake, of which I have already spoken, in my letters in 1845 and 1846, after traveling over those places.

Evident tokens convince the traveler that the immense plains that he is crossing, and on which not even a shrub grows, have not always been destitute of wood. Petrified trunks and entire trees frequently meet the eye. Astonishment and admiration seize the mind, and excite conjectures concerning the manner in which these changes have been wrought. But what answer offer to the question, "Why are not these lands wooded as they must have been in former times?" The steppes of Asia, the pampas of South America and the western prairies of this hemisphere, seem to possess a common and uniform character; generally speaking, they have neither trees nor shrubs on them. Some observers attribute it to the action of frequent fires which have passed over these localities; others to the change undergone in the climate, or to the natural sterility of the soil; and there are some who pretend that some operation or convulsion of nature has destroyed the forests which formerly existed here, and has reduced them to their present condition. I have examined different localities; and the enormous heaps of shells of the testaceous kind and of the genus *muscula*, which I found a few feet from the summits of the loftiest hills, and which were incorporated in alluvial earth and mingled with sand and water-worn pebbles, convince me that this portion of land has undergone changes as great as they are amazing.

On the same day we traversed a mountainous elevation which stretches as far as the Owl-head Buttes. These buttes or mounds, in this ocean-like prairie, serve as guides to the warrior, the traveler and the hunter, who can perceive them thirty miles off. From the summit of this extensive emi-

nence we contemplated, with pleasing wonder, the White Earth country, or clay plains of the Yellowstone. From south to north they measure from thirty to forty miles. When on this height, the imagination discovers ruins of ancient villages, and one seems to see confused rows of broken columns, forts with their turrets and bastions, towers, domes, walls in decay, castles and edifices of every sort. Some of these pillars of red and white hardened clay rise to an elevation of from 50 to 100 feet. It would have gratified me much to have passed one or two days in an attentive examination of these volcanic productions. I presume that the soil is not unlike that near the White Earth river, a tributary of the Missouri, and that it contains the same species of interesting fossils.

Similar tracts, which have ceased to be volcanic, are found in the environs of the superior sources of the rivers Arkansas, Platte, etc., and of the Big Horn, a branch of the Yellowstone. Near the source of the river Puante [Stinking Water, now called Shoshone] which empties into the Big Horn, and the sulphurous waters of which have probably the same medicinal qualities as the celebrated Blue Lick Springs of Kentucky, is a place called Colter's Hell — from a beaver hunter of that name.<sup>4</sup> This locality is often agitated with subterranean fires. The sulphurous gases which escape in great volumes from the burning soil infect the atmosphere for several miles, and render the earth so barren that even the wild wormwood cannot grow on it. The beaver hunters have assured me that the frequent underground noises and explosions are frightful.

However, I think that the most extraordinary spot in this respect, and perhaps the most marvelous of all the northern half of this continent, is in the very heart of the

<sup>4</sup> For John Colter, a soldier of the Lewis and Clark expedition, who discovered this spring in 1807, and passed across the Yellowstone Park country in the same year, being the first white man to enter that region. For a full account of his adventures, see *The Yellowstone National Park*, edition of 1903.

Rocky Mountains, between the forty-third and forty-fifth degrees of latitude and 109th and 111th degrees of longitude, that is, between the sources of the Madison and Yellowstone. It reaches more than a hundred miles. Bituminous, sulphurous and boiling springs are very numerous in it. The hot springs contain a large quantity of calcareous matter, and form hills more or less elevated, which resemble in their nature, perhaps, if not in their extent, the famous springs of Pambuk Kalessi, in Asia Minor, so well described by Chandler.<sup>5</sup> The earth is thrown up very high, and the influence of the elements causes it to take the most varied and the most fantastic shapes. Gas, vapor and smoke are continually escaping by a thousand openings, from the base to the summit of the volcanic pile; the noise at times resembles the steam let off by a boat. Strong subterranean explosions occur, like those in "Colter's Hell." The hunters and the Indians speak of it with a superstitious fear, and consider it the abode of evil spirits, that is to say, a kind of hell. Indians seldom approach it without offering some sacrifice, or at least without presenting the calumet of peace to the turbulent spirits, that they may be propitious. They declare that the subterranean noises proceed from the forging of warlike weapons: each eruption of earth is, in their eyes, the result of a combat between the infernal spirits, and becomes the monument of a new victory or calamity.

Near Gardiner river, a tributary of the Yellowstone, and in the vicinity of the region I have just been describing, there is a mountain of sulphur. I have this report from Captain Bridger,<sup>6</sup> who is familiar with every one of these mountains, having passed thirty years of his life near them.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Richard Chandler, English archæologist, 1738-1810.

<sup>6</sup> James Bridger, 1804-1881, "the ablest hunter, mountaineer and guide of the West," went to the Indian country in 1822, founded Fort Bridger in 1843; his vast special knowledge made him invaluable in later years to the Government and in railroad surveys.—*American Fur Trade of the Far West*.

<sup>7</sup> This is one of the most complete and interesting early references

From the Owl Buttes, where we encamped on the 7th of August, to the source of the Immel, a distance of about thirty-six miles, we traveled on the highlands. The surface was rugged, cut by deep ravines, and excessively difficult to pass with our vehicles. At every step we met volcanic remains. For two days our route offered on the right and left burnt hills, some of which were covered with lava and scoriæ and had evidently been craters, whence volcanic matter had been ejected into the neighboring plain.

At the decline of the same day we were witnesses of a singularly beautiful phenomenon. The moon was surrounded by four circles; the first was of a beautiful azure, the second a rich purple, and the third white, while the fourth was obscure or black. In the midst of all these circles the queen of night shone brilliantly. The savages au-

to the Yellowstone Park country extant. As is well known, the country around the sources of the Yellowstone was practically a *terra incognita* until 1870. The researches of later years have discovered several accounts of early visits by the traders and trappers, but nowhere is there anything more complete than this of Father De Smet. It would indeed have been fortunate if the park had been set apart on the lines he describes rather than as it was, for it would then have embraced much territory, particularly the Jackson Hole country, which, it is generally conceded, should have been a part of the park, and which is now largely included in recent forest reservations. This territory contains the sources of the three great river systems of the western portion of the United States—the Missouri, with its great tributary, the Yellowstone; the great tributary of the Columbia, the Snake river; and Green river, the principal tributary of the Colorado of the West. In a scrap-book containing a large number of manuscript maps prepared by Father De Smet during his travels, are four maps that embrace the sources of the Yellowstone. From these maps are taken the following names of features now familiar to every visitor to the Park: Gardiner river, Mammoth Hot Springs, Yellowstone lake, Yellowstone falls, noted as 290 feet high, with an outline of the Grand Cañon below them, Firehole river, the various hot spring districts, Jackson lake, the Teton mountains, Two-ocean Pass, Atlantic and Pacific creeks, and "Colter's Hell." On one of the maps occurs the following notation: "Great volcanic region about 100 miles in extent now in a state of eruption."

gured from this sign that some hostile band was near, and passed the whole night under arms, watching.

On the 10th we quitted the highlands and advanced about twenty miles, over a barren, rugged space, excavated by rains. A kind of salamander, vulgarly called horned frog, lizards and rattlesnakes, were most abundant. I give you the information I gathered from the Indians concerning the antidotes they employ for curing the bite of the last-named reptile. Blackroot (*Pterocaulon*)<sup>8</sup> is regarded by them as a

<sup>8</sup> The editors have been unable to identify Father De Smet's "blackroot." In his first draft of this letter, the apparently scientific name given in the text does not appear; it was perhaps furnished him afterward by some friend better posted in botany than himself, but a somewhat extensive search has failed to reveal any better clew to "ptero-caulon" than to "blackroot." Major E. A. Mearns, U. S. A., who is exceptionally well acquainted with the flora of the northwest, suggests that it may be Culver's Physic—*leptandra virginica*. Maximilian of Wied speaks of a blackroot or snakeroot, *galardia bicolor*. Father De Smet's account of the plant and its virtues seems to have aroused some interest in Europe, and his letter-books contain several requests to missionaries in the Indian country, to procure seeds or roots of it for transmission thither; but no mention has been noticed of any having been furnished. In a letter to the gentlemen of the Propagation of the Faith at Lyons, in January, 1852, the following further information is given: "I will tell you what I know about the Racine-noire, to which you allude in your letter, and of which the savages make use with entire success. I have found this root throughout the desert, from the States to the Rocky Mountains. The plant has a very handsome flower, red and purple, which may be classed with the little Tournesols (Genus *Cistus*). It stands one to two feet above the soil; it has a long, slender, fibrous and blackish root. All that is needful is to chew the root (either fresh or dried) with the teeth, and to apply the saliva to the part bitten by the reptile. Immediately the subtle poison loses its force and the inflammation stops and subsides. Eye witnesses have assured me that they have seen the Indian jugglers play with and caress rattlesnakes with impunity, which they attributed to the blackroot, which stupefies the reptile and deprives it of the power to bite; the juggler holds the root in his hand, or rubs his hands with its juice, before going to work on the snake."

sovereign remedy against the wound inflicted by this most venomous serpent, and Providence has rendered it very plentiful precisely in those places in which these snakes are found. The remedy is truly side by side with the ill — for it is sufficient to chew the weed and apply it to the wound, when the swelling is arrested and disappears. When an Indian, his horse or his dog, has been bitten by one of these serpents, they pursue the reptile, which dies almost directly after having given its bite. They open its stomach, take out the blood that it has swallowed and apply it to the wound; the swelling subsides at once, and the dangerous effects of the poison are prevented. When the swelling is considerable, the Indians use the sharp bones and the teeth of the rattlesnake to pick and open the swollen skin, and by this means they dissipate or remove the inflammation. The copperhead snake has a poison so subtle that its breath alone causes death to him who inhales it. Its tongue is not forked like that of other snakes; it is of a triangular shape. When the reptile is startled and provoked, his head flattens and he throws from his mouth a great quantity of yellow poison, and then blows till he expires.

On the 11th we arrived at the upper portion of a gently sloping plain. Having crossed it, we found ourselves at Fort Alexander, situated on the banks of the Yellowstone, and at a short distance from the little river Rosebud. Fort Alexander is about 200 miles distant from Fort Union, along the dividing ridge. The winter, it is said, is extremely severe in these regions, commencing in November, and only terminating in the month of April.

After remaining six days at Fort Alexander, allowing our animals time to repose, and also awaiting the arrival of a barge belonging to the American Fur Company, which was freighted with some of our effects, we passed over the Yellowstone on the 17th of August, at about two o'clock. We passed over a high and very level plain: for a distance of five miles the soil is light, sandy and entirely covered with "green toads," as the *voyageurs* call different kinds of

cactus — plants that are noted for the splendor of their flowers and for their grotesque and varied shapes. The round and the oval, about the size of a hen's egg, abound in this plain, and are set with long thorns, hard, and as fine and sharp as needles. When trampled by the horses' feet, these thorns spring up and adhere to the legs and belly of the animals, and thus render them furious and unmanageable. We soon arrived in Rosebud valley, and continuing our route until sunset we encamped on the borders of a little river bearing the same name, and quite near a beautiful pond, over which a new dam had been constructed by the beavers.

This section of the country offered us frequent occasions of admiring the labors and ingenious industry of these intelligent animals. They are more numerous here than in any other district I have visited, and I am told that their preservation is chiefly attributable to the continual excursions of war-parties, either Sioux, Assiniboins, or Blackfeet, all implacable enemies of the Crows, and these prevent the huntsman and the savages from hazarding a chase in these parts. At present, the fur of the beaver is of so little value that their search is almost abandoned. In ancient times the Crows held the beaver in the highest veneration because this nation imagined that they became beavers after death. This article of their creed entailed the loss of his scalp to many a bold huntsman among the whites, for every Crow Indian considered himself bound to protect, defend and avenge, even with death, the spirits of "his near relations," in their second state of existence. During late years this dogma of faith has been erased from their religious code, to the great detriment certainly of the poor beavers. Such superstitions will never wholly disappear until the Catholic faith enlightens these wilds, over which the darkness of paganism still hangs.

For four days we continued ascending the valley of the Rosebud, about 110 miles, as high as the sources of the river. There again we found the soil light and sandy; it

was covered with wild rose bushes, cactus, and artemisia of several varieties, and intersected with ravines which were exceedingly difficult to be crossed with baggage-wagons. The shores of this river relieve the eye with an occasional group of cottonwood, intermingled with plum, cherry and service-trees, which thrive here in undisturbed plenty.

The Little Wolf Mountains, whose rivulets give rise to the Rosebud river, have in general a charming appearance in their hills and acclivities — and in their combined aspect as a whole chain. The absence of water, especially of spring-water, is a painful privation to travelers in this season of the year. We found, indeed, some holes of stagnant water in the dry beds of the rivers, but the taste is almost insupportable. The buffalo herds are less numerous here than in the lands lying farther north, owing no doubt to bands of warriors that roam over the space. Yet we perceived at every moment large troops of elk, and a great many deer and mountain sheep. We remarked recent traces of enemies — such as the slain carcasses of very dangerous wild animals, the impress of human feet in the sand, concealed encampments and half-quenched fires. Consequently we redoubled our vigilance, in order to avoid a perilous surprise. A beautiful chief's coat of scarlet cloth, trimmed with gold lace, suspended from the branch of a tree, was perceived waving in the air like a floating banner. There was a race to win the prize; an Assiniboin having carried it off, it was most carefully scrutinized. The conclusion was that it had been offered only the day before by some Blackfoot chief. These Indians, when on the warpath, frequently make such offerings either to the sun or to the moon, hoping thus to render them propitious, so that through their intervention they may obtain many scalps and horses. The most precious objects which they possess and which they esteem most, are often thus sacrificed. The Mandans, the Aricaras and their neighbors go still further: they cut off fingers and make deep incisions in the fleshy parts of the body before starting for war, in order to obtain the same favors of their false gods.

On my last visit to the Aricaras, Minnetarees and Mandans I could not discern a single man at all advanced in years whose body was not mutilated, or who possessed his full number of fingers. How profound their ignorance! How fearful the idolatry in which these unhappy tribes are plunged! To this sombre picture we may add a passionate love of gaming, which consumes the hours which should be devoted to necessary repose; a sloth which nothing but hunger can arouse; an innate inclination to dissimulation, gluttony, and to whatever can flatter sensuality. And still, amid this ocean of miseries, they feel an indescribable need of invoking a power superior to man: they listen attentively to any instruction which reveals to them the means of procuring his favor, and give them information of his attributes. They love the missionary, and ever listen to him with delight; and in his quality of priest receive him with friendship and respect. To judge by the respect and friendship shown me as a priest, on all occasions and circumstances, by the Indians on the Upper Missouri, I am satisfied that if a few zealous priests were stationed here, they would soon become generous Christians, full of zeal and ardor for the glory of our God and his holy law. "They would know their Father who is in heaven, and him whom he has sent on earth;" they would become faithful disciples of the Redeemer, who so ardently desires the salvation of all, and who did not disdain to shed his blood for them on the cross.

On the 22d of August we quitted the head of the Rosebud and crossed the mountainous train which separates it from Tongue river. The crest of this chain presents a continuation of sandstone cliffs, under a multitude of varied and fantastical shapes. The sides are almost perpendicular, and consequently very difficult to ascend or descend with our wagons. The aid of every arm was necessary to sustain the teams. For several days we had had to camp by ponds filled with disgusting water. How agreeable the contrast to find ourselves on the borders of this beautiful river, the waters of which are pure as crystal! How eagerly did we allay our

burning thirst! The horses and mules appeared to rejoice, neighing and rearing with impatience; as soon as their bridles were loosened, they plunged into the waves and indulged in long draughts. When the whole caravan had assuaged their thirst, we continued our route. We traversed an undulating plain; and perceiving in the distance a prominent point of land which appeared sparkling with crystals, we named it Diamond Hill. It was covered with large pieces of mica. For the first time since we left Fort Alexander we breakfasted beside beautiful springs of fresh water, the most remarkable in the country.

After advancing about twenty-three miles that day, we camped on the banks of Tongue river. There we had new occasion to recall and arrange our recollections of the land we had seen. Coal also appears as abundant south of the Yellowstone as above it; we met it everywhere. The slopes of the hills are well wooded with larch and pines of every variety up to the very summit, throughout the whole extent of the Little Wolf chain. This we left for that of the Great Wolf, which we reach before arriving at the Black Hills. These mountains form spurs of the Rocky Mountains; the principal summits are over 13,000 feet high.<sup>9</sup> On the 23d we left Tongue river. For ten hours we marched over mountain and valley, following the course of one of its tributaries, making, however, only about twenty-five miles. On the day following we crossed a chain of lofty mountains to attain the Lower Piney Fork, nearly twenty miles distant. We arrived quite unexpectedly on the borders of a lovely little lake about six miles long, and my traveling companions gave it my name.<sup>10</sup> There our hunters killed several wild ducks. On quitting the lake, we discovered another elevated portion of land on which red mounds and scoriæ, vol-

<sup>9</sup> Father De Smet here refers, presumably, to the great mountain system known as the Big Horn range, whose commanding summit, Cloud Peak, is 13,300 feet high.

<sup>10</sup> This lake still bears the name De Smet. It is soon to be utilized for storing the waters of Piney Fork to be used in irrigation.

canic remains, are scattered in all directions, as far as the Upper Piney Fork; and there petrified trees are met with at every step. Toward evening we encamped at the base of a mountain, after advancing about twenty-five miles, and thought ourselves favored in finding a pool of water. The next twenty-four miles were taken in the direction of Sandy river, through undulating plains and mountainous hills.

On the 27th of August we reached Powder river, one of the principal tributaries of the Yellowstone. Our wagoners will not soon forget the difficulty of conducting their teams through this vast route, for it was a very miserable, elevated, sterile plain, covered with wormwood and intersected with countless ravines, and they vowed they would never be caught driving a wagon there again.

The valley of Powder river, in the neighborhood of the Gourd [Pumpkin] Buttes, which are in sight, is three or four miles wide. Although the soil was light, the verdure was fine and the grazing abundant. The part where I crossed the valley is well wooded, and they told me that wood, especially cottonwood and fruit trees, is abundant all along the river. This valley forms a beautiful contrast with the high plains of these parts, which are the very picture of aridity and desolation, with naught but weeds, rocks and deep ravines.

Here we happened to meet with three young Indians of the Crow tribe. They had been on the lookout for a Sioux camp, intending to steal horses, but had not succeeded. These young men advised us to pursue the vale of a little river which they pointed out to us, assuring us that by taking that direction we should soon arrive at Fort Laramie. I was surprised at this counsel, for the course of the valley was southwest; however, we followed the route indicated by the Crows. This proved the most rugged and difficult part of our journey, hence we styled it "the valley of a thousand miseries." A name could not have been better chosen. Imagine a river with perpendicular banks, winding in a serpentine course through a narrow valley, so that in a distance

of three miles we were obliged to cross it ten or twelve times, with carts and wagons, at the imminent risk of killing our horses and mules and destroying our vehicles. The soil, too, was sterile, and as we journeyed on water became scarce — on the fifth day it failed completely, and it did again on the last. The night that ensued was a hard trial, for after so long a march we had not a drop of water to quench our burning thirst.

On the 1st of September, having traversed three chains of hills, we gradually attained the summit of the Black Hills. We had one cart less, and one heavy wagon so broken that it had to be tied together with strips of raw buffalo-hide. From the summit we were so happy as to perceive a distant lake. We eagerly hastened in that direction, for we were consumed with thirst, and had serious fears for our beasts of burden, which were slackening their weary pace. To our astonishment, we directly perceived that we were still at a great distance from Fort Laramie. Instead of being near that fort, in accordance with the assurances of the three Crows, we discovered ourselves in sight of the Red Buttes, [near Casper, Wyoming] twenty-five miles off. This is a well-known spot on the Great Oregon Route, and is 160 miles from Fort Laramie. On the top of the Black Hills I left a little souvenir of my passage,— on a very high rock of the form of a pulpit, I carved a large and handsome cross. Ah! may the Indian tribes scattered throughout the wild solitude soon learn the great truths which this holy emblem announces! May they soon leave the bondage in which error has chained them during innumerable ages!

The whole region over which we passed, south of the Yellowstone, offers only feeble hopes to civilization. The soil is light, wood scarce, and water wanting during a large portion of the year. It is a country favorable solely to hunters and wandering tribes. All the animals common in the wilderness abound, and during long years to come they will rest undisturbed in their possessions. When all the fertile tracts,

yet vacant in the immense Indian territory, shall be occupied, then only will the lands below the Yellowstone attract attention; then alone will necessitous and persevering industry succeed in drawing any considerable portion of this region from its present barrenness.

In the neighborhood and along the base of the Black Hills there lies a very extensive tract of fertile and tillable land. The verdure is rich and abounds in all the valleys, and these valleys penetrate the mountains like so many veins, where millions of domestic animals might be raised; for the springs and rivulets, so seldom occurring in the central section between the Yellowstone and the Black Hills, are very numerous in the interior and at the base of these mountains. There are also a great many sites favorable to the erection of mills. The climate is reputed delightful, and the noble forests of cedar and pine would abundantly supply the necessities of a population. Mines of lead and iron are very numerous.

The 2d day of September, 1851, we found ourselves on the Great Route to Oregon, over which, like successive ocean surges, the caravans, composed of thousands of emigrants from every country and clime, have passed during these latter years to reach the rich gold mines of California, or to take possession of the new lands in the fertile plains and valleys of Utah and Oregon. These intrepid pioneers of civilization have formed the broadest, longest and most beautiful road in the whole world — from the United States to the Pacific Ocean. On the skirts of this magnificent highway there is an abundance of grass for supplying the cattle and animals appertaining to the caravans which are incessantly traveling on it, from early spring to autumn, every succeeding year.

Our Indian companions, who had never seen but the narrow hunting-paths by which they transport themselves and their lodges, were filled with admiration on seeing this noble highway, which is as smooth as a barn floor swept by the winds, and not a blade of grass can shoot on it on account

of the continual passing. They conceived a high idea of the countless White Nation, as they express it. They fancied that all had gone over that road, and that an immense void must exist in the land of the rising sun. Their countenances testified evident incredulity when I told them that their exit was in nowise perceived in the lands of the whites. They styled the route the Great Medicine Road of the Whites. The term medicine is applied by them to whatever they find grand, religious, mysterious or incomprehensible. They visited and examined in detail all the forsaken camping-grounds on the way; they brought a great variety of objects to me to have their use and signification explained; they filled their pouches with knives, forks, spoons, basins, coffee-pots and other cooking articles, axes, hammers, etc. With the bits of earthenware which bore any figure or inscription, they fabricated some ornament for their necks and ears. How wonderful will be the accounts given of the Great Medicine Road by our unsophisticated Indians when they go back to their villages, and sit in the midst of an admiring circle of relatives!<sup>11</sup>

But these relics collected by our savage friends were not the sole vestiges of the great multitude of emigrants who, in search of gold, had crossed this vast plain with a rare courage and unheard-of fatigues and difficulties. The bleached bones of domestic animals disseminated profusely along the route; the rising mound hastily made over the grave of a parent or a friend deceased during the long jour-

<sup>11</sup> The Oregon Trail, to which Father De Smet very justly devotes much attention, was first traveled by white men over portions of its course by the Astorians, on their outward and return journeys, in 1811-13. South Pass, the celebrated crossing of the Continental Divide, was discovered about 1824. The route had become well established by the fur travelers before emigration set in. The California Trail, which branched off in the valley of Bear River, did not come prominently into use until after the discovery of gold. The Trail remained the great highway of trans-continental travel down nearly to the advent of the railroads.

ney, and the tribute offered to memory in a coarse and rudely-carved inscription on a narrow strip of board or on a stone, with other graves which offered no such testimonial of affection, furnish ample and melancholy proofs that death had considerably thinned their ranks. By such disasters thousands of emigrants have found themselves suddenly arrested, and been mocked in the flattering hope of wealth and pleasure.

The countless fragments of conveyances, the heaps of provisions, tools of every kind, and other objects with which the emigrants must have provided themselves at great expense, but which the most impatient, eager to outstrip others in the Western Eldorado, had forsaken and cast aside, testify to that bold recklessness with which they hazard everything in this enterprise which has proved fatal to thousands. The picture traced by Thornton<sup>12</sup> in his Journal of 1848, is the most shocking that can be contemplated. Arrived in the arid lands of California, the famine had at first reduced them to eating their horses and mules; soon they had recourse to dead bodies; then the dying were not spared, and at last they actually devoured each other! What a salutary proof of the uncertainty that accompanies the grandest perspectives in the life of man, and of the deceptions that unveil to him his native weakness!

We followed the great road south of the Platte to the foot of the Black Hills. On this road we found ourselves relieved from these obstacles which had so often endangered our vehicles and our animals. After eight days' journey along the Platte, we arrived at Fort Laramie without the least trouble or accident. The commander of the fort informed us that the Great Council was to take place at the mouth of Horse river, in a vast plain situated nearly thirty-five miles lower down on the Platte. The next day I accepted the polite invitation of the respected Colonel [Rob-

<sup>12</sup> J. Quinn Thornton, *Oregon and California in 1848*. N. Y., 1848, 2 vols.

ert] Campbell,<sup>13</sup> and took a seat in his carriage. We arrived at the plain of the intended council about sunset. There the superintendent, Colonel Mitchell,<sup>14</sup> received me with warm friendship and cordiality, insisting that I should become his guest during the whole time of the council. All the others showed me great respect.

In this immense plain above mentioned, we found about a thousand lodges, that is to say, 10,000 Indians, representing Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahos, with several deputations from the Crows, Snakes or Shoshones, Aricaras, Assiniboins and Minnetarees. I purpose entertaining you in my next with the object of the council, and with my interviews with the Indians.

I subjoin a list of the animals killed by our hunters from the 1st of August till the 9th of September, 1851: Two deer, eleven antelope, thirty-seven bison cows, twenty-two bulls, three bears, two stags, seven Rocky Mountain sheep, two badgers, two polecats, one porcupine, one wolf, seventeen hares and rabbits, thirteen ducks, eighteen heathcock, sixteen pheasants.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Campbell, 1804-1879, an Irishman by birth, came to St. Louis in 1824; went to the mountains the year following, remained in the fur trade on the spot for ten years, and at St. Louis for ten years more; one of the foremost business men of that city in his time. The Government made several demands on his knowledge of Indian affairs, in the negotiation of treaties.—*American Fur Trade of the Far West*, p. 260.

<sup>14</sup> David D. Mitchell, born in Louisa county, Va., July 31, 1806, died in St. Louis, Mo., May 31, 1861, had a long and honorable career in the fur trade, first as a clerk and then as a partner in the Upper Missouri outfit. He was the builder of Fort McKenzie in 1832. He became United States Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Central Division, with headquarters at St. Louis, September 20, 1841, and held the position at intervals until 1852. He entered the volunteer service during the war with Mexico and was lieutenant-colonel of a Missouri regiment raised by Sterling Price. He served with Colonel Doniphan during the war, and commanded the detachment that captured Chihuahua.—*American Fur Trade of the Far West*, p. 388.

## CHAPTER IV.<sup>1</sup>

### THE GREAT COUNCIL AND RETURN TO ST. LOUIS.

The eighteen-days' Peace Council — Adoptions of brothers — Treaty with the Government — Mass and baptism — Notes on Indian customs — Grand dog-feast — Distribution of presents — The assembly breaks up — Down the Platte — Prince Paul of Wurtemberg — Pawnees at Fort Kearney — Potawatomi mission in Kansas — Indian deputies introduced to fruit and vegetables — Their behavior on board ship — Medicine matters — Arrival in St. Louis.

**D**URING the eighteen days that the Great Council lasted, the union, harmony and amity that reigned among the Indians were truly admirable. Implacable hatreds, hereditary enmities, cruel and bloody encounters, with the whole past, in fine, were forgotten. They paid mutual visits, smoked the calumet of peace together, exchanged presents, partook of numerous banquets, and all the lodges were open to strangers. A practice occurring but on the most amicable and fraternal occasions was seen — this is, the adopting of children and of brothers on each side. There was a perfect unanimity of views between Colonel Mitchell, superintendent of the Indian Territory, and Major [Thomas] Fitzpatrick, and nothing was omitted to foster these germs of peace. The object of the assembly was a distinguished proof of the highest benevolence on the part of the United States Government, as well as of the sincere desire of establishing a lasting peace among tribes hostile to each other, and of obtaining a right of passage through their possessions for the whites, and making the Indians compensation for injuries and losses the latter may have sustained from the whites.

At the opening of the council, the superintendent made

<sup>1</sup> Comprises Letters VI and VII, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*.

known to the savages that the object of the assembly was the acceptance by them of the treaty, such as it had been prepared beforehand, with the consent of the President of the United States. This treaty was read sentence by sentence, and distinctly explained to the different interpreters, that they might have the exact and legitimate meaning of each article. The preamble explains that it is a treaty between the agents named on one side by the President of the United States, and on the other by the chiefs or braves of the Indian nations that reside south of the Missouri, east of the Rocky Mountains, and north of the boundary line of Texas and Mexico, viz. : The Sioux or Dakotas, the Cheyennes, the Arapahos, the Crows, the Minnetarees, the Mandans and Aricaras. The principal articles were :

*Article 1st.*—The Indians recognize and admit the right of the United States to form roads and establish military posts in their territory. *Article 2d.*—Solemn obligations agreed upon for the maintenance of peace, and for repairing the damages and losses sustained by the whites on the part of the Indians. *Article 3d.*—Indemnity accorded to the Indians for the destruction caused in their hunting-grounds, their forests, pasturages, etc., by travelers from the States who cross their lands. The present of \$50,000 is granted to them on this ground. *Article 4th.*—During fifteen coming years, \$50,000 will be annually paid in objects and gifts which may prove useful or necessary to the Indians.

The treaty was signed by the agents of the United States, and by all the principal chiefs of the different nations who were present. Another treaty in favor of the half-breeds and the whites residing in the country was proposed, to wit : That a tract of country be assigned them for their use, in order to form agricultural establishments and colonies, and that they should obtain the assistance of the Government of the United States in the execution of their project. This is the sole means of preserving union among all those wandering and scattered families, which become every year more and more numerous, and of establishing them in one or two

colonies, with churches and schools, for their general instruction and well-being.

With a few exceptions, all the half-breeds are baptized and received as children of the Church. During twenty years they have petitioned to have Catholic priests, and have manifested their good will to meet the wants of their missionaries and to maintain them. If ecclesiastical superiors are not aided to make timely provision, it is to be feared that the care of these new colonies will pass under the direction of men who will spare no exertion to extinguish in the hearts of the courageous and simple people the germs of faith, and the good wishes they entertain in favor of our holy religion. The question, " Shall they have priests? " involves the salvation of several thousand souls. It must be soon decided; it is already agitated, and unless Catholic missionaries are sent there, I repeat it, it is to be feared that persons hostile to the true faith may take possession of the ground.

On the second Sunday of September, Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, three days after my arrival, some lodges of buffalo-hides were arranged and ornamented as a sanctuary, on the plain of the Great Council. Under this tent I had the happiness of offering the holy sacrifice, in presence of all the gentlemen assisting at the council, of all the half-bloods and whites and of a great concourse of Indians. After my instruction, twenty-eight children (half-bloods) and five adults were regenerated in the holy waters of baptism, with all the ceremonies prescribed by the Church.

The Canadians, French and half-breeds who inhabit the Indian territory treat all the priests who visit them with great kindness, attention and respect. It is truly afflicting to meet them in this wilderness, like so many strayed sheep. By the zealous efforts of two good clergymen, fine missions could be founded among them — these would furnish catechists, and these latter would labor in concert with the priests for the conversion of so many benighted pagans, who wander forsaken in the deserts and destitute of religious hope and consolation.

During the two weeks that I passed in the plain of the Great Council, I paid frequent visits to the different tribes and bands of savages, accompanied by one or more of their interpreters. These last were extremely obliging in devoting themselves to my aid in announcing the gospel. The Indians listened eagerly to my instructions. Each time that I addressed them concerning the particular vices which I knew reigned among them, they owned their faults with admirable simplicity and candor, free from all human respect. During an instruction in the camp of the Ogallalas, a Sioux tribe, in which I explained to them the Ten Commandments, when I arrived at the sixth and seventh, a general whispering and embarrassed laugh took place among my barbarous auditory. I inquired the reason of this conduct, and explained to them that the law I came to announce to them was not mine, but God's, and that it was obligatory on all the children of men; that the word of God required all their attention and respect: that those who observe his commandments will have eternal life, while the prevaricators of his holy law shall receive hell and its torments as their lot. The head chief at once rose and replied: "Father, we hear thee; we knew not the words of the Great Spirit, and we acknowledge our ignorance. We are great liars and thieves; we have killed; we have done all the evil that the Great Spirit forbids us to do; but we did not know those beautiful words; in future we will try to live better, if thou wilt but stay with us and teach us."

They besought me to explain baptism to them, as several of them had been present when I baptized the half-blood children. I complied with their request, and gave them a lengthy instruction on its blessings and obligations. All then entreated me to grant this favor to their infants. The next day the ceremony took place; 239 children of the Ogallalas (the first of their tribe) were regenerated in the holy waters of baptism, to the great joy and satisfaction of the whole nation. I held daily conferences on religion, sometimes with one band of Indians, sometimes with another. They

all listened with great attention, and unanimously expressed the wish to be supplied with Catholic missionaries.

Among the Arapahos, I baptized 305 little ones; among the Cheyennes, 253; and among the Brûlés and Osage Sioux, 280; in the camp of Painted Bear, fifty-six. The number of the half-bloods that I baptized in the plain of the Great Council and on the river Platte is sixty-one. In the different forts on the Missouri, I baptized, during the months of June and July last, 392 children. Total number of baptisms, 1,586. A great number died shortly after, in consequence of diseases which reigned in the Indian camps.

I witnessed for the first time a singular rite, to which the Cheyennes attach as much importance as the Asiatic tribes do to circumcision; this is the "ear-cutting of the children." This custom appears to be common among all the tribes of the Upper Missouri, and probably in other places, though there may be perhaps some variety in the form of the ceremony. Among the Cheyennes, the mother chooses the operator and puts the knife into his hands. She extends the child on the skin of some animal, carefully prepared and painted, and which the Canadians call "*pare flèche*." While one of the relations or friends holds the infant in a quiet posture, the operator makes two to five incisions in the rim of each ear. These incisions are destined to receive and carry ornaments. The mother makes a present of a horse to the operator, and another present to each one of the assistants.

In the same place, rudely arranged for the occasion, and composed of six lodges, each lodge consisting of twenty hides of buffalo cow, we witnessed another ceremony. The Shoshones, or Snake Indians, had scarcely quitted the Rocky Mountains to repair to the Great Council, when they were pursued and attacked by a party of Cheyennes, who killed two of their men and carried away their scalps. The Cheyennes must pay, or "cover the body," which is a satisfaction required by the savages on such occasions, before they can accept the calumet of peace or smoke it together. On this day the principal braves of the Cheyenne nation and forty

warriors of the Shoshones were assembled. Several orations were delivered as preliminaries of peace.

Then followed a feast, of which all partook. It consisted simply of corn, crushed and thoroughly boiled. The dogs were spared this time, for the Shoshones are an exception to the common rule among the Indians; that is, they never eat dog flesh. The feast over, the Cheyennes brought suitable presents of tobacco, blankets, knives, pieces of red and blue cloth, and deposited them in the centre of the circle. The two scalps were also exposed, and then returned to the brothers of the two wretched victims, who were seated at the head of the circle, between the two chiefs of their nation. The brothers were solemnly assured that the "scalp dance"<sup>2</sup> did not take place. They wore, however, a very sombre air, and on accepting the scalps were deeply affected. However, they embraced the murderers, received the donations, and distributed the larger portion of them to their companions. After this, the usual signs of peace and amity, presents and reciprocal adoptions of children, were interchanged; their orators employed all their eloquence to strengthen the good feeling which appeared to reign in the assembly, and to render it lasting. The next night the Cheyennes visited the lodges of the Shoshones, who were encamped beside my little tent. Songs and dances were prolonged till daylight, and prevented me from sleeping. These amusements among the Indians are perfectly innocent. I have never been able to detect the slightest gesture that could offend modesty. During my waking hours that night I reflected on the excellent dispositions of these pagans, and thought, could the clergy of Europe but know them, they would eagerly hasten hither to gladden our Holy Mother the Church, with thousands of new children.

<sup>2</sup> This ceremony, which is an essential condition, consists of dances and songs. The latter recount all the exploits of the braves. The ceremony is renewed every day, and often lasts several weeks. Women, old and young, as well as children, can take part; and, in fact, the women make most noise and exertion.—*Author's note.*

During this assembly, as on other occasions, I frequently remarked the skill and facility with which the Indians communicate their ideas by signs and gestures. Their movements are highly expressive, and appear to be reduced to a language as perfect and communicable as that of the deaf and dumb among us. By means of these signs an Indian will relate the chief events of his life. This mute speech may be styled a language of precaution and defense, for when they meet in the desert, in their excursions, they make signs while yet very far apart, before they approach. They immediately know with whom they have to deal and what there is in question. They have, however, still more remarkable modes of communicating thought. The large figures displayed on their buffalo-ropes are hieroglyphics, as easily understood by an intelligent Indian as written words are by ourselves; and they often contain the narrative of some important event. This is not, however, because words are wanting in their various dialects, which are quite copious and expressive.

I attended the council from the outset to the close. As I have already stated, 10,000 Indians, belonging to different tribes, many of which had been at war from time immemorial, met on the same plain. During the twenty-three days of the assembly there was no disorder: on the contrary, all was peaceable and tranquil, which is saying much for Indians. They seemed all to form but a single nation. Polite and kindly to each other, they spent their leisure hours in visits, banquets and dances; spoke of their once interminable wars and divisions as past things, to be absolutely forgotten, or "buried," according to their expression. There was not a remark in all their conversations to displease; never did the calumet pass in peace through so many hands. To convey an idea of the importance of this action, I must observe that smoking the calumet together is equivalent to a treaty confirmed by oath, which no one can contravene without dishonoring himself in the eyes of all his tribe. It was really a touching spectacle to see the calumet, the Indian emblem of

peace, raised heavenward by the hand of a savage, presenting it to the Master of Life, imploring his pity on all his children on earth and begging him to confirm the good resolutions which they had made.

Notwithstanding the scarcity of provisions felt in the camp before the wagons came, the feasts were numerous and well attended. No epoch in Indian annals, probably, shows a greater massacre of the canine race. Among the Indians the flesh of the dog is the most honorable and esteemed of all viands, especially in the absence of buffalo and other animals. On the present occasion it was a last resource. The carnage then may be conceived. I was invited to several of these banquets; a great chief, in particular, wished to give me a special mark of his friendship and respect for me. He had filled his great kettle with little fat dogs, skins and all. He presented me, on a wooden platter, the fattest, well boiled. I found the meat really delicate, and I can vouch that it is preferable to sucking-pig, which it nearly resembles in taste.

The Indians regaled me several times with a dish highly esteemed among them. It consists of plums, dried in the sun, and afterward prepared with pieces of meat, like a stew. I must own that I found it quite palatable. But hear what I learned subsequently, as to their manner of preparing it. When an Indian woman wishes to preserve the plums, which grow in profusion here, she collects a great quantity, and then invites her neighbors to her lodge to pass an agreeable afternoon. Their whole occupation then consists in chatting and sucking the stones from the plums, for they keep only the skins, which, after being sun-dried, are kept for grand occasions.

The wagons containing the presents destined by the Government to the Indians, reached here on the 20th of September. The safe arrival of this convoy was an occasion of general joy. Many were in absolute destitution. The next day the wagons were unloaded and the presents suitably arranged. The flag of the United States floated from a tall

staff before the tent of the superintendent, and a discharge of cannon announced to the Indians that the division of the presents was about to take place. Without delay, the occupants of the various camps flocked in,—men, women and children,—in great confusion, and in their gayest costume, daubed with paints of glaring hues and decorated with all the gewgaws they could boast. They took the respective places assigned to each particular band, thus forming an immense circle, covering several acres of land, and the merchandise was displayed in the centre. The view of such an assembly would give an interesting theme to a Hogarth or a Cruikshank.

The great chiefs of the different nations were served first, and received suits of clothes. You may easily imagine their singular movements on appearing in public, and the admiration which they excited in their comrades, who were never weary inspecting them. The great chiefs were, for the first time in their lives, pantalooned; each was arrayed in a general's uniform, a gilt sword hanging at his side. Their long, coarse hair floated above the military costume, and the whole was crowned by the burlesque solemnity of their painted faces.

Colonel Mitchell employed the Indians as his agents in distributing the presents to the various bands. The arrangements were characterized by benevolence and justice. The conduct of this vast multitude was calm and respectful. Not the slightest index of impatience or of jealousy was observed during the distribution; each band appeared indifferent until its portion was received. Then, glad or satisfied, but always quiet, they removed from the plain with their families and their lodges. They had heard the good news that the bison were numerous on the South Fork of the Platte, three days' march from the plain, and they hastily turned their steps in that direction, resolved to make the buffalo atone for the hunger they had recently suffered on the Great Council plain.

This assembly will form an era among them, and I trust will be ever dear to their memories. It closed on the 23d of September.

The happy results of this council are, no doubt, owing to the prudent measures of the commissioners of the Government, and more especially to their conciliatory manners in all their intercourse and transactions with the Indians. The council will doubtless produce the good effects they have a right to expect. It will be the commencement of a new era for the Indians — an era of peace. In future, peaceable citizens may cross the desert unmolested, and the Indian will have little to dread from the bad white man, for justice will be rendered to him.

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Quite late in the afternoon of the 23d of September I bade farewell to the Creoles, Canadians and half-bloods. I exhorted them to live well and to pray to God, and to hope that he would soon send them spiritual succor for their temporal and eternal happiness and that of their children. I shook hands for the last time with the great chiefs and with a large number of Indians, and addressed them some encouraging words and promised to plead their cause with the great chiefs of the Black-gowns, and make known the desire, good intentions and hopes they had expressed to me, while they would daily, in all sincerity of heart, implore the "Master of Life" to send them zealous priests to instruct them in the way of salvation, which Jesus Christ, his only Son, came to trace to his children on earth.

I directed my course toward "the springs," situated about fourteen miles distant, in the vicinity of Robidoux' trading-house, for Colonel Mitchell had named this as the rendezvous for all those who proposed going directly to the United States. On the 24th, before sunrise, we set out in good and numerous company. I visited, in my way, two

trading-houses, in order to baptize five half-blood children. In the course of the day we passed the famous Chimney-Rock, so often described by travelers. I had already seen it, in 1840 and 1841, in my first visit to the Rocky Mountains, and mentioned it in my letters. I found it considerably diminished in height.

We cast a last look upon the singular productions of nature, the Castle and the Tower, which are near the Chimney, and resemble the ruins of lordly residences scattered over several acres, and presenting a very elevated and broken surface amid a level plain.

Arrived on the Platte, at the place known as Ash Hollow, we turned our steps toward the South Fork, fifteen miles away, over a beautiful rolling country of great elevation. Here we met Prince P.,<sup>3</sup> accompanied only by a Prussian officer, on their way to enjoy a hunt in the Wind River Mountains. We exchanged our little news, and received with pleasure the interesting information which the prince gave us. His excellency must be indeed courageous, to undertake at his age so long a journey in such a wilderness, with but one man as suite, and in a wretched little open wagon, which carried the prince and his officer, as well as their whole baggage and provisions. Later, I learned that the prince intends to choose a location suited to agriculture, for the purpose of founding a German colony.

We live in an age when wonders multiply; we cannot say what, in the way of colonization, may not come to pass in a

<sup>3</sup> This was Prince Paul (Charles Frederick Augustus) of Wurtemberg. Father De Smet gives the name in full in his first draft of this letter. This somewhat mysterious individual visited the West in 1823 and again in 1830, by scanty contemporary mention; in the latter year a New Orleans paper spoke of him as a nephew of the King of England, and as being thirty-three years of age. He seems to have written an account of his travels, which is quoted by Maximilian. He was in fact brother to King William I of Wurtemberg, and he died the spring following this meeting, namely, April 16, 1852, at the age of sixty-seven years.

short time, after witnessing the success of the Mormons, who in less than five years have changed the face of a frightful desert and live there in great abundance. Yet I am free to maintain that if the prince has really formed the plan ascribed to him, which I scarcely credit, I pity from the bottom of my heart those who first embark in the expedition. The enemies whom they would have to meet are still too powerful: Crows, Blackfeet, Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahos and Snakes, are the most feared and warlike of the desert. A colony established in such a neighborhood, and against the will of the numerous warlike tribes in the vicinity of those mountains, would run great dangers and meet heavy obstacles. The influence of religion alone can prepare these parts for such a transformation. The threats and promises of colonists, their guns and sabres, would never effect what can be accomplished by the peaceful word of the Black-gown and the sight of the humanizing sign of the cross.

From the crossing of the South Fork to the junction of the Great Forks, the distance is reckoned to be seventy-five miles, and thence to Fort Kearney 150 miles. Wood is very rare along the Platte or Nebraska. From the junction of the two forks to the mouth the valley is six or eight miles wide, while the bed of the river is about two miles in width. In the spring, at the melting of the snows, when this river is high, it presents a magnificent sheet of water, with numerous isles and islets covered with verdure, and skirted with cottontrees and willows. In the autumn, on the contrary, it loses all interest and beauty. Its waters then escape into a great number of almost imperceptible passages and channels among the sand-banks which cover the bed through its whole length and extent.

When wood fails, as frequently happens on the banks of the Platte or Nebraska, the meals are cooked at fires of buffalo dung, which, when dried, burns like turf.

The soil of the Nebraska is in general rich and deep, mingled, however, with sand in several localities. There is

a great variety of grasses, which with numerous shrubs, covered with flowers of dazzling beauty, present a wide field of study to the lover of botany. As we retire from the valley, a very sensible change is perceptible in the productions of the soil: instead of the former robust and vigorous vegetation, the plains are overgrown with a short, crisp grass; however, it is very nourishing, and eagerly sought by the herds of buffalo and countless wild animals that graze on it.

We arrived at Fort Kearney on the 2d of October, where Colonel Mitchell, the superintendent, held a conference with a deputation of some twenty Pawnee chiefs and braves. They expressed their regret that, not having assisted at the Great Council, they found themselves excluded from the advantages that the treaty would secure to the other nations, and had no share in the presents made by the Government. They all made solemn promises to adhere to the spirit of the treaty, and to execute the orders of their "Great Father the President," who desired that they should live peaceably with all their neighbors, and decreed the cessation of all depredations exercised against travelers from the United States who cross this territory. These Pawnee chiefs and warriors received with all the politeness of Indian customs the various deputations which accompanied us on their way to Washington,—that is, the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahos, hitherto their mortal enemies,—regaling them with banquets, dances and songs. "My heart leaps with joy," shouted Big Fatty, a chief of the Pawnee Loups, "because I find myself in presence of those that from my infancy I have been taught to consider as my mortal foes. Cheyennes, I and my warriors have made many incursions into your territories, to steal your horses and rob you of your scalps. Yes, my heart bounds with delight, for it had never dreamed of meeting you face to face, and of touching your hand in friendship. You see me here poor — I have not a horse to mount. Well, I will gladly go on foot the remainder of my days, if the tomahawk is to be buried by all." He of-

ferred the calumet to all the deputies, and several accepted it. A young Cheyenne chief named Ride on the Clouds refused to touch it, and thus answered the Pawnee: "Neither thou nor thy people have invited me into your territory. My father," added he, pointing to the superintendent, "requested me to follow him, and I follow him: I accept not thy calumet of peace, lest I betray thee. Perchance while I now speak to thee, our brave warriors seek the lodges of thy tribe. No! I will not deceive thee, therefore know that peace exists not between me and thee. I speak thus fearlessly and clearly, for I stand beneath the banner of my father."

The allusions of the Cheyenne seemed not to mar the existing harmony; the dances, songs, speeches and banquets were kept up till late in the night.

The following are the names of the Indian deputies.

The Cheyenne envoys are — *Voki vokammast*, or White Antelope; *Obalawsha*, or Red Skin; and *Vaive atoish*, or Rides on the Clouds.

The Arapaho deputies are — *Nehumutah*, or Eagle's Head; *Nocobotha*, or Tempest; and *Vash*, or Friday.

The Sioux deputies are — *Hakou-zetze*, or One Horn; *Kaive on nêve*, or Little Chief; *Pouskawit cah cah*, or Shellman; *Ehakahakcechtah*, or Watchful Elk; and *Marwgah*, or Goose. The last belongs to the Blackfoot Sioux.

The two Otoes and their wives, who joined us afterward, were *Wah-rush-a-mence*, or Black Elk; and his wife, *Mook-apee*, or Eagle's Plume; *Wah-sho-chegorah*, or Black Bear; and his wife *How-ah-pee*, or Singing Bird.

At Fort Kearney we parted with Colonel Mitchell and his suite, who took the route to Table River [Nebraska City, by way of Ashland]. I joined Major Fitzpatrick and the deputies, and we continued on the southern route, which crosses the Indian Territory.

The country between the frontiers of Missouri and the Big Blue river for about 200 miles, presents a remarkable

uniformity in all its leading features. Clay soil, rolling prairies and the shores of the rivers well wooded. You meet forests of oak and nut trees of all varieties, with maple and cottonwood and a variety of trees found in the east. The hillsides in several places abound in fine springs of water surrounded by beautiful groves, arranged with as much order and taste as if planted by the hand of man. While a luxuriant turf, enameled with fragrant flowers, replaces the briars and underwood, the prairies on all sides, surrounded by forests which protect the water-courses, present to the sight an ocean of verdure adorned with flowers, agitated by the wind and perfuming the air with a thousand odors.

The valley of the Kansas is broad, of a deep, brown vegetable soil: the same remark may be made of the valleys of the remaining rivers of this territory, all of which are suitable for agriculture. The streams of water are clear; they run over pebbly beds, between high banks, and teem with fine fish.

Major Fitzpatrick preferred taking the southern route, in order to give our friends, the Indian deputies, an opportunity of witnessing the progress that the tribes are capable of making in agriculture and the mechanic arts. He wished to convince them that labor and its results gradually conduct to happiness and ease, and that by adopting habits of industry man is freed from the necessity of wandering from place to place to obtain subsistence.

We reached St. Mary's, among the Potawatomes, on the 11th of October. Bishop Miège and the other Fathers of the Mission received us with great cordiality and kindness.

To give the Indian deputies a relish for labor by the tasting of the various products of farming, a quantity of vegetables and fruits were set before them. Potatoes, carrots, turnips, squashes, parsnips, melons, with apples and peaches, graced the board, and our forest friends did them most ample honor. One of the chiefs, Eagle Head, said to me,

“ Now, Father, we comprehend thy words. Thou hast told us that in a few years the buffalo would disappear from our territory; that we must take measures against the day of need; that then we can reap from the earth subsistence and even plenty for our children. When thou wast speaking to us, our ears were shut; now they are opened, for we have eaten the products of the soil. We see here a happy people, well fed and well clothed. We hope that the great Father (the bishop) will take pity on us and on our children. We wish to have Black-gowns with us, and we will cheerfully attend to their words.”

The day after was Sunday, and all attended high mass. The church was well filled. The choir, composed of half-bloods and Indians, sang admirably the Gloria, the Credo and several hymns. The Reverend Father Gailland<sup>4</sup> delivered a sermon in Potawatomi, which lasted three-quarters of an hour, and the number of communicants was large. All this, joined with the attention, modesty and devotion of the whole auditory, some with prayer-books and others with beads, made a profound and, I hope, durable impression on the minds of our Indians of the plains. During several days they never ceased talking with me and questioning on all they had seen, calling it the doctrine that renders men happy here and conducts them to heaven. We found the mission in a flourishing state; the two schools are well attended; a community of nuns of the Sacred Heart have conciliated the affection of the women and girls of the nation, and are working among them with the greatest success. The Potawatomies approach their residences nearer and nearer to the church and to their “ Good Fathers,” and have resolutely commenced cultivating the ground and raising domestic animals. Every Sunday the Fathers have the consolation of contemplating a beautiful congregation of Indians

<sup>4</sup> Reverend Maurice Gailland, a diligent student of native languages; compiled a grammar and lexicon of the Potawatomi language, acquired by the Smithsonian Institution.

assembled in the wood-built cathedral, and on an average 120 piously approaching the holy communion. We spent two days visiting the mission. The Indian chiefs quitted the establishment with hearts overflowing with delight, and in the consoling expectation of having similar happiness in their own tribes at no very distant future. God grant their hopes may be realized!

The weather was fine, and in three days we attained Westport and Kansas [City] on the Missouri.

On the 16th of October we took places on board the steamboat *Clara*. Our Indian deputies had never seen a village or settlement of whites except what they had seen at Fort Laramie and at Fort Kearney; they knew nothing of the manner in which houses are constructed, hence they were in constant admiration; and when for the first time they saw a steamboat their wonder was at its height, although they appeared to entertain a certain fear as they stepped on board. A considerable time elapsed before they became accustomed to the noise arising from the escape of steam, and the bustle that took place at the ringing of bells, etc. They call the boat a "fire canoe," and were transported with delight at the sight of another boat ascending with a small boat behind, which they called a "papoose," or little child. When their apprehensions of danger had subsided, their curiosity augmented; they took the liveliest interest in whatever they saw for the first time. They were in grand costume and seated themselves on the promenade deck; as the boat approached the several towns and villages in her progress, they hailed each with shouts and songs.

On the 22d of October we reached St. Louis. A few days after all the members of the Indian deputation were invited to a banquet given in our university. They were highly pleased at the reception given them by the Reverend Father Provincial, and overjoyed at the encouraging hope that he gave them of having Black-gowns among them — a hope perhaps soon to be realized.

Recommending the poor Indian to your prayers, I beg you to believe me with profound respect.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The word "medicine" is frequently found in letters written on the religious ideas, practices, and customs of the North American Indians. It is necessary to know the signification that the Indians themselves attach to this word.

The term Wah-kon is employed by the Indians to express anything that they cannot understand, whether supernatural, natural, or mechanical. A watch, an organ, a steamboat, or anything in fine, the operations of which exceed their capacity to understand, is called Wah-kon. God is called Wah-kon-tonga, or the Great Incomprehensible. The word *Tonga* in Sioux means great or large.

Wah-kon means, properly incomprehensible, inexpressible. It is badly translated by the whites, who always render it medicine; thus, for example, the word *Wah-kon-tonga*, or God, has been translated *Great Medicine!*

The word *medicine* has since been so universally applied to the different religious and superstitious ceremonies of the Indians, that all travelers use it when writing of the natives.

The word *medicine*, when applied to Indian ceremonies, whether religious or superstitious, has, however, no relation to the treatment of the body, but it has been so commonly adopted that I am forced to use it when speaking of the Indians. Thence are derived the compounds, "medicine-feast," "medicine-dance," "medicine-man," etc., and also "medicine-bag," or sack, containing idols, charms, and other superstitious articles.

My intention in giving this little note is to distinguish between *medicine* used in the sense of *medicament*, and the same word applied to charms, religious invocations, and ceremonies.—*Author's note.*

## PART V.

THE UTAH AND OREGON EXPEDITIONS OF 1858-59, AND  
SOME PRECEDING EVENTS.

*Itinerary for the years 1852-59.*

1852.

**F**ATHER DE SMET spent this year mainly in St. Louis. He made one excursion, as Socius, with the Father Provincial, to Louisville, Bardstown and Cincinnati.

Distance traveled, 1,478 miles.

1853.

“In the month of April of this year, with the approval of the consultors of the Vice-Province, the Reverend Father Provincial sent me to Europe, in company with the Right Reverend Bishop Miège, then Vicar Apostolic of the Western Indian Territory, east of the Rocky Mountains. His Lordship was to proceed to Rome, myself to France, Belgium and Holland, both on business of the Society.”

While in Washington en route to New York, “we shook hands with President Pierce and were kindly entertained by his Excellency. I was made bearer of dispatches to various Ministers in several of the great European capitals, by recommendation of Colonel Benton and the kindness of the Secretary of State, the Honorable Mr. Marcy.”

Visited Georgetown and Washington Colleges — Proceeded to New York — Entertained by the Fathers at Fordham and St. Xavier — May 9th embarked on Steamer *Fulton* — Crossed the Atlantic (eighth time) in eleven days — Landed at Havre — Proceeded to Paris whence Miège went to Rome and De Smet to Brussels — Father

De Smet then visited all the principal cities of Belgium and Holland.

November 17th left Belgium with seven candidates and in Paris was joined by Miège with five more — November 23d embarked at Havre on the steamer *Humboldt* (ninth crossing of the Atlantic) — Stormy voyage all the way — Compelled to put into Halifax for coal — Through incompetence of pilot taken on board, the *Humboldt* ran upon the Three Sisters reef (December 6th) and was completely wrecked, but without loss of life — De Smet's party entertained at the residence of Archbishop Walsh — December 8th the party boarded the *Niagara* which stopped en route from Liverpool to Boston — Reached Boston next day and disembarked — Father De Smet went alone to New York and returned — December 15th party left Boston and proceeded via Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati and Louisville to St. Louis where they arrived December 26th.

Distance traveled, 12,000 miles.

#### 1854.

This year was spent mainly in St. Louis with one visit with the Provincial to Louisville, Bardstown and Cincinnati; and another with Bishop Carroll to Lexington, Frankfort and other places.

Distance traveled, 1,400 miles.

#### 1855.

During the course of this year Father De Smet with the Father Provincial made two trips to Louisville, Bardstown and Cincinnati, and two to Chicago, Milwaukee and other points.

Distance traveled, 4,468 miles.

#### 1856.

Early in the year visited Louisville, Bardstown, Cincinnati, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and

returned to St. Louis March 10th — September 9th left St. Louis for Europe — Embarked on the *Fulton* at New York September 20th (tenth crossing of the Atlantic) — “Being the time of the autumnal equinoxes, the weather was rather boisterous and the sky foggy and cloudy. The vessel steered for Cape Sable, the most southern point of Nova Scotia. On the third night it was dark and cloudy. To this time the captain had not been able to make any observations, except soundings. For a moment the dark clouds disappeared, the watchman cried out: “Land! Land!” The engine was stopped, the captain and officers were soon on deck. They had supposed that the steamer was a hundred miles southeast of Cape Sable. What could be the land they saw, on both sides? And how did the vessel come there? The danger was great. A few minutes more of covering, dark clouds, would have brought us to perish on the dangerous shoals and rocks of Nova Scotia in the Bay of Fundy. The steamer had found its way into this bay, carried on by a strong and setting tide. The land seen on both sides was the rocky, precipitous shores of St. Mary’s bay. This happened on the night of the 24th [of September].”

Arrived at Havre October 3d — Reached Paris next day and took a stroll about the city, “to see as much of its wonders as possible. I was facing the Rue Rivoli, toward the Champs Élysées, when the great Lion and Lioness made their unexpected appearance in an open carriage. I had a good view of Napoleon III and of the Empress Eugénie, at a distance of hardly twelve feet.”

Left Paris for Belgium October 7th and arrived in Brussels next day — Visited the larger towns of Belgium and Holland which consumed the remainder of the year.

Distance traveled, 9,995 miles.

1857.

Early in February went to Lille, France — Thence to Calais, London, Dublin and Limerick in Ireland, back to

London, Lille and Belgium — Visited Aix la Chapelle, Prussia — Made a tour of Holland and returned to Belgium.

April 21st embarked at Antwerp on the steamer *Leopold I* for New York (eleventh crossing of the Atlantic). "Usually on board of a vessel with many passengers, mostly strangers to each other, the first day of the voyage is spent in looking around; in making a few congenial acquaintances, in rendering one's self comfortable below and on deck. Jolly fellows are always found in a big crowd and always ready to step forward. The fiddle, the harp, the accordion, were produced; a party soon formed and we had dancing and singing. Our deck resembled a floating village, all people on the alert, as on great picnic occasions.

What is beautiful and pleasant is seldom of a lasting nature, and the sequel will prove this. On the 23d, at half-past four in the afternoon we left Southampton. We soon lost sight of the island of Wight and of the English coast. Though the wind was moderate and the weather fine, we met a high, swollen and agitated sea, which tossed the vessel violently to and fro, and now behold the reverse of the picture, or picnic. This day and the two following were like days of mourning, without a song or a dance, without fun or any animation whatever. The dinner table was almost deserted, and appetite and gaiety had both left together. Here and there groups of men, women and children were observed, leaning over the side of the vessel, with haggard looks and pale faces, paying their tribute and forced respects to the sea. Surely Neptune was at his post, this inexorable tax gatherer called for his toll, and to the last particle it was exacted.

\* \* \* \* \*

As the sea became calmer, the sick were soon restored and dances and songs became again the order of the day.

The wind continued moderate and the weather fair till we arrived on the Newfoundland banks, on the 2d of May.

This is the regions of rains and fogs, which lasted four days and nights. No observations could be taken and nothing could be distinguished at a short distance from the vessel. The dreadful collisions of the *Lyonais* and *Arctic* were then still recent, as a warning to other vessels, which might be on the same track. The great and piercing steam whistle was opened every five minutes. I had the great happiness and consolation to offer up the holy sacrifice of mass every day, with few exceptions. My young companions approached the holy table frequently, and several passengers, with joy, availed themselves of the happy opportunity of observing their religious and Christian duties. The little altar surmounted by a little statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was neatly and beautifully adorned. Before it we said in common and daily, our evening and morning prayers, and sang one or two appropriate canticles. On Sunday I said mass in the large cabin, at which about 150 persons assisted, several Protestants asking the favor to be admitted. In the evening of the 6th, the sky cleared up and the moon appeared in its full lustre and splendor, reflecting itself majestically, with all its surrounding sparkling stars, on an even unrippled ocean. Never did I behold at sea a calmer and more beautiful night. I made the best of it, and did not retire to rest before two in the morning.

On the 7th the sky was clear, the sea was tranquil and even, hardly a ripple stirred the surface of its waters and from its bosom rose the majestic sun, in all its lustre and glory, spreading and reflecting its dazzling rays and beams, high and deep above and below the horizon. Eastwardly the ocean appeared like in a blaze and resembled a boundless mass of molten gold. Truly grand and sublime is the sight of the rising sun at sea. "*Mirabilia opera tua, Domine, et anima mea cognoscit nimis.*" (Ps. 138-14.) Two vessels were seen on these apparently boiling and red fiery waters, which greatly added to the sublime sight. We looked around and discovered numerous crafts, with out-

spread sails, directing their course to every point of the compass. Finally all eyes were stretched westwardly. We beheld in the distance, above the horizon, a long and foggy line, as of dark rising vapors and clouds. Spy glasses were then applied, a close examination made. From a hundred mouths, from one end of the vessel to the other, re-echoed the ever joyous cry, Land! Land! Land! No mistake! The ardently desired and anxiously looked for American shore appeared in view, gradually developing itself to the naked eye, as we approached. First the outline of the hills and bluffs; next the forest trees and houses; at last, men riding and walking, bands of horses and herds of cattle, were seen browsing the rich herbage in the beautiful meadows along the shore.

The deck was now literally alive with its numerous passengers, formed in groups and parties. All were seen gazing with the utmost interest and most cordially saluted the New World, the home of the oppressed! The land of Liberty! The new land of promise! For months or years past it had engrossed their whole attention, had occupied all their thoughts, yea, their whole being. There it was, unfolding itself gradually, in all its loveliness and beauty, in a succession of magnificent villas and gardens and prosperous cities and towns. No dismal thought strikes the newcomer on such an occasion and he feels happy for the moment. America is indeed an earthly Paradise to an industrious, resolute and sober man. Many realize all their expectations, nay, do even go beyond them. In every one of our great cities we find foreigners, on the first list, amongst the wealthiest, and thousands who are doing well, and surely much better than in the old country. However, as the old Proverb says: "It is not all gold that glitters." You may easily find this out, by a peep in the calaboose, the hospital, the asylum, the poorhouse, etc. They are frequently crowded with foreigners, as many as can be admitted. Tens of thousands would ask no better boon, if in their power, than to return to their old homes.

Before the end of this beautiful day, on the 7th of May, at four in the afternoon, the *Leopold* anchored before New York, near Staten Island. On the 8th we disembarked with our baggage and lodged at St. Xavier's College and at St. John's, Fordham, until the 18th. On the 19th we took the cars in New York, via Buffalo, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Terre Haute, and arrived in St. Louis on the 21st a little after noon."

Distance traveled, 7,200 miles.

1858.

Early in the year went to Leavenworth to recover body of Father Duerinck drowned in the Missouri — Went thence to St. Mary's on the Kansas river — Returned to St. Louis — May 5th received commission as Chaplain U. S. Army — Left for Leavenworth to join Harney's command destined to Utah — Went as far as the Ford of the South Platte when news was received that the Mormons had made peace with the Government — De Smet returned to Leavenworth — Went thence to St. Mary's, Kansas, and thence to St. Louis, September.

September 15th left for New York to go to Oregon with General Harney via Panama, still in the capacity of chaplain — Embarked at New York September 20th — Crossed the Isthmus on the 29th — Stopped at San Francisco October 16th and arrived at Vancouver October 28th.

November 1st started for the upper country — Visited the Dalles and Walla Walla — Arrived at the Sacred Heart Mission among the Cœur d'Alènes November 21st and remained there the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 10,347 miles.

1859.

February 18th Father De Smet left mission of Sacred Heart and visited the Pend d'Oreilles, Kalispels, Kootenais and Flatheads — From the Flatheads set out for Fort Vancouver April 16th with nine chiefs, arriving there about

May 16th — Council with General Harney took place on 18th — Thence De Smet went to Salem to present the chiefs to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs — Later returned to Vancouver.

June 15th left Vancouver with the chiefs for the upper missions — Arrived at St. Ignatius July 16th — Left for Fort Benton July 22d and arrived there July 25th — Left Fort Benton by skiff August 3d and reached St. Louis on the 23d of September.

Distance traveled, 5,284 miles.

## CHAPTER I.

### OCEAN VOYAGES OF 1853 AND 1857.

A glimpse of Paris — Loses his boys — Stormy passage of the Atlantic — Neptune twice blest — Trouble with machinery — Out of coal — Shipwrecked outside Halifax — Undesirable European immigration — Boston and New York — Dangers by rail and river — Another crossing — Comfortable passage — Neptune still there — Fogs of Newfoundland — Lovely day for arrival in New York.

#### *Shipwreck of the Humboldt.*

<sup>1</sup>University of St. Louis, January 1, 1854.

*My dear Brothers :*

¶ PROFIT by my earliest leisure moments, to inform you that we happily arrived at our place of destination on the 27th day of December.

I wish you and your dear children a happy and prosperous New Year, and I implore God to pour down upon you daily his choicest favors and blessings. I can never forget the fraternal attachment and extreme goodness manifested to me so continually during my short visit to the land of my nativity.

I inclose you a little sketch of my long and dangerous voyage. As I am overwhelmed with business, I am forced to write in haste — *currente calamo.*

<sup>1</sup> This letter to MM. Charles and Francis De Smet was also furnished by him to the *Précis Historiques*, and was reproduced in *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres* and thence translated for *Western Missions and Missionaries*, appearing as Letter VIII, Second Series, in both the latter works. The text followed is the English of *Western Missions and Missionaries*. During the month of January Father De Smet wrote this letter in turn to three different friends in Europe.

The 17th of November, the day on which I bade you farewell, will not soon be effaced from my memory. The following day I rejoined Monseigneur Miège and his companions, at Paris. The eight young men who accompanied me had only two days to allow them a cursory view of this great city, or interminable fair. They, however, visited its most splendid palaces, and its principal monuments, with the public squares of this extensive and wonderful capital, and the palaces and gardens of Versailles.

On the 2d we arrived at Havre, so as to be ready to embark thence on the morrow. The whole day was employed in collecting our trunks, boxes and cases, which were in the different offices of the port and in making preparations for our voyage. The American steamer was already in the roadstead, about two leagues from the city, and a small towboat was waiting to conduct her passengers to her. I had left my thirteen companions for an hour, to go in search of three boxes at the custom-house, and have them transported directly on board of the *Humboldt*. On my arrival at the proper place of embarking, all the passengers were there in readiness, except my company. I immediately sent some eight or ten persons in search of them, who searched all the streets and wharves of Havre for six hours, without procuring the least information concerning them. The moment named for sailing arrived! when a gendarme, to whom I had addressed myself as a last resource, and the surest after all, hastened to draw me from my embarrassment by informing me that the young gentlemen that were giving me so much solicitude had been on the *Humboldt* the last six hours, and that they also were in great anxiety concerning my delay. In a word, they had mistaken their course in the labyrinth of wharves at Havre, and thinking they had not a moment to spare, had hired two little boats to convey them to the steamer. I hastened to join them, and reached the ship at the moment they were heaving the anchor to put to sea.

I found gendarmes on board, in search of some suspected individuals. It was said that these agents had received strict orders to examine all the passports carefully. My traveling companions were all provided, except one, who had joined me in Paris, with the consent of his parents. I was not without anxiety in his regard; but our young deserter, M. M\*\*\*\*, disguised as a cabin-boy, played his part perfectly; he held the lantern to aid the police-officers in a manner to do honor to the most skillful cabin-boy, during their whole visit to the saloons and cabins. All the passengers passed in review, all the passports were minutely criticized; but the agents paid no attention to the handsome lantern-bearer, who always remained close by them, and thus quietly escaped their scrutiny. My anxiety, however, did not subside until I saw the gentlemen leave our decks.

Without a moment's delay, two discharges of cannon announce the departure of the *Humboldt*. Every officer, pilot and sailor is at his post. The whistling of the steam-engine is heard for the last time, so shrill that it penetrates the very heart of the town: it is the signal of the engineer. The captain with his speaking-trumpet orders the departure, and the steamer steers her course in the direction of Southampton and Cowes — places between the Isle of Wight and the coasts of England, where English passengers and the English mails are received. It was only in the evening of the 23d that she took the direction of New York.

For fourteen days the *Humboldt* combated against a stormy sea and violent west wind; Neptune received this time a double tribute from those who were so bold as to hazard crossing his domain in this season of the year. The greatest sufferer was Bishop Miège, who kept his bed constantly. The next was young Fortuné Hègel,<sup>2</sup> of Brussels, who has too weak a stomach ever to make a good sailor; he supported this misery with great fortitude, never

<sup>2</sup> Son of a glove manufacturer coming to America to finish his commercial education.

regretting that he had left his quiet home for some years. All the others escaped tolerably; as to myself, I felt almost no inconvenience from sea-sickness during the whole voyage. To the violent storms of wind we must add several other disagreeable circumstances: the steam-engine got out of order several times, and the boilers threatened to blow us in the air; the coal was of a bad quality, and that, even, began to become scarce on the twelfth day of our voyage. We were obliged to deviate from our ordinary route, to get a supply of coal at Halifax, a seaport of Nova Scotia. This neglect on the part of the company was extremely fatal in its consequences.

In the forenoon of the 6th of December, about five leagues from port, a fisherman presented himself on board as a pilot, and declared to the captain, who demanded his certificates, "that his papers were either in his boat, or at his own house." The captain relied upon his word, and intrusted him with the management of the ship. Against the expressed opinion of the officers, the false pilot changed the boat's direction, and notwithstanding their reiterated remonstrances, he persisted in his obstinacy. An hour and a half afterward, the *Humboldt* struck on the dangerous rocks called "The Sisters," in the neighborhood of Devil's island. It was half-past six in the morning — the greater number of the passengers were still in their berths. The shock was terrific: I was walking on the deck at the moment. Discovering directly great pieces of wood floating on the surface of the water, I hastened to warn all my companions of their danger, for they were also still in their beds. Young Hègel having been intrusted to me by his father, I took him by my side as long as the danger lasted, and kept a rope in my hand for the purpose of lowering him into the first life-boat that should be launched. All had been startled from sleep. Fear had palsied every heart; and while the water was pouring into the vessel by torrents, fire broke out. It was got under only by great exertion, through the presence of mind and manly energy

of the first engineer; after great efforts, they succeeded in extinguishing it. As if all things conspired to our destruction, a fog arose, so thick that we could not see thirty paces from the vessel. The whole power of the steam-engine was exerted in an attempt to gain the shore, six miles distant. The boat soon inclined to the larboard side, where she had sprung a leak, and began to go down. Every arm set to work to aid in launching the small boats. Had not the captain<sup>3</sup> exhibited great presence of mind and an extraordinary firmness, there would have been much tumult and disorder. There was a rush to get in first, but happily we were not obliged to resort to this means of saving ourselves. While the greater number believed that all was lost, and I among the rest, the ship touched again, in a few fathoms of water, and rested on a rock. We were saved!

Immediately after the shipwreck, the fog arose, and we then discovered, for the first time and to our joyful surprise, that the shore was only 100 feet from us. The sea was calm, the wind lowered, and the sun rose majestically. It was the announcement of a return of fine weather, which left us at Havre de Grace, and now accompanied us until we reached Missouri. We had the good fortune and the time to save all our trunks, traveling bags and boxes. The loss of the ship and cargo was estimated at \$600,000.

We had for traveling companions on the *Humboldt* Jews, Infidels and Protestants of every shade. Some of the voyagers were imbued with very strong prejudices against the Catholic faith, but in particular against Jesuits. The wreck of the *Humboldt* was even attributed to our presence, and it was maliciously proposed to oblige us to quit as soon as possible.

A few hours after the wreck, a steamboat from Halifax came to our aid. The Archbishop of that city treated us with great kindness, and insisted that Monseigneur Miège and myself should become his guests during our stay. The

<sup>3</sup> Lyons, an American.

next morning we had the consolation of offering the sacrifice of mass in the cathedral, and my companions all received holy communion, to thank the Almighty and our Lady for having saved us amid so many perils, and especially shipwreck, where our life was in danger. Such circumstances are well suited to convince us that we are in the hands of the Lord, who protects us and preserves our life, or calls us, as he wills, before his tribunal.

Halifax numbers about 25,000 souls, one-third of whom are Catholics, and contains three Catholic churches, two convents, and four schools.

On the 8th of December, Feast of the Immaculate Conception, after the celebration of mass, we heard that the steamship *Niagara*, of the Liverpool and Boston line, was in sight. At each trip she stops at Halifax, remaining two hours. All the passengers of the *Humboldt*, including those that we took in from England, went on board, making the total of passengers more than 400.

Among those already on the *Niagara*, was a little man, with an ape-like face and a goatish beard, who called himself Francis Tapon, a self-nominated apostle, and self-commissioned to teach a new religion to the universe. Francis declared himself an enemy of all existing creeds, but above all to the Pope and the Jesuits. When quitting Liverpool, he declared openly and aloud that he would *kill* the *first Jesuit* that he might meet on American soil! In fact, he was so violent that the captain prudently took from him his gun, pistols and poniards. The moment I set foot on the *Niagara*, I was informed of these interesting particulars. I advised my young friends to avoid Mr. Francis Tapon, and pay no sort of attention to his words or movements. He proclaimed from the deck the program of his new gospel, that "was to succeed all religions." Those who heard him shrugged their shoulders, saying, "The man is crazy." On arriving at Boston, he made several ablutions, to the great amusement of the passengers, saying that he "was wash-

ing off the last filth of Europe." Mr. Tapon at last reached the city, and we lost sight of him, without receiving a blow.

He is but a fanatic more for these States, which have already unfortunately received thousands from all the various countries of Europe. These creatures begin to agitate, to harangue, to seek to change the Constitution, and make the United States a land of proscription, especially against the Catholics.

But let us resume our journey of voyage. We had fine weather, and a pleasant trip from Halifax to Boston, which we reached at night. Our Fathers received us with open arms and extraordinary charity, in which all their parishioners joined — I will add to the praise of the German congregation in particular, that during our stay at Boston they loaded our tables with poultry, choice vegetables, cakes and fruits. This parish numbers about 3,000 Catholics, and they are distinguished in the city by their piety and zeal. Although Boston contains a Catholic population of nearly 75,000 souls, there are but fifteen priests, and only four or five Catholic schools. The Sisters of Notre Dame, from Namur, have a very flourishing establishment here, and are doing immense good. Their houses in America are very successful, and their subjects are asked for in many of our large towns. In Cincinnati these good sisters teach 2,000 children and youth.

I accompanied young Hègel as far as St. John's College, at Fordham, according to the wishes of his father, who had intrusted him to my care for this purpose. We are always astonished at the rapid increase of New York, the great metropolis of the United States, in commerce and population. Its inhabitants, who number more than 700,000, are the descendants or representatives of every nation beneath the sun. The Catholics number about 200,000.

I returned to Boston on the 14th. The day following, my companions (who were quite recovered from their fatigue) and myself quitted this city. Their astonishment

was unceasing at all they saw in Boston, which is styled the "Athens of America." Its commerce is very great, and its population exceeds 150,000.

We risked ourselves on the railroad, by Buffalo, Cleveland and Columbus, as far as Cincinnati — a distance of 770 miles — and passed over it in fifty-two hours, comprehending all the delays experienced at the numerous stations. We changed cars six times in this distance. Be not astonished at the word "risk," for accidents on all the routes are of frequent occurrence, and often frightful. To-day, it may be that a bridge has been left open — a hair-brained or intoxicated engineer pays no attention, and locomotive and cars are precipitated into the water; to-morrow, two trains will meet in collision, dashing into each other with all the velocity that steam can create. In a word, there are all kinds of accidents. When they occur, a list is given of the killed and disabled, which is often a very considerable one, curious inquiries are made, and some days after there is no further mention of the affair.

At Cincinnati our Fathers were most delighted to see us arriving with thirteen new and youthful companions full of fervent zeal to labor in this vast vineyard of the Lord. As we approached St. Louis, I breathed more freely; I was no longer harassed with anxiety — indeed I had but one step to take, and I should be at home. However, this "step" measured 700 miles, 530 of which were to be passed on the Ohio, and 170 on the Mississippi, and these rivers give an annual list of fearful accidents. We entered the steamer on the Ohio, and on the morning of the 21st found ourselves cordially welcomed by our Fathers of Louisville, Kentucky. Continuing our descent on the 22d, we arrived at the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi without accident.

My young companions were never weary of admiring the graceful and varied scenery of the lovely Ohio, now gratifying the sight by a chain of romantic elevations, then by a succession of rich lowlands, adorned with well-cultivated

and extensive farms; and the attention arrested also by a succession of flourishing villages and cities.

The Mississippi is also more dangerous than the Ohio; exacting from its navigators during the winter many precautions, for the river is then low, full of sand-banks, sawyers and floating ice. We were several times in danger, and three different times our boat ran aground, and we believed her lost. On our way we saw the wrecks of five boats. Five Lazarists, who shared our disasters in the *Humboldt*, arrived in St. Louis some days before us, but only after having undergone a second shipwreck, and having been immersed in water to the neck.

On the 26th we reached St. Louis in safety, and animated with joyful and grateful sentiments on finding ourselves at our destination. An hour after my arrival I had the comfort of celebrating mass, in thanksgiving for the special protection and blessings extended to us in our journey from Ghent to St. Louis.

Believe me, Dear Brothers,  
Your devoted brother,  
P. J. DE SMET.

*My Dear Friend:*<sup>4</sup>

To accomplish my promise, I hasten to give the news of our voyage. I am well aware that you will not only be pleased, but that you will expect a letter with a certain impatience.

We have just safely arrived in America, after a delightful and tranquil passage. Embarking at Antwerp on the 21st of April, we reached New York on the 7th of the month of May. I send you a sketch of our itinerary.

<sup>4</sup> This letter was sent from New York May 15, 1857, to Father Terwecoren, to be copied for the *Précis Historiques* and forwarded to its (unnamed) destination. It was also sent from St. Louis in Flemish, to a Mr. Cuyten on the 3d of June, and in French to the Father-General about June 22d. It was published as Letter XXIII, Second Series, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*, and thence translated as Letter XXXVI, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter version is here followed.

The eve of our departure, we were invited to dine in the family of the worthy and honored Count Le Grelle, late Burgomaster of Antwerp, who was desirous of testifying to us on this occasion, as he did on several other departures of missionaries, the deep interest which he takes in our cherished American missions. The day of our departure, he was so kind as to accompany us as far as the port. A great number of other persons, and several of our near and dear relatives also, came to the quay, to bid us a last adieu and wish us a successful voyage.

They weighed anchor between nine and ten in the morning. The weather was superb. The large and beautiful ship, *Leopold I*, was full of animation. A multitude of emigrants, from Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Belgium, Russia, France, etc., etc., were already on board, and were occupied with an infinity of petty cares and arrangements, in order to render the long passage agreeable, or, as the English say, *comfortable*. The sailors, attentive to the word of command, and every one at his post, were making the latest preparations for setting sail.

We took but a day to reach Southampton, and remained there until the next day, to take in English and Irish passengers. Our number increased then to more than 620 persons. During the whole of this day the air resounded with the songs of the Germans and Hollanders, collected on the deck; several parties executed dances, to the sound of the violin and guitar; our main-deck resembled a floating village at the Kermesse. But fine things never endure long, and here follows a proof.

Scarcely had we lost sight of the Isle of Wight, than the scene assumed a new aspect. We found the sea in extraordinary agitation. Although the wind was tolerably moderate, and the weather sufficiently fine, the swell shook the ship with violence, bearing us now on the summit of the highest waves, and then precipitating us into an abyss, between the turbulent and foaming surges which rose mountain high around us. It was an agitation which succeeded a

tempest, or many heavy contradictory winds, which had passed, a short time before, in our neighborhood. That day resembled a genuine day of mourning; the songs and dances ceased; no animation or vivacity was exhibited anywhere; the table was almost deserted; hunger and gayety made their exit together. Here and there might be seen groups of men, women and children, with sinister faces and haggard eyes, pale and wan as spectres, leaning over the vessel's side, as though making some hasty communication to the sea. Those especially who had reveled most freely, and perhaps looked too deeply into the wine cup, wore the most melancholy and lengthened faces; they looked absolutely like old parchment — *franzysne gezichten*. Neptune was at his post; this inexorable toll-gatherer exacted the very last portion of his tribute; willingly or unwillingly, it must be paid; and, remark it well, how contradictory the humor of the stern sea-king, for we leave the table after dessert, but he requires the list exactly reversed, from dessert to the initiatory course of soup.

Though this was my eleventh trip across the Atlantic, I was not exempted from the general sea-sickness. I endeavored to resist, but all in vain. I was, therefore, obliged humbly to submit, and share the common misery. The old adage says, "violent sufferings do not last long," hence the indisposed insensibly recovered, and we had no deaths to mourn. We had a worthy and excellent physician on board, Monsieur Themont; he was on his feet night and day, and lavished his cares on all indiscriminately.

This little shadow past, the remainder of the passage was unclouded. The weather was favorable from that day forward. The winds were sometimes a little contrary, but the ocean was calm and tranquil, until within six days' distance from New York.

I had the consolation of saying mass every day in my cabin. My young companions frequently received, and several of the emigrants enjoyed the same happy privilege. You would have been edified had you seen our little altar,

neatly adorned and surmounted with a pretty little statue of the Blessed Virgin, garlanded with flowers that some ladies from Holland had removed from their bonnets. On Sunday I said mass in the grand saloon, where more than a hundred persons could conveniently find places; several Protestants asked permission to be present. Hymns were sung, during the sacrifice, in French, Latin, Dutch and German. It was certainly a rare spectacle on the ocean, where one is much more habituated to hearing blasphemies than the praises of God.

On the 2d day of May, when near the Banks of Newfoundland, the sea became covered with a dense fog. It continued thus during four days, so that the captain could not make an observation. We could not distinguish anything a few feet from the boat. The misfortunes of the *Lyonnais* and of the *Arctic*<sup>5</sup> are still recent. We were in continual danger of coming in contact with some sailing vessel pursuing the same route. As a precaution, the great whistle of the steam engine was heard day and night, in its loudest and most piercing tones, in order to give the alarm to vessels which might be in our passage. By means of this manœuvre we were able to advance with our ordinary rapidity, ten or twelve knots, or four leagues, an hour.

However, as we were rapidly approaching land, and the fog increasing in intensity, it appeared that we were progressing more or less at random; and as the observations of the meridian had become impossible, we were not without anxiety. We, therefore, had recourse to heaven, and we said our beads together, with the litany of our Blessed Mother, and some special prayers to obtain, by the intercession of the souls in purgatory, a serene sky. Our prayers appear to have been heard. Some hours after, the fogs had vanished, and we had one of the most glorious evenings that can be witnessed at sea. The full moon, reflected on the waves, shone in its splendor from the starry and cloudless firmament. The next day the sun rose majestically. We

<sup>5</sup> Wrecked on these coasts in 1856 with considerable loss of life.

saw a great number of vessels sailing toward every point of the compass. At last, all eyes being turned toward the west, we descried in the distance, above the horizon, as it were, a long train of rising mists. The officers apply the spyglass and announce that those are the much-desired coasts of America! Songs and exclamations of joy were simultaneously offered by all hearts. The emigrants, grouped upon the upper deck, all saluted the New World, the land of promise, which bore in its bosom all their hopes and all their future prospects. As the objects and shores presented themselves more distinctly to view my young companions could not satisfy their longing eyes at the view of that land, to the salvation of which they came to devote their lives, and on which they will be, I trust, instruments of salvation to thousands of neglected souls. Before the close of that lovely day, the 7th of the month of Mary, we found ourselves, at four o'clock in the afternoon, in the roadstead off Staten Island, in the bay of New York.

One duty remained for us to fulfil. In the name of all the passengers of the first and second cabin, who amounted to more than a hundred persons, I presented to the worthy commandant of the steamship, Monsieur Achille Michel, and to all his officers, a document signed by all, to express our cordial gratitude and sincere thanks for their assiduous attentions, their great kindness and politeness in regard to all the passengers; and, at the same time, to compliment them for their naval skill in the management of the large and noble ship, *Leopold I.* In all my sea voyages, I have never met a commandant more capable, and officers more attentive to their charges. The whole crew was well selected and perfectly organized. It is rare to find sailors more tranquil, laborious and respectful. The names of Messrs. Edward Michel, commander; Justius William Luning, first mate; Louis Delmer, second mate; Julius Nyssens, third mate; Leopold Grosfels, fourth mate; Augustus Thémont, surgeon, and Edward Kremer, engineer, will always be dear to us. We also pay a tribute of respectful thanks

to Messrs. Posno and Spillaerds, of Antwerp, for their assiduous attentions to us before embarking, and for all the precautions which they so kindly took to render this long voyage pleasant. Most cheerfully we wish the happiest success to the great and noble enterprise of the Atlantic Steamship Company of Antwerp.

On arriving in New York, our dear brethren of St. Xavier's College, New York, and of St. John's College, at Fordham, near the city, gave us a most hearty reception, pleased at seeing a new reinforcement to the apostolic work in America. Beautiful and vast America, so superb in all its natural features, is in pressing need of fervent, holy and zealous missionaries! The thousands of Catholic emigrants who seek a home on her shores from year to year, render her penury, in this respect, more afflicting and melancholy. Ah! may the generous hearts of Catholics in Holland and in Belgium continue to be moved with an increasing compassion for so many thousands of souls, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, who are deprived of pastors and of the consolations of religion. May they not cease sending new troops of young missionaries, filled with a thirst for the salvation of their neighbor. The harvest is great; the Father of the family only waits for the harvesters. No country in the world has in prospect so magnificent a future. How happy, if she can be induced to acknowledge the true Church, which alone can make us happy here below and secure us a happy eternity, for which we have all been created and redeemed.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MORMON EXPEDITION OF 1858.<sup>1</sup>

Appointment as Army Chaplain—The Mormon troubles—Fort Leavenworth—Progress of Kansas—Fort Kearney—An Indian scalp-fight—A buffalo hunt—Freighting on the plains—Discouraging for the Indians—Mormons escaping from Utah—Conclusion of peace puts an end to the expedition.

St. Louis University, May 9, 1858.

*Right Reverend and Dear Father:*

GENERAL HARNEY is now in St. Louis with General Smith. I paid him a visit at the Planter's House. He seems really to have been in earnest in asking for a Catholic chaplain for the Utah army. He assured me that I will receive my commission within two or three days. Should it come, I shall immediately make ready for the trip. I hope Reverend Father Provincial will give me a companion. I shall do my best to obtain one. I was just preparing for my journey among the tribes of the upper Missouri. Both ends may perhaps be accomplished in this and the following year, should obedience allow me. I may soon see your Reverence in Leavenworth City.

St. Louis University, May 18, 1858.

*Right Reverend and Dear Father:*

I received, last evening, my appointment as chaplain to the army of Utah, from the Secretary of War.

<sup>1</sup> Father De Smet wrote several accounts of his travels in 1858-59, in both French and English, for various correspondents in both hemispheres. When he decided, in 1861, to publish another book, he had a set of his French letters translated for the purpose, by Mr. Robert A. Bakewell, of St. Louis; and the volume called *New Indian Sketches* was the result. This is the text followed here. It had previously appeared in French in the *Précis Historiques*.

You may as yet remember, that in my trip to Leavenworth last December, I met Mr. Murphy, brother to our friend Colonel Murphy. We conversed then together on my probable trip to Utah and he seemed to relish the idea of accompanying me thither. In case your Reverence should approve of this selection and should Mr. Murphy be as yet willing to undertake the voyage, I think we may easily come to a proper understanding as to terms; and you will please inform him, if he resides at Leavenworth or its vicinity.

It is probable I shall proceed from Utah to the Flat-head Mission to confer with the Fathers about a new establishment among the Blackfeet. There are fair prospects to bring it about. The Government appears favorably disposed. The Rocky Mountain missions have been separated from California. In a letter dated 18th of April, Father Congiato writes to me that he has been appointed Superior exclusively for these missions; he is already on his way thither.

I shall leave St. Louis for Leavenworth in the course of the present week.

St. Louis University, May 18, 1858.

*Honorable Sir:*

I have the honor of acknowledging the receipt of your communication of the 13th instant, informing me of my appointment as chaplain to the army for Utah.

It is indeed with the utmost diffidence in my own humble abilities that I feel myself constrained by a sense of duty to accept a charge of such responsibility. Trusting, however, to the Divine Assistance, I shall endeavor faithfully to comply with the duties of the office assigned me.

Allow me to beg the favor of you, Honorable Sir, to convey to the President my sincere thanks for the very distinguished honor which he has thought proper to confer upon

me. I shall immediately make ready to repair to the headquarters of General Smith, as directed in your letter.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

Honorable JOHN B. FLOYD,

*Secretary of War,*

Washington City, D. C.

St. Louis, Nov. 1, 1859.

*Reverend and Dear Father:*

In accordance with your request, I proceed with great pleasure to give you some details of my recent journey.

On the 20th of May, 1858, I set out from St. Louis for the western portion of North America, and after an absence of about sixteen months, I returned to the point whence I set out. During this interval, I had accompanied, as chaplain, an army sent out by the United States against the Mormons and the savages. I propose to give you some details of this double expedition. Not to fatigue you, I will endeavor to be brief. At best, however, my narrative will fill some pages, as my recent voyage has been very long. It exceeded 15,000 English miles, or 5,000 leagues. I propose then to give you some details in regard to the different countries I have traversed, and the seas I have crossed, and of my visit to the savage tribes, my dear spiritual children of the Rocky Mountains, the Cœur d'Alènes, Kalispels, Pend d'Oreilles, Flatheads and Kootenais, of my stay among the different tribes of the Great Plains of the Upper Missouri, and of the manner in which my time was spent in the army of the United States in quality of chaplain, and envoy extraordinary of that Government. These details, I venture to hope, will not be without interest for you, and they will form the subject of my little sketch.

Several years have passed, since the Mormons, that terrible sect of modern fanatics, flying from civilization, set-

tled in the midst of an uninhabited wilderness. With hearts full of hate and bitterness, they never ceased on every occasion which presented itself to agitate the country, provoke the inhabitants, and commit acts of robbery and murder against many travelers and adventurers from the United States. In September, 1857, 120 emigrants from Arkansas, men, women and children, are said to have been horribly massacred by the Mormons, in a place called the Mountain Meadows. These fanatics never ceased to defy the Government, and announced that the day had arrived to avenge the death of their prophet Joseph and his brother, and to retaliate the wrongs and acts of injustice and cruelty of which they pretended to have been the victims in the States of Missouri and Illinois, whence they had been forcibly expelled by the inhabitants.

On two different occasions, the Governor and subaltern officers, sent by the President of the United States, had met with such strong opposition from the Mormons in the attempt to accomplish their respective duties, that they were forced to quit the Territory of Utah, and to return to lay their complaints before the President. Congress resolved to send a third Governor, accompanied, this time, by 2,000 soldiers, who were to be followed by from 2,000 to 4,000 others in the following spring of 1858. I accompanied the last-named expedition. On the 15th of May, 1858, the Secretary of war wrote to me as follows:

“The President is desirous to engage you to attend the army for Utah, to officiate as chaplain. In his opinion your services would be important in many respects to the public interest, particularly in the present condition of our affairs in Utah. Having sought information as to the proper person to be thus employed, his attention has been directed to you, and he has instructed me to address you on the subject, in the hope that you may consider it not incompatible with your clerical duties or your personal feelings to yield to his request,” etc.

The Reverend Father Provincial and all the other con-

sultors, considering the circumstances, expressed themselves in favor of my accepting.<sup>2</sup> I immediately set out for Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Territory, to join the army at that point. On the very day of my arrival I took my place in the Seventh Regiment, composed of 800 men, under the command of the excellent Colonel Morrison, whose staff was composed of a numerous body of superior officers of the line and engineers. General Harney, the commander-in-chief, and one of the most distinguished and most valiant generals of the United States, with great courtesy, installed me himself in my post. The brave colonel, though a Protestant, thanked him very heartily. "General," said he, "I thought myself highly honored when intrusted with the command of the engineers: to have attached to my command a representative of the ancient and venerable church, I hold as an additional favor." General Harney then shook hands with me, with great kindness, bade me welcome to the army, and assured me that I should be left perfectly free in the exercise of my holy ministry among the soldiers. He kept his word most loyally, and in this he was seconded by all the officers. During the whole time that I was among them, I never met with the slightest obstacle in the discharge of my duties. The soldiers had always free access to my tent for confession and instruction. I had frequently the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the mass early in the morning, and on each occasion a large number of soldiers devoutly approached the holy table.

A word or two in regard to the character of the countries through which we passed will perhaps be agreeable to you. I left Fort Leavenworth on the 1st of June, 1858, in the Seventh Regiment, commanded by the worthy Colonel Morrison. I had an opportunity of observing with admiration the extraordinary rapidity of the progress of civilization in Kansas. A space of 276 miles was already in great part

<sup>2</sup> Father De Smet had planned a missionary journey up the Missouri for this year, but concluded he would combine that work with his chaplaincy, as the following letters show.

occupied by white settlers. No further back than 1851, at the time of my return from the Great Council, held on the borders of the Platte or Nebraska river, the plains of Kansas were almost entirely without inhabitants, containing only a few scattered villages of Indians, living for the most part by the chase, by fishing and on wild fruits and roots. But eight years have made an entire change: many towns and villages have sprung up, as it were, by enchantment; forges and mills of every kind are already very numerous; extensive and beautiful farms have been established in all directions with extraordinary rapidity and industry.

The face of the country is entirely changed. In 1851, the antelope, the wild deer and the wild goat bounded at liberty over these extensive plains, nor is it much longer ago that these fields were the pasture of enormous herds of buffaloes; to-day they are in the possession of numerous droves of horned cattle, sheep and hogs, horses and mules. The fertile soil rewards a hundredfold the labors of the husbandman. Wheat, corn, barley, oats, flax, hemp, all sorts of garden stuff and all the fruits of the temperate zone, are produced there in abundance. Emigration tends thither, and commerce follows in its tracks and acquires new importance every day.

Leavenworth is the principal town of Kansas Territory. It contains already about 10,000 souls, though it has sprung into existence within the last six years. It is beautifully and advantageously situated on the Missouri river. It has a bishop, two Catholic churches, a convent with a boarding-school and a day-school. There are already fifteen churches, twenty-three stations, sixteen priests, five religious communities, and four manual-labor schools for the Osage and Potawatomie Indians, which are under the care of our fathers and religious ladies of different orders.

The greater portion of the Territory is not thickly wooded: the surface of the country, as a general thing, is rolling and well adapted to agriculture; it is not unlike the billows of a vast ocean, suddenly arrested in its flow and

converted into solid land. The air is fresh and wholesome. As one rises with the elevations of the soil, the graceful undulation of the alternating vale and hill contrast admirably with the waving lines of walnut trees, oaks and poplars which mark the course of each little river. The banks of each stream are generally more or less thickly wooded. We ascended the valley of the Little Blue for three days, making a distance of fifty-three miles. The names of the principal plants which attract the attention of the botanist in the plains of Kansas, are: the *anostera*, with its brilliant yellow flowers, the *amorphia* and *artemisia*, the *commelina*, the blue and purple *lupin*, different forms and species of *cactus*, the *tradescantia*, the *mimosa*, and the white *minimus*. The waters of the Little Blue are left at a distance of 275 miles from Fort Leavenworth.

Continuing the route from that point, you cross elevated prairies for a distance of twenty-six miles, and enter the great valley of the Nebraska or Platte river, at a distance of fifteen miles from Fort Kearney. This river, up to its two forks, is about 3,000 yards wide; its waters are yellowish and muddy in the spring freshets, and resemble those of the Missouri and the Mississippi; it is not so deep as those streams; its current is very rapid. Fort Kearney is rather insignificant. It consists of three or four frame houses and several made of *adobes*, a kind of coarse brick baked in the sun. The Government has a military post there for the tranquillity of the country, and to provide for the safety of travelers crossing the desert to go to California, Oregon and the Territories of Utah and Washington.

A great number of Pawnee Indians were encamped at a little distance from the fort. I came near witnessing a battle between them and a war-party of Arapahos, who, favored by the night, had succeeded in approaching the camp unseen almost forty strong. The Pawnees had just let their horses loose at break of day, when the enemy, with loud cries, rushed into the drove, and carried away many hundreds with them at full gallop. The alarm immediately spread through-

out the camp. The Pawnees, indifferently armed and almost naked, rushed to the pursuit of the Arapahos, caught up with them, and a combat more noisy than bloody took place. A young Pawnee chief, the most impetuous of his band, was killed and three of his companions wounded. The Arapahos lost one killed and many wounded. Desirous to stop the combat, I hurried to the scene of battle with an aide-de-camp of the general, but all was over when we arrived; the Pawnees were returning with their dead and wounded and all the stolen horses. On their return to camp, nothing was heard but cries of sorrow, rage and despair, with threats and vociferations against their enemies. It was a harrowing scene. The deceased warrior was decorated and painted with all the marks of distinction of a great brave, and loaded with his finest ornaments. They placed him in the grave amid the acclamations and lamentations of the whole tribe.

The next day the Pawnee Loups invited me to their camp. I found there two French Creoles, old acquaintances of mine, of the Rocky Mountains. They received me with the greatest kindness, and desired to act as my interpreters. I had a long conference on religion with these poor, unhappy savages. They listened with the most earnest attention. After the instruction they presented to me 208 little children, and very earnestly begged me to regenerate them in the holy waters of baptism. These savages have been the terror of travelers obliged to pass through their territory; for many years their character has been that of thieves, drunkards and ruffians, and they are brutalized by drink, which they readily obtain, owing to their proximity to the frontiers of civilization. This accursed traffic has always and everywhere been the ruin of the Indian tribes, and it leads to their rapid extinction.

Two days' march above Fort Kearney, at a place called Cottonwood Springs, I found thirty lodges of Ogallalas, a Sioux or Dakota tribe. At their request I baptized all their children. In 1851, at the Great Council on the Platte, I

had brought them the same blessing. They told me that a great number of their children had died since, carried off by epidemics which had raged among the nomadic tribes of the plains. They are much consoled at the thought of the happiness which children obtain by holy baptism. They know its high importance, and appreciate it as the greatest favor which they can receive.

General Harney had many friendly conferences with the Pawnees, the Ogallalas and the Cheyennes, in which he strongly advised them to cease molesting the whites who might pass through their borders, adding that on this condition alone could they remain at peace with the United States.

I have so often spoken of the buffalo in my letters, that this time I might pass him by in silence. However, I will mention it for the purpose of saying that the race is not extinct in these parts, though it is becoming more rare to find buffalo on the highway across the plains, which its instinct must have taught it to avoid. We met our first herds of this noble animal in the neighborhood of Fort Kearney. The sight created great excitement among those soldiers who had not visited the plains before, and they burned to bring down one or two. Armed, as they were, with the famous Minié rifles, they might have made a good hunt, had they not been on foot, while the buffalo were mounted; it was, therefore, impossible to get near them. They fired, however, at a distance of 200 or 300 yards. A single buffalo was wounded in the leg. Its wound compelled it to lag behind, and it became the target of all our men. A confused sound of cries and rifle shots arose, as if the last hour had come for the last buffalo. Riddled with balls, his tongue lolling out, the blood streaming from his throat and nostrils, the poor brute fell at last. To cut him up and distribute the meat was the work of a moment. Never was buffalo more rapidly transformed into steak and soup,—every one would have his piece.

While these things were going on, Captain P——, mounted on a fine horse, approached a bull, already terrified

by the rifle shots and the terrible noise of our soldiers, who were novices to the chase, and fired at him twice almost point blank. The buffalo and the horse stopped at the same instant. In spite of all his efforts, Captain P—— could not make his horse, unaccustomed to the hunt, advance a single step, and the furious buffalo plunged both horns into his flank and threw him down dead. In this critical moment the courageous rider did not lose his presence of mind: he leaped from his horse over the buffalo's back, gave him two more bullets from his six-shooter, and completely baffled him. The captain then fled to a gully, which was luckily both deep and near at hand. The buffalo, unable to follow him, abandoned his persecutor, who returned to camp with his horse's saddle on his back. A horse must be well trained to hunt the buffalo, and must be trained specially for buffalo hunting: otherwise the danger is very great, and the consequence may be fatal.

During the months of June and July, tempests and falls of rain and hail are very frequent, and almost of daily occurrence, toward evening in the valley of the Platte, which is the country of storms and whirlwinds *par excellence*. The gathering of these storms can be noticed at a great distance, as at sea. At first, light spots of clouds are observed on the horizon, which are followed by dark masses of cloud, which move along in succession, crowding one upon another, and spreading over the sky with extraordinary rapidity, they approach and cross each other; they burst and pour forth torrents of water, which drench the valleys, or volleys of hail which crush the herbs and flowers; the storm-clouds then disappear as rapidly as they have come. "Every evil has its remedy," says the old proverb, and these hurricanes, storms and heavy rains serve the purpose of cooling and purifying the atmosphere, which at this season would become insupportable but for this circumstance. The mercury often rises to 100° of Fahrenheit in the shade. The water does not rest long on the surface of the soil: it is absorbed almost as it falls, on account of the

very porous character of the earth of the valley and its sandy bottom. Travelers, in camps a little removed from the river, always dig wells; the water is everywhere found at a depth of two or three feet. This water, though cold and clear, must be unwholesome, and frequently causes severe sickness.

Graves abound in these regions, and the mortal remains of a vast number of emigrants repose there. With these emigrants have also sunk beneath the valley of the Platte that ardent thirst for gold, those desires and ambitious projects for wealth, greatness and pleasure, which devoured them, and drove them toward the distant regions of California, Pike's Peak and Frazer. Death met them far from their Penates, and they are buried in these desert strands. How uncertain are the affairs of this world! Man makes his plans; he builds his castles in the air; he counts upon a future which does not belong to him: he proposes, but God disposes, and cuts the thread of life in the midst of these vain hopes.

The most remarkable thing that I met on this occasion on the highway of the prairies, ordinarily so lonely, were the long wagon trains engaged in transporting to Utah provisions and stores of war. If the journals of the day may be believed, these cost the Government fifteen millions. Each train consisted of twenty-six wagons, each wagon drawn by six yoke of oxen, and containing near 5,000 pounds. The quartermaster-general made the calculation, and told me that the whole train would make a line of about fifty miles. We passed every day some wagons of this immense train. Each wagon is marked with a name as in the case of ships, and these names served to furnish amusement to the passer-by; the caprices of the captains in this respect having imposed upon the wagons such names as the *Constitution*, the *President*, the *Great Republic*, the *King of Bavaria*, *Lola Montes*, *Louis Napoleon*, *Dan O'Connell*, *Old Kentuck*, etc., etc. These were daubed in great letters on each side of the carriage. On the plains, the wagoner assumes the style of *captain*, being placed in command of his wagon and

twelve oxen. The master-wagoner is admiral of this little land fleet: he has control of twenty-six captains and 312 oxen. At a distance, the white awnings of the wagons have the effect of a fleet of vessels with all canvas spread.

On leaving Leavenworth the drivers look well enough, being all in new clothes, but as they advance into the plains their good clothes become travel-stained and torn, and at last are converted into rags. The *captains* have hardly proceeded 200 miles, before their trail is marked with rags, scattered and flying along the route. You may often remark also on the various camping grounds, even as far as the Rocky Mountains, and beyond, the wrecks of wagons and the skeletons of oxen, but especially the remains of the wardrobe of the traveler: legs of pantaloons and drawers, a shirt-bosom, the back or the arm of a flannel vest, stockings out at toe and heel, crownless hats, and shoes worn through in the soles or uppers, are strewed along the route. These deserted camps are also marked by packs of cards strewed round among broken jars and bottles; here you see a grid-iron, a coffee-pot or a tin bowl; there a cooking-stove and the fragments of a shaving-dish, all worn out and cast aside.

The poor Indians regard these signs of encroaching civilization with an unquiet eye as they pass them on their way. These rags and refuse are to them the harbingers of the approach of a dismal future for themselves; they announce to them that the plains and forests over which they roam in the chase, their beautiful lakes and rivers swarming with fish, and the repair of numerous aquatic birds; the hearth which witnessed their birth, and the soil which covers the ashes of their fathers — all, in fine, that is most dear to them — are about to pass into the hands of the rapacious white man: and they, poor mortals, accustomed to roam at large and over a vast space, free like the birds of the air, will be inclosed in narrow reserves, far from their cherished hunting grounds and fine fisheries, far from their fields of roots and fruits; or driven back into the mountains or to unknown shores. It is not surprising, then, that the savage seeks some-

times to revenge himself on the white man; it is rarely, however, that he is the aggressor: surely, not once out of ten provoking cases.

The wagons are formed every evening into a *corral*. That is, the whole twenty-six are ranged in a circle, and chained one to the other, so as to leave only one opening, to give passage to the beasts, which pass the night in the centre, and are guarded there by several sentinels under arms. Under the protection of a small number of determined men, the wagons and animals are secure from any attack of undisciplined Indians, in however great numbers. When the travelers neglect this precaution, and camp at random, not unfrequently a hostile band of Indians will provoke what is called a *stampede*, or panic among the cattle, and carry them all off at once. The travelers go into camp early, and at break of day the beasts are let loose in the prairie that they may have plenty of time to graze. Grass is very abundant in the valley of the Platte, and on the neighboring acclivities.

Between Fort Kearney and the crossing of the South Fork of the Platte, we met over 100 families of Mormons on their way to Kansas and Missouri, with the intention of settling there. They appeared delighted at being fortunate enough to leave, safe and sound, the famous promised land of Utah; thanks to the influence of the new Governor, and the presence of the United States troops. They told us that a great number of other families would follow them, so soon as they should be capable of doing so and of procuring the necessary means for the journey. They confessed that they would have escaped long before, had they not been afraid of falling into the hands of the Danites, or Destroying Angels. These compose the bodyguard of the Prophet; they are said to be entirely and blindly at his disposal, to carry out all his plans, meet all his wishes and execute all his measures, which often involve robbery and murder. Before the arrival of the United States soldiers, woe to any one who manifested a desire to leave Utah, or abandon the sect; woe to

him who dared to raise a voice against the actions of the Prophet — they rarely escaped the poniards of these Destroying Angels, or rather incarnate demons.

The highway of the plains, during the beautiful season of 1858, appeared, as it were, invaded by an unusual and joyous animation. To complete the idea which I have just given, I will add that couriers and express messengers, coming and returning, constantly crossed each other on the road. The different companies of the army left a space of two or three days' journey between them. Each company was followed by ambulances for the use of the superior officers, a body of artillery and engineers, and a train of wagons, with six mules each, transporting provisions and baggage. Each company was followed also by an immense drove of six or seven hundred horned cattle, to furnish their daily food. Uncle Sam, as the Government of the United States is called, has a truly paternal heart; he provides abundantly for the wants of the defenders of the country, and will not suffer them to want their comforts.

Everything was going on admirably and in good order. The commanding general and staff were already at the crossing of the south branch of the Platte, 480 miles from Fort Leavenworth, when he received the news that the Mormons had submitted, or laid down their arms, and at the same time an order to distribute his troops to other points, and return to the United States. This also changed my destination; the conclusion of peace put an end to my little diplomatic mission to the Indian tribes of Utah. I consulted with the general, and accompanied him on his return to Leavenworth.

The South Fork of the Platte, at the crossing, is 2,045 feet wide. In the month of July, its depth is generally about three feet, after the junction of the two forks, the width is about 3,000 yards. The bottom, throughout the whole length, is sandy.

I could say much, dear Father, about the country between Leavenworth and the South Fork of the Platte, its botani-

cal and other properties and productions, but I have spoken of these on many occasions in my letters describing other journeys across this region. The little incidents mentioned in this letter are all connected with my last trip.

Before leaving Fort Leavenworth for St. Louis, I made a little excursion of seventy miles to visit our dear fathers and brothers of the Mission of St. Mary among the Potawatomes. I at last reached St. Louis in the beginning of September, after a first absence of about three months, and after a journey, to and fro, of 1,976 miles. My stay in St. Louis was short. I will, in my next letter, give you details, which will inform you as to the particulars of the long expedition of which I speak in the first part of this letter.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE OREGON EXPEDITION OF 1858-9.<sup>1</sup>

De Smet's resignation not accepted — Indian uprising in the Northwest — New York to Aspinwall — Notes on the Isthmus — Up the Pacific — Acapulco — San Francisco's rapid growth — The Big Trees of Calaveras — Over the bar of the Columbia again — Changes in the country — Indian hostages at Fort Walla Walla — Their piety — They accompany Father De Smet — Journey to the Cœur d'Alène Lake.

#### *From St. Louis to Oregon.*

**M**Y last letter told you of a journey of some sixteen months, in which I accompanied, in the capacity of chaplain, an army corps sent out on a twofold errand; against the Mormons and against the Indians. I gave you an account of the first in the narrative of my three-months' travels across the New Kansas; and promised you information regarding the second, to complete my tale of a journey of 5,000 leagues.

I will briefly indicate the cause of the war waged by the United States upon the western Indians, and then take you with me across the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea to the celebrated Isthmus of Panama.

At the beginning of September, 1858, I sought to resign the post of chaplain which I had occupied in the Utah expedition. The Secretary of War did not see fit to accept my resignation, in consequence of fresh difficulties which had arisen west of the Rocky Mountains. There the Indian tribes had formed a powerful league against the whites; they had surprised Colonel Steptoe and had killed two of

<sup>1</sup> Written in Brussels in March, 1861, for publication in the *Précis Historiques*. Published as Letter II in Volume V of the third Belgian edition.

his officers and several soldiers; a general uprising was imminent in all that region. Nine tribes had already entered into the coalition, namely, the Palooses, Yakimas, Skoyelpis, Okinagans, Spokans, Cœur d'Alènes, Kalispels, Kootenais and Flatheads. These poor savages, formerly so peaceable, the last four especially, had become very uneasy over the frequent incursions made by the whites upon the lands in the southern and western portions of the Territories of Washington and Oregon. From uneasiness, they had soon passed to displeasure and anger, when they saw these adventurers taking possession of the most advantageous sites and settling as owners upon the most fertile parts of the country, in total contempt of their rights and without the slightest preliminary agreement.

The mountain tribes had become especially stirred up, and had resolved to drive back the whites, or at least to make resistance to their progressive encroachments. Bands were quickly formed in various places; these came together, began drilling, and in a few days a body of 800 to 1,000 warriors was organized. Their first blow was a victory for them, and in their eyes a complete one, for they had not only driven off the enemy but had besides captured his train and provisions. The precipitate retreat of the Americans even seemed to them a shameful flight. It was, however, a perfectly natural thing, since the brave Colonel Steptoe, having no suspicion of the rising, had with him only one company of 120 men, on their way to maintain order at Colville. Intoxicated with their first success, the Indians thought themselves invincible and able to meet the whole United States army.

On the other side, the Government thought the affair of sufficient gravity to make it prudent to put it in the hands of General Harney. This officer had won glory on many occasions in the famous Indian wars, in Florida, Texas, Mexico and the plains of the West. He wished to have me with him on this distant expedition, and at his express request, the Secretary of War invited me to go accordingly.

After ascertaining that it was agreeable to my superiors, I consented to retain my position of army chaplain in the new army. I hoped to be of some service in that capacity to the men, but above all to the Indian tribes of the mountains; I desired greatly also to be in touch with my missionary brethren in the difficulties which the war would doubtless bring upon them.

On the 15th of September, I left St. Louis by the central line of railroad; in fifty hours, I had covered 1,100 miles and reached New York. My arrangements were quickly made, and on the 20th I embarked, together with the general and his staff, on the steamer *Star of the West*. Our first destination was Aspinwall, a small place on the northern side of the Isthmus of Panama, about 2,000 miles from New York. We made this distance in eight days and a few hours. It was the time of the equinox, and we were accordingly accompanied by high winds, squalls and some small tempests, especially among the dangerous Bahama islands. There was nothing extraordinary on board, unless it were the countenances of the numerous victims of the inexorable Neptune. Aside from this, the trip was a very fortunate one; no serious case of sickness appeared on board, which is quite unusual in the tropics. The passengers were 640 in number, bound mainly for California, the great Eldorado of the West. The route of our vessel was as follows; you can easily trace it on the map:

We passed through the Bahama islands, of which there are more than 600, including that of Guanahani, or San Salvador, the first land touched by Columbus, on October 12, 1492. We coasted the Long, Crooked and Fortunate islands; we admired Maysi Point, the eastern tip of the island of Cuba, and at the same time we perceived Cape St. Nicholas and other points of San Domingo. After this we passed in sight of Jamaica, which brought us into the Caribbean Sea, which stretches 1,600 miles from north to south. Presently Aspinwall appeared, not far from Porto Bello.

Aspinwall is only about five years old. It cannot fail to become a very important place, commercially; the passage of emigrants, the greater number of them bound for California, is at present the principal basis of its prosperity. Its population is made up of various races, from the purest whites to the solid black of the finest of negroes, and including the various shades of the Indian peoples. One part of the village is marshy, which must render it unwholesome; but this serious disadvantage will soon have been remedied.

The Isthmus of Panama is thirty-six miles in width, and the railroad that joins the two oceans forty-seven in length. This railroad may be cited as a wonder, for the boldness of the undertaking and the success with which it was carried out. It traverses dense forests and crosses one handsome river, over which a bridge of the most solid construction has been thrown. It is indeed a gigantic work and must have cost an enormous sum. How many European workmen, attracted by greed of gain, have come to this burning climate in search of fortune, and found nothing but death!

There is no sign of human habitation along the way, save two or three little villages, consisting of a few poor huts of bamboo. The children wear scarcely any clothing; grown persons are covered, but very lightly. Their food consists mainly of vegetables and fruits, which are very abundant and grow almost without cultivation.

Formerly, to reach the farther shore, it was necessary to travel three or four days afoot or on horseback, amid privations and difficulties of every kind. To-day you are softly transported in less than three hours from Aspinwall to Panama. During the short ride, I admired a charming and graceful little flower with a white centre and purple petals. It bears a deceiving resemblance to a very young dove with outspread wings. Head, eyes, bill, nothing is lacking, except the feet. The Spanish have named it, very properly, the Flower of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed a very remarkable country, with respect to flowers, plants and trees; the

vegetable growths are really extraordinary. What a vast field, hardly explored as yet, for a bold and zealous botanist!

New Granada occupies the northwestern portion of South America, between the Pacific Ocean and the Orinoco River. The Isthmus of Panama forms part of it, as well as all the countries that run westward as far as Central America. The Andes run lengthwise along the western coast and in the southern part of the Republic divide into three portions. East of the mountains lie vast plains, which abound in horses and other domestic animals. The climate and products of New Granada vary with the elevation. Wheat, barley and the fruits of the temperate zones grow in the higher portions, while toward the sea-coasts and in the lower parts, the finest products of the tropical regions are found in abundance.

Commerce is not yet very extensively developed; it is carried on principally with the United States and England. Sugar, cocoa, cotton and hides are exported; there are mines of gold, silver, platinum and copper, but they are rather scanty. Roads are rare in the mountainous districts. If the traveler wishes to visit them, and can afford it, he hires a kind of chair and is carried by men, called *silleteros*. Bridges consist often of a mere rope with a hammock or basket attached. The traveler gets into this, if he wishes to reach the opposite bank; for that matter, he runs little risk, even in crossing rapid torrents in this manner.

Under Bolivar's presidency, New Granada, Venezuela and Ecuador formed the Republic of Colombia; it is only since 1830 that these three countries have constituted independent States. Santa Fe de Bogota, the capital of New Granada, is not far from the Magdalena river; it lies upon a very lofty plateau, in the centre of which the Bogota makes a fall of over 500 feet in height, called the cascade of Tequendama. The city has a university, and several large churches and handsome convents. Cartagena is the Republic's principal port; those of Santa Marta, Popayan,

Paste, Aspinwall and Panama are for the present of minor importance.

The bay of Panama is very beautiful; the little islands scattered over it resemble baskets of verdure thrown upon the water. The city itself occupies a most picturesque position; but within it is sombre and mournful, and presents the appearance of a city in decadence. Notwithstanding, the hour of its prosperity has struck, and every American who comes to seek shelter there brings, in his labor, a sure pledge of its grandeur to come.

I had the honor of seeing several times Monseigneur the Bishop of Panama. This worthy prelate showed me the greatest kindness, and expressed his ardent desire to have some Jesuits in his diocese. But this is enough for to-day. Permit me to take breath before issuing with you upon the floods of a new sea.

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We parted at Panama; I would like to recall you thither, in order to present to you my traveling companions, now about to embark. They are no less than 1,300 in number, and they are busy stowing themselves away the best they can in the interior and on the deck of the great steamship which is already bearing us away.

On the 2d of October we left the bay of Panama. We coasted along almost the entire shore line of Costa Rica and Nicaragua. By the sixth day we had come 1,500 miles, and we reached Acapulco, where we made a stop to take on provisions and coal. This is the only port upon the Pacific which Mexico has retained. It has a very beautiful bay, which has the advantage of being sheltered from gales, being surrounded by high hills and mountains. Yonder you can see an ancient fort; all that one can say for it is that it is still standing. Enter the city; you will find but a single church, and a very poor one at that. Look at the houses, how wretched they are and what an indolent and lazy air

the inhabitants have. Poor people! I imagine that they think much less of acquiring fortunes than of struggling against misery. They live chiefly on fish, do a little business in fruit and vegetables and a little pearl-fishing also. Although few in number, this population presents a mixture of almost all races; you would find descendants of the Spanish, Indians, negroes and mulattoes of all degrees; you would distinguish also half-breeds and *sambos*.

Let me say a few words of a sufficiently curious spectacle which the *sambos* gave for our benefit as the boat came up. They are all good swimmers, and can stay in the water for hours at a time without showing the slightest weariness. It is most remarkable. Hardly had they espied our vessel, when they rushed forth to meet us. Soon they surrounded us, begging with voice and gesture for our pretty five and ten-cent pieces. Purse-strings are untied, the little coins are dropped into the sea, our excellent divers following in their wake. A few moments later they reappear upon the surface with the precious prize in their hands, which they display with pride to the spectators and then deposit in a safe place — their mouth. The close of the exhibition was sudden and exciting; a shark appeared on a sudden in the midst of the swimmers, and gave the signal for retreat. It was a general panic flight. The voracious visitor was a good fellow, however, and permitted them all to regain their boats without appropriating any of their heads, arms or legs.

On the second day after, October 10th, we made a short stop at Manzanilla, to leave and take on the mails. A few hours previously we had made out in the distance the volcanic mountain named Popocatapetl, or la Puebla; it is the loftiest peak of the Sierra Madre, and one of the highest on the globe; its height is 5,400 metres [19,623 feet].

On the 11th we passed within sight of Cape San Lucas, the southernmost point of Old California. The Santa Margarita, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz islands, and others, presented themselves in turn to our view, as well as a great

number of whales and other cetaceans, which abound in those seas. On the 15th we perceived Point Concepcion, 250 miles distant from San Francisco; we saluted from afar Santa Barbara, San Luis and Monterey, and on the 16th we came to San Francisco. I was glad to find myself in a house of the Society and in the company of several of my brethren in Jesus Christ, who overwhelmed me with kindness and care, with the most cordial charity. One especially appreciates the *Quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*, after having been shut up in a ship among 1,300 individuals of all nations, on earth, all with their morals infected with the yellow (or golden) fever, and who think, speak and dream of nothing but of mines of gold and the earthly happiness which their wealth is to procure them hereafter — and often this “hereafter” never arrives.

An examination of the map will show you how favored California is by nature. It is surprising how this country could be so long neglected, and as it were forgotten, despite its immense advantages. To-day it has a start, and commerce and all human industries are centering there and developing with a rapidity that bewilders the boldest and most adventurous spirits. The soil is generally fertile and adapted to all the exigencies of life; the products exceed the demand already, and go to enrich distant markets. I would never stop if I tried to tell you in detail of the soft climate of this lovely land, the regularity of its seasons, its fine mountains, its rich valleys, its immense prairies, where horses and a multitude of other domestic animals multiply to infinity, its incomparable mines, etc., etc. Consider that for a century to come the bosom of California will remain open to thousands of miners, greedy for gold and silver.

A dozen years ago San Francisco was nothing but a very little seaport, with only a handful of inhabitants. To-day it is the marvel, and the port *par excellence*, of the whole Pacific Ocean. A population of at least 60,000 souls has sprung up, gathered from all the corners of the earth. There are 4,000 Chinese, preserving faithfully the manners and customs of

their fatherland, including the long queue; almost all of them live in a separate quarter, and they are quiet and industrious, though charged with great immorality. I need not say that in this modern Babel one's ears are continually rent by strange sounds and cries belonging to all the languages and jargons of earth; while one's eyes become weary of this living panorama, in which appear in turn all the diverse shapes and the various colors of the poor human species.

But what consoles and reconciles one with all this uproar and these continual changes in sight, is the sweet thought that our holy religion has its share in the astonishing activity of this future great people. Judge of its progress: besides a fair cathedral, just recently built by its venerable titular, who is an archbishop, there are five churches, four convents, a college directed by our Fathers and several schools for boys and girls. Pray often that God will bless these first consoling successes.

The markets were covered with the most beautiful fruit; grapes, melons, pears, etc., etc. In no place have I seen any surpassing them in beauty, size and flavor. Grapes are so plentiful that two steamboats were employed daily in transporting them from Los Angeles to San Francisco.

In the matter of size California stands second among the American States. It is three times as large as Virginia and has a coastline 800 miles in length. The bay of San Francisco is one of the most beautiful in the universe; it contains a great number of excellent harbors. Its position, opposite the Sandwich Islands, the Celestial Empire, Japan and the Philippine Islands; its almost daily connection with the long stretch of South American coast, with the Eastern States, and even with the greater portion of the great European ports; everything, in short, both without and within, seems to combine to make this land one of the most important commercially and one of the most thickly populated in the world. There is no doubt that its commercial metropolis will soon be the New York of the West.

The surface of California is especially mountainous. Two long mountain ranges run almost parallel along the coast. The principal rivers are the Colorado, Sacramento and San Joaquin. The gold mines lie principally on the base of the Sierra Nevada, for a length of about 500 miles, along the tributaries of the large rivers.

One word further, before I close, concerning a natural wonder which probably has not its like in all the universe. The cedars of Lebanon are celebrated for more reasons than one. What is especially admired is their age; 4,000 years! The most ancient are as much as eleven metres in circumference, and their tops still stand high in air, though so often smitten by the thunderbolt and battered by the tempest. But what are these majesties in ruins, in the presence of the Washingtonia of California? You may judge. In Calaveras county there is a forest of enormous trees, pines, cedars, etc. There are sugar-pines with a diameter of not six, but eight feet, and a height of 200 feet and more. Still these are only a species of big dwarfs beside ninety-six giant trees (*Sequoia gigantea*) which stand within a mile of one another. One of them, the Father of the Forest, has been uprooted by the winds, and at present the ground is encumbered with its enormous fragments. Grasp, if you are able, its proportions; 112 feet in circumference and more than 450 in length. Another of them has been felled. To make use of the stump, it has been leveled off and made the foundation of a printing shop. The whole building rests on this stump, which serves for a floor at the same time; they have even taken pains to preserve a portion of the trunk at the side, which has been worked into a fine staircase of twenty-six steps. Each of these colossi of the vegetable kingdom has its name. The most noteworthy are the Two Guards, the Three Graces, the Twins, Hercules, the Hermit, the Beauty of the Forests, etc. In Belgium one will hardly believe in all these prodigies of vegetation. I have not been able to see them with my eyes, but I have the particulars I have given you from respectable

eye-witnesses. This is enough about big trees. After all, they do not deserve, among so many other *mirabilia Dei*, more than a little exclamation point —!

The distance covered from New York to San Francisco, by the Aspinwall and Panama route, is 6,850 miles. Some 800 miles more and we are at the mouth of the Columbia; there I will resume my narrative.

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On the 20th of October, 1858, I left San Francisco for the mouth of the Columbia. We passed within sight of Cape Mendocino, the westernmost point of the United States, and skirted the coast of Oregon. On the 23d we passed over the dangerous bar of the Columbia, which I had crossed for the first time in 1844. A large and handsome light-house has been erected on Cape Disappointment, since the advent of civilization. The savages, formerly so numerous along the coast and the river, have almost entirely disappeared. Every approach of the whites thrusts them back, by force or otherwise; they go upon reservations, in a strange land, far removed from their hunting and fishing grounds, and where drink, misery and diseases of every sort mow them down by hundreds.

Since the whites have taken possession of the Indian lands, great changes have taken place throughout the country. The Willamette valley has changed its aspect entirely. They now have there a great number of towns and villages, rich and beautiful farms, with vast apple orchards. They raise apples of an extraordinary size and beauty. Barley, wheat and oats do very well here, and vegetables of every sort likewise.

I will mention in passing the towns and villages that are seen on both banks in going up the Columbia river; a great many others will rise before long, as new settlers come in. After passing the bar of the Columbia, behind Cape Disappointment, a large bay appears on the left, on the Washing-

ton side, the shores of which are covered with a thick forest of larch and pine. There you may behold two houses, rather far apart; they mark the location of Pacific City, the embryo of a great future city. For the moment, the sawmill is in repose, and though the "city" is new, the solitary houses in it already look quite old and sad.

I may remark here that, especially in the new territories, speculators in the line of starting towns and villages are very numerous. When they choose their sites well and succeed in attracting people thither, their fortune is made. But many of them simply lose their time and money. Let them adorn the places where their imaginations or private interests would see great cities arise, with great names, call them New London, Paris, Madrid, St. Petersburg or whatever you please — in most cases, nobody sets up his penates there, and though the sites be well chosen, the new capitals are soon forgotten.

Twelve miles above Pacific City (in the territory of Oregon) are the fort and little town of Astoria, or rather the two Astorias, the upper and the lower. They are only two villages as yet, rather picturesquely established on the slope of a steep hill, surrounded with thick forests of the Canada balsam. Either of them may contain twenty to thirty little houses of wood, painted white and of fairly good appearance.

After the Astorias, you go on up the river for twenty-four miles without seeing anything like a town or village. It is a succession of fine high hills, covered with dense forests, the picturesque aspect of which enchants the newcomers; but it will be many years before anything can be done here save to cut timber. Then you come to Cathlamet, a village in Washington composed of six houses. Ten miles farther, is the village of Oak Point, with a few houses and a sawmill; here we come to the first oak on the Columbia. After another twelve miles, and fifty-eight miles from the ocean, appears Rainier, a village of twelve houses in the Oregon Territory. Another, St. Helen's, on

the same side and eighteen miles farther up, contains a score of buildings. As we ascend the Columbia, the white summits of Mounts St. Helen's, Rainier, Jefferson and Hood, covered with perpetual snow and rising to a great height, offer sublime spectacles which one never wearies of watching.

Twenty miles beyond St. Helen's, you come to Vancouver, consisting of some hundred houses, besides the fort recently built for the use of the troops. There is a little frame Catholic church, which has the title of cathedral; a bishop and his grand vicar, and two little schools for boys and girls. The last is directed by some very fervent and zealous sisters. Vancouver is considered the most flourishing of the towns on the Columbia.

Thirty-six miles above Vancouver, and at the distance of 132 miles from the sea, the river passes through the mountainous Cascade range. For a stretch of five miles it is strewn with great masses of rock, accumulated in a quite narrow place, which form those rapid and insurmountable currents called the Cascades. The view of the mountains on each side of the river is truly ravishing and grand. Their flanks are covered with trees and high brush, and especially now in the fall the different-colored foliage augments greatly the beauty and magnificence of these picturesque places. The numerous streamlets that are seen falling from rock to rock contribute greatly to set off the beauty of the region. The village called Cascade is destined, I doubt not, to become a very important centre.

After sixty miles of navigation above the Cascades, we reach the Dalles, another fall of the Columbia, which boats cannot pass. The aspect of the country becomes less interesting as we ascend the river. The lofty hills on both sides are almost wholly bare of vegetation or verdure. The new city that has just been started here has taken the name of the place — Dalles City. It has upward of 100 houses, some of which are of stone. A fine future is predicted for it by reason of its position. A number of large

farms are grouped around this new colony and on the same side of the river. I visited the Catholic soldiers of the fort of Dalles City.

A series of colonies of white settlers will soon be established along the rivers Des Chutes, John Day and Umatilla, and over the 175 miles between the Dalles and Walla Walla. Umatilla has fine forests. This country is especially adapted to the raising of innumerable domestic animals; it is everywhere covered with an abundant and nourishing grass. At the mouth of the Des Chutes there is, as at Walla Walla, a new town started. The Walla Walla plain has already a great number of habitations, in the neighborhood of the fort; the gold mines attract many thither. Farther down, on the Cowlitz river, below the Willamette, is Monticello, the beginning of a town. On Puget Sound are the cities of Olympia, Steilacoom, Fort Townsend, Seattle and Tumwater. There is much rivalry among them as to which will become the notable place.

The news of the cessation of hostilities against the United States and the submission of the Indians had been received at Fort Vancouver. The savages, however, still retained their prejudices and an uneasiness and alarm which had to be dissipated, and there were false reports to be rectified. Otherwise the war might soon break out afresh. Under the orders of the commanding general I left Fort Vancouver on the 29th of October to go among the mountain tribes, some 800 miles distant.

On the 2d of November I set out from the fort at the Dalles, in an ambulance, for Walla Walla. This journey took about eight days. The plains that we crossed are for the most part undulating and covered with tufted grass. All this country is to-day stripped of animals and game; we did not see anything of the sort. Where we encamped on the Des Chutes, John Day and Umatilla rivers, we found wood for our camp-fire. This country has been under military occupation for some years, to keep the peace between the settlers and the Indians. Fort Vancouver is

headquarters; then there are the fort at the Dalles and Fort Steilacoom in the interior; Fort Walla Walla in the valley of the same name and little Fort Taylor, on the right bank of Snake river.

I visited the Catholic soldiers at Fort Walla Walla. At this post I had the great consolation of meeting the Reverend Father Congiato, returning from his visit to the missions, and of getting reassuring news from him concerning the disposition of the savages. I also met here several Cœur d'Alène and Spokan families. They were prisoners, or rather hostages, from the war their nations had so recklessly engaged in after the deplorable attack upon Colonel Steptoe. These people were greatly surprised at my arrival, after an absence of eleven years; they appeared delighted, in view of the unhappy situation in which they found themselves. They were to be my traveling companions. I learned with pleasure that all of them, and especially the Cœur d'Alènes, had managed during their captivity to gain the good will of the officers and soldiers of the fort, by exemplary and Christian-like conduct. At the fort as at their own homes, alone or surrounded by strangers, evening and morning they were seen devoutly reciting their prayers and heard singing their pious canticles. One of the most respectable captains said that he should never forget the deep impression which the piety of these poor savages had made upon him. The officers and soldiers were fond of enjoying this edifying spectacle. The commandant of the fort felt very kindly toward them. He accepted with much benevolence the proposition I made him, to take them with me into their own country, if it were only to pass the winter. He even issued orders to provide them abundantly with provisions for the journey. This condescension on his part will never be forgotten by the Indians, nor by the two tribes for whose salvation they had generously offered themselves as hostages. This benefactor's name will remain in benediction among the nations of this region; for, whatever their detractors may say, Indians

know how to appreciate a kind act and to be grateful for a favor received.

I left Walla Walla on the 13th of October, with my companions, glad and free, the Cœur d'Alènes and Spokans. They acted as my guides. Throughout the journey, they showed me unceasing signs of gratitude. Their exactitude in their religious duties was to me a source of consolation and happiness.

We encamped the first night on Little Dry Fork, where we found water and brush enough for our cooking and abundant forage for our pack animals. Here we had an annoying accident, caused by a good half-breed whom the commandant had given me to take care of my horses and serve as my interpreter. I cannot say what he was doing with his powder horn, but anyway it exploded in his hands, severely burning his fingers, arms and face. We sent word of the sad occurrence to the fort, and in a short time a surgeon and two employees came to the rescue of the wounded man and took him back to the hospital in a kind of carriage.

The distance from Walla Walla to the Traverse, a place called thus because Snake river is traversed there, is about fifty miles. There are rather uneven plains, covered with rich pasturage, and in some places mountains entirely bare of timber. We reached the Traverse on October 15th, by the valley of a little well-wooded river, called the Two Canyons. At the mouth of this stream the small fort bearing the name Taylor has been built. Here there was a numerous camp of Palooses. The chiefs received us with kindness, and eagerly aided us in getting across the main river with our horses and baggage. We went on and camped in the Paloos valley, at the foot of the Bad Rock, four miles above the mouth of that river. A large number of Palooses came and spent the evening with us; they seemed hungry for news, in the critical situation in which they were with regard to the whites. They were charged with having taken an active part in the attack on Colonel

Steptoe, and having been among the principal instigators of the warfare on the whites. I found them very attentive to my advice and to the religious instruction that I gave them; several even gave evidences of a desire of having a Catholic mission among them.

The Bad Rock is a very remarkable place. Basaltic rocks rise to great heights in various shapes, sometimes like lofty walls with narrow passages, sometimes like dentelated towers or bastions, or old ruined fortresses. From Snake River to the great Cœur d'Alène Lake the country consists of continuous rolling plains, though generally more level than the plains of Walla Walla and the Nez Percés. Wood is scarce; water fails in autumn, and in winter snow lies deep. These are serious impediments to the formation of white colonies. Still, there is grazing for millions of domestic animals in these immense fat pastures; there are also nourishing roots and various fruits, which the Indians gather to help out their stock of provisions. Game is rather scarce in the high plains. From time to time a grouse or prairie chicken would rise at our passage and fall victim to a hunter's shot.

The weather continued beautiful and agreeable throughout the journey. Every day we performed the evening and morning prayers in common, accompanied with singing. In these long evenings, seated around the camp-fire, the Indians loved to relate to me, with really touching simplicity, the principal things that had happened since I left them, such as the death of their chiefs, etc. On my side, I did not lack interesting things to tell them.

After three long days' journeys in the plains, and crossing a high mountain covered with a dense forest of cedars and pines, we arrived, on the evening of the 18th, at the great Cœur d'Alène lake. Here we found several Cœur d'Alène families, who received me with the liveliest cordiality. The unexpected return of the prisoners heightened the universal joy still further. The next day, I celebrated the holy sacrifice of the mass, as a thanksgiving service for all the

favors received from heaven during the voyage. When one has been traveling for some time through monotonous and treeless countries, having to camp every night by some fringe of brush insufficient to maintain a good fire, or on the banks of a little river, brook or spring; and then when one comes to a noble forest, where gigantic trees rise on the border of a vast lake, whose water is clear as crystal, the emotions aroused in one by the contrast are such as cannot be described.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PEACE WITH THE OREGON INDIANS.

Causes of war — Hostility of Kamiakin — Lies circulated — Approach of troops — The first blow — The Cœur d'Alène country — De Smet met by Father Gazzoli — Reaches Sacred Heart Mission and remains until spring — Indians fond of work — Honesty of Kootenais — Across deep snow to Bitter Root valley — Flatheads still keep the faith — Escorts chiefs to Fort Vancouver for interview with officials.

**I** HAVE spoken of the prisoners of war made among the Cœur d'Alènes by the United States troops. The following are the causes of the war :

For some years past, the Indians had given signs of uneasiness relative to the future invasion of their lands by the whites. The treaties negotiated by Governor Stevens, and the wars that had followed, had provoked these fears. They demanded urgently of the Governor that the troops should respect the portion of country included between the Columbia, Snake river and the Rocky Mountains; they proposed to remain neutral, and desired to have this territory respected by both parties. They seemed disposed to renounce invasion; but this did not suit the chiefs Kamiakin, Telgawêê and consorts, who, at the time of the war between the Yakimas and Cayuses, had tried every means to draw the Cœur d'Alènes into the trouble on their side. The Catholic missionaries of the country used their influence to restrain them, and though they were sometimes accused of siding with the Americans against the Indians, they succeeded in holding their people in. When the Yakimas, counseled by Father Pandosy, had made their peace, in spite of Kamiakin, and the military post of Simcoe had been established, Kamiakin took refuge among his own men, the Palooses. Tinêwê, Telgawêê and a number of other Cayuse, Yakima and Walla Walla refugees were there also.

Kamiakin could not keep quiet. By means of gifts he had won over the richest of the Cœur d'Alènes. He came and spent the winter of 1857-58 with him, and sought without ceasing to communicate to him his own sentiments of distrust toward the whites, even the priests. "They are white like the Americans," he told him; "they all have one heart." Because the Cœur d'Alènes refused to come out, they were called "women — little dogs who only know enough to bark when danger is at hand." Fresh rumors were circulated every day; but especially after murders had been committed by the Palooses, the excitement grew more and more. Several Indians told Father Joset "that they were tired of Kamiakin's doings." A white man had told them, "Poor savages! It is all up with you now. The troops are coming this year to take possession of your lands." Another, "I have seen them already, 500 of them, camped on Snake river." A third white man had assured them that "500 soldiers would come first to Colville; that they would soon be followed by 500 more, and so on, until they were strong enough, when they would lay aside the mask and declare themselves masters of the country." Another day "the troops had formed three columns and crossed Snake river at three places, to take possession of the whole country at once." Father Joset could not assure himself whether white men had really said these things; but he has very little doubt that false reports were often spread among the Indians to excite them to war. A good many Americans looked on war as a good thing for the country, and a means to make money plentiful.

Despite all Kamiakin's efforts, there was no apparent likelihood that the Cœur d'Alènes would let themselves be drawn in; this was far from the case: three weeks before the Steptoe fight, the chief Vincent told Father Joset that "it may very well happen that we shall have to fight the Palooses, who are very sore against us *because we will not declare against the Americans.*"

The sudden approach and inexplicable march of Colonel Steptoe came in here to give the lie to all the arguments of the most sensible men, and those best disposed toward the whites. "I had always repeated to our Indians," says Father Joset, "'have no fear. If the troops cross the river, it can only be against the Palooses or the whisky sellers at Colville.'"

But the troops did not take the road for Colville, nor that for the Paloos country. A portion of the Cœur d'Alènes were digging roots in the Nez Percé country. Learning that the soldiers were marching toward them, they at once retired and went to join their own people in the country of the Spokans. At once the Federals changed their line of march and came to the Indians' new camp. The colonel sent word that he was going to Colville. Just suppose for an instant that, instead of having to do with poor ignorant savages, it had been a question of white people; would they have believed the colonel's statement? Would they not have said, "How can we believe that you are going to Colville, when you are not traveling that way at all? If you were going to Colville, you would not have come here to where we are camped, very far from the road to Colville." That is what white men would most certainly have said.

As the soldiers approached, the words of Tim-o-tsen, the guide of the troops, were continually brought to the Cœur d'Alènes. This is what he said:

"Cœur d'Alènes, soon we shall divide your spoil." And moreover, on the 16th of May, when Father Joset reached the Indian camp, they came and told him "that a slave of the soldiers (an Indian who accompanied them) had arrived in Kamiakin's camp, and reported these words of the chief of the soldiers: "Cœur d'Alènes, no matter what you do, your wives, your children and your lands are ours." Let any thinking man say: if instead of Cœur d'Alènes, it had been a white people, would the magistrates, with no other resources than words, have been able to control the uprising? And also, even yet, the Cœur d'Alènes will ex-

cuse themselves to you, saying, "Did we go to hunt for the Federal soldiers? Was it not their bands who came upon us, when we had not done a thing?"

When Father Joset was at Walla Walla, early in November, 1858, he had been told that the colonel was marching against Telgawêê, who had been stealing Government horses and killing whites who were on their way to Colville. The Spokane and Cœur d'Alène chiefs had expressed their indignation with the Palooses for this latter deed. "I do not know whether it is true," says Father Joset, "Colonel Steptoe never said anything of the sort to me; but if it was so, this would explain the whole puzzle." Telgawêê was camped in the country of the Nez Percés, in the neighborhood of the Cœur d'Alènes. When these last withdrew at the approach of our soldiers, he also went away, to join the other Palooses, who were likewise in the Spokane country, in the neighborhood of the Spokane and Cœur d'Alène camps. Father Joset had already heard the latter accuse this same Telgawêê of having deceived them, by falsely reporting the words of Tin-o-tsen. The latter, it was claimed, said: "Telgawêê, soon we will go and divide the spoils;" which Telgawêê translated, "Cœur d'Alènes, soon we will go and divide your spoils." It was said to have been Kamiakin who, later, accused Telgawêê of this perfidy. However this may be, the sight of the soldiers in the vicinity of their camp had irritated the young Cœur d'Alènes. It was only with difficulty that the chief, Vincent, succeeded in restraining them. Despite the colonel's protestations that he had nothing against them, that he was going to Colville, his coming near their camp was an enigma, and his presence was enough to support the irritation. His precipitate retreat, without having even asked for the chiefs to take farewell of them, had the look of a flight and was of a nature to encourage his enemies, rather than to appease them. But an incident calmed the passions of yesterday, when the chiefs were not there to suppress the riotous movement. This is the incident:

Father Joset had joined the colonel, in order to give him all the information that he had been able to gather, and with his consent he had brought the chief, Vincent, to him. The colonel told him "that he had not had the slightest intention of molesting the Cœur d'Alènes and Spokans; that he had always considered them as very well disposed; that having learned that there was trouble between the whites and the Indians at Colville, he had set out to go and talk to them and try to bring them to agreement; that he had thought to find as he passed a good occasion to see the chiefs, with whom he desired to confer; that he had been very much astonished, the day before, to see the Cœur d'Alènes and Spokans come against him with hostile demonstrations; that he had expected that it would come to blows, and that he was glad to return without bloodshed."

He recognized Vincent and gave him credit for the efforts he had made on the previous day to prevent the conflict. In fact, it was Vincent who, with Galgalt, chief of the Spokans, had in spite of all the efforts of Telgawê managed to avert the trouble. Vincent had received a blow from a whip, from one of the Nez Percés who accompanied the expedition, who had said to him: "Boaster! why don't you fight?" Vincent turned, and, smiling, said to him, "Hereafter you will be ashamed of having struck your relative." This same Nez Percé seems to have told the officers afterward that he had only struck the chief's horse. Vincent persisted in his statement, adding, "It would be rather strange that my horse, which is very spirited, should not have made some movement if he had been struck." Nothing came of the affair, because Vincent and all the other chiefs, as well Cœur d'Alènes as Spokans, wanted only peace.

While Vincent was answering the colonel, his uncle came for him, saying that the Palooses were about to open fire. Father Joset at once notified the colonel, and went away with Vincent to report to the Cœur d'Alènes what

they had heard from the officer's own mouth, as to his friendly disposition toward them.

A large number of Cœur d'Alènes gathered around us. As soon as the peaceful intentions of the colonel were announced to them, you could see the faces clear up. The chief, John Peter, then said, "We have nothing more to do here; we will go back, every man to his own country." Victor, one of the braves of the nation, a quasi-chief, spoke in the same sense as John Peter. Then Melkapsi slapped the chief and struck Victor. They would have fought, but Father Joset threw himself between them and drew Melkapsi aside. In an instant they were calm again, and thinking that everything was settled, the Father went off toward the camp with several chiefs, and announced that all was quiet. But scarcely had he been half an hour in his tent, when some one came in and told him that they were fighting. Father Joset did his utmost to get a horse; but only old men, women and children were left in the camp. Toward three or four o'clock, they brought him a work-horse. To reach the battle-field, he had more than twenty miles to go. He started, though with no prospect of getting there before dark. On the way he met a neophyte, who told him, "Father, you are fatiguing yourself in vain. The Indians are mad; they won't listen to anybody." Then Father Joset learned for the first time what had happened. Some kinsmen and friends of Victor and Melkapsi, irritated by the latter's insolence, had revenged themselves, in the Indian fashion, by doing something foolish. They went and fired on the troops. It was only a handful of hot-heads, and the troops did not return the fire until one of their number was struck. Then, most unhappily, Jacques, the best of the Indians, beloved by all, and Zachary, brother-in-law of the head chief, were killed, and Victor mortally wounded. Only then did the engagement become serious; and if the colonel had not withdrawn secretly, leaving, like a prudent leader, a bait for the Indians' cupidity, it is more than probable that very few would

have escaped. The forces were too much out of proportion with the gravity of the circumstances.

These Indians, who had never recognized the Government, and had no idea of its power, had never received either benefit nor injury from it; but they had seen the tribes of lower Oregon oppressed, the Cayuses, Yakimas and others led by threats into treaties which had been followed by war. They were not hostile to the Government, but they were keeping a sharp lookout. They prided themselves on never having misused the whites. Jealous of their tribe's independence, they asked nothing of them, but seemed by their attitude to say "Let us alone." Colonel Steptoe's march appeared to them hostile. In their situation, it was bound so to appear. This is how the 17th of May came about. The encounter with Colonel Wright was a different thing.

Vincent, and all the other Indians as well that Father Joset had occasion to see, evinced great regret over what had happened, and sought to restore to the Government the animals in their possession. How came they then to take up arms again? "This," says Father Joset, "was the consequence of a custom which was unknown to me, and of which Vincent did not think when he made that promise. After a battle in which blood has been shed, the chiefs cannot make peace without the consent of the families which have lost a member. So, when the terms of Vincent's promise were known, a great opposition arose; but when they learned the terms of the propositions offered by General Clarke, one article of which stipulated that the authors of the battle with Colonel Steptoe should be given up, without even their lives being promised them, as Colonel Wright afterward did, then the relations of those who had been killed pronounced obstinately against the peace.

"Then Vincent, braving the hatred and vengeance of his nation, forsook them and came to the missionaries, who had declared that the continuation of hostilities would compel them to retire. Forty-five men rallied to Vincent's support.

As to the others, it is positively averred that the great majority desired peace; but they dared not go counter to an ancient usage and break with their brethren and friends. To the last moment, they strove to bring to these peaceful views two or three kinsmen of the victims of the battle of May 17th; but in vain. They persisted to the end, and dragged in the others despite their repugnance. They took no part in the first engagement with Colonel Wright; they did follow the Kalispels to the second battle, if battle there was; for no lives were lost in it. From the first, the colonel knew how to disable them, and it was practically no fight, but a complete rout.

“ Before this, the Indians smiled with pity when any one suggested that they could not make head against the whites; but the brave Colonel Wright so well persuaded them that, by their own admission, they cannot even think of war any more. They are like men tied hand and foot, who cannot move.

“ The effect produced by Colonel Wright's expedition is such that one must be upon the spot to gain any idea of it. A general war was on the eve of breaking out. The volunteer expeditions had exasperated the Indians, without inspiring them with any dread; but by the able manner in which the colonel made the most of his resources, he completely rid the savages of any desire to measure themselves with the American troops. Furthermore, he has terrified the bad Indians by his severity, as much as he has won the hearts of the good ones by his clemency. In short, he has deserved well of the Republic, above all that can be said for him. And finally, the fine discipline that he enforced wherever he passed has been an eloquent reply to the slanders by which it had been sought to render the military odious to these poor people, insomuch that the chief, Vincent, was able to say to the officers, and it is the expression of the feeling of the whole nation: ‘ Before, we knew you only by hearsay, and we hated you; now that we have seen you, we love you.’

"All that I have said is a proof that it would not be difficult to overcome this ancient antipathy of the Indians against the Americans, and to avoid the difficulties that are constantly springing up afresh, if only a good choice be made of the men who are sent to them to transact the business."

This is a summary sketch of the hostilities that broke out between the tribe of the Cœur d'Alènes and the United States. I will proceed with my journey among them in my next letter.

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I<sup>1</sup> had reached the great Cœur d'Alène lake on the 18th of October, 1858. I will give you an idea of the country occupied by this tribe and of the missionary field that our Fathers are tending.

The Cœur d'Alène country is truly picturesque; it is one of the most beautiful in Washington Territory. Nature seems singularly to have favored it, and on all my various visits I have always greatly admired it. From north to south and from east to west, the extent of country which the Cœur d'Alènes occupy may be a hundred miles. The surface is mountainous throughout. Father Joset, who has been fifteen years a missionary in this country, compares it to Jura, one of the most beautiful cantons of his native Switzerland. It has, he says, the same climate, the same display of large and small valleys, hills and mountains covered with fine forests. Here, in these primeval forests, trees of different sorts are mingled. There are ten distinct varieties in the nature of pines, firs, spruce, larch, etc.; the cedar occurs in all its grandeur; ivy, poplar and aspen abound, especially in the valleys.

The Cœur d'Alène lake, with its twenty-five bays and promontories, may have a length of close to thirty miles by a width of five; the range of mountainous hills that in-

<sup>1</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition, vol. IV.

close it are of extremely varied aspect. It receives its waters principally from two fine rivers, named Saint Joseph and Cœur d'Alène, which have a tranquil and limpid flow, barely perceptible in the fall. Each of them is about 100 yards wide, and each valley one to three miles. Here and there lovely little lakes may be admired, three to six miles in circumference, at the feet of high mountains which set off their full beauty. Two of the valleys inclose considerable portions of fertile lands and rich pasturages. The upper valleys are full of camas, a very nutritious root, which requires no cultivation. The mountains which border the valleys are mainly of conical form, often resembling sugar-loaves. Some have their summits covered with snow throughout a good part of the year. The most picturesque sites abound. The grazing grounds near the lakes, as well as those of the valleys and the verdant sides of the hills and mountains, would be ample for the maintenance of thousands of cattle, sheep and horses. They would have to be carried over through the severe winter, however, for during four months of the year the country presents merely the aspect of a desert covered with deep snow, and cannot be crossed save on snowshoes.

Diligent Indians find a good living on their lands in the great variety of roots and fruits that they can gather. At the same time the lakes, rivers and smaller streams, at almost all seasons of the year, but especially at the melting of the snows, swarm with various kinds of fish, principally the handsome salmon trout. The Cœur d'Alènes in general cultivate sundry small patches of yams, carrots, peas and beans, wheat and barley. They catch fish, and have no lack of wild animals.

I had forty miles yet to make to reach the Mission of the Sacred Heart. When we reached the great lake, on the 18th, the sky was covered with clouds and seemed to announce the approach of bad weather. It set in, in fact, with a heavy snowfall and a steady rain, which continued all night, to such an extent that part of my tent was under

water. It became impossible for us to break camp the following day. Reverend Father Gazzoli, nephew of the cardinal of the same name who died in 1857, and superior of the missions, having learned of our approach, had come, in spite of the bad weather, to meet me, in an old rude *barquette*, which leaked in more than one place. The good Father gave me a great deal of news, some consoling and some sad, concerning the country and the Indians. As the day of invasion by the whites approaches, the mind of the poor Indian becomes uneasy, gloomy and apprehensive. The idea of having presently to leave the place where repose the ashes of his fathers and of all those he has loved, and his hunting and fishing grounds, throws him into a state of entire hopelessness, which is the worse because it is irremediable and irresistible. The Indian sees nothing ahead of him but a dark and sombre future. That is the present state of all the tribes of these parts. It will not be easy to preach resignation to them. We must pray for them and hope in the Lord.

On the 20th we took to the boat, and after a ride of about ten miles over the beautiful waters of the lake, we entered the sweet and smiling valley, two to three miles wide, between two picturesque mountain ranges, where the Cœur d'Alène river flows with so gentle a current that the motion of its crystalline water is barely perceptible. Fifteen miles or so from its mouth, we camped at the foot of a high mountain, under the thick foliage of a great cedar which sheltered us against the inclemency of the season.

Some Indians had gone on ahead in their light canoes of the bark of the Canada balsam, of the thickness of ordinary pasteboard; they float with surprising lightness and swiftness. A good fire had been kindled, and when we arrived the coffee-pot and a great kettle of soup, made of flour and meat, were already boiling. It was late, and we had eaten nothing since breakfast. We therefore did honor to the dinner-supper, by the best of appetites.

Finally, on the 21st of November, in the afternoon, we reached the mission after a long ride, and I had the happiness of embracing my dear brethren in Jesus Christ; among them, the Reverend Father Aloïs Vercruysse and Brother Francis Huybrechts, both Belgians, who have been laboring in our missions for fifteen years with indefatigable and truly apostolic zeal.

The bad season had commenced, and it was not long before the snow had filled all the passes of the mountains, and heavy ice began to float on the rivers and lakes. I was therefore compelled to abandon, for the time being, my project of going to the mission of the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles, who are located six days' journey to the northeast, in one of the loftiest valleys of the Rocky Mountains.

At the beginning of winter, the snow piles up on the plateaus and in the mountain gorges to a great depth. They never become practicable, either for ordinary footwear or for snowshoes, until after a good thaw and rain, followed by a hard freeze; only then can the intrepid traveler venture upon a passage. Without this precaution, a man is risking his life. It is rare for a foolhardy or imprudent adventurer to escape the danger. I tried it in 1845. I then crossed, on snowshoes, the Saskatchewan Mountains at the sources of the Columbia, for a distance of about ninety miles, over snow five to twenty feet in depth. I shall never forget the good and brave savages who served me as guides at this time; but for them, certainly I should never have gotten out of the bad place I had so rashly engaged myself in. The danger that I ran on this occasion has made me more prudent. On my last journey, of which I am giving you the account, I therefore remained at the Sacred Heart Mission from November 21, 1858, to February 18, 1859. In this time we had forty-three days and forty-three nights of snow, more or less abundant. There were seven rainy days, twenty-one of cloudy weather, and sixteen of clear cold weather.

The Cœur d'Alène Mission possesses a handsome church, which would be a credit to any civilized country. It is ninety feet in length by thirty-five in width and thirty in height, with a portico supported by six massive columns. There are three altars, adorned with three magnificent pictures, brought from Rome. The beautiful statues of the holy Virgin and of Saint John at the foot of the cross, artistically sculptured by Father Ravalli, Cœur d'Alène missionary, attract especial attention.

The buildings consist of eight houses of logs squared on two faces, in which each Father and Brother has his chamber. There is a kitchen and a refectory. The barn and stables are very roomy, and are under one roof. Then there is a mill to grind the wheat, run by horse-power, and four closed sheds for provisions. The blacksmith, carpenter and baker have each man his shop. Around the church and not far from the Fathers in charge, are the cabins and lodges of the Indians, made of rounded wood, cedar-bark, skins and reeds, according to the various habits and tastes of the savages.

The redskins are fond of work. "The construction of their handsome church," said Father Gazzoli, "was the most agreeable pastime for them." All their leisure time they devoted to transporting the stones and timbers necessary in the construction. "To forbid a Cœur d'Alène to take part in the work, or to drive him away, is a very severe punishment for him." This is the testimony of the superior of the mission.

The fields and grazing grounds of the mission, with those of the Indians, are composed of two vast and beautiful vales, where the land is very fertile and yields prodigious crops, especially of grain. Father Joset told me that a single grain of wheat produces about 1,000 grains the first year. Last summer every acre produced 80 to 120 bushels of wheat.

If the Indians do not devote themselves more to agriculture, it is the fault of unfavorable circumstances surround-

ing them, particularly the lack of necessary implements for tilling and tools for building. The missionaries themselves are in great want of these things, and consequently cannot assist the Indians much.

On the day of the great feast of Christmas, I sang the midnight mass. All the Indians, men, women and children, intoned together the Vivat Jesus, the Gloria, the Credo and several canticles composed in their own tongue. They sang in really marvelous accord. I could not describe to you the consoling impressions that I felt at this happy moment, at this beautiful solemnity celebrated in the desert. It recalled to me those meetings or *agapés* of the first times of Christianity, when, as says Saint Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, all had "one heart and one soul." In the week preceding the feast, the Indians had carefully prepared themselves to make a good confession and hear the midnight mass. All, with few exceptions, approached the Lord's table to partake of the bread of angels. Such a scene is not forgotten, but remains among one's recollections as one of the happiest of his life.

There are among these poor Indians a great many really choice souls; faithful to the grace of God, humble, fervent and zealous in the accomplishment of their Christian duties, and endowed with that admirable simplicity which the gospel recalls to us in the text, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." The riches and grandeurs of earth are absolutely unknown to them: they seem careful only for the "one thing needful," the search for the treasures of heaven, which alone can render them happy in eternity. Nothing could be more touching nor more edifying than the stories their missionaries tell us about them. These happy results abundantly repay the Lord's workmen, and support them amid the privations and miseries that they meet with in this little corner of the world, far from their brethren in Jesus Christ and separated from all that is dear to them in the world: their families and their native land.

The missionaries at present engaged in the Indian missions of the Rocky Mountains are these: Fathers Congiato, superior, a native of Sardinia; Gazzoli, a Roman; Joset, a Swiss; Vercruysse, a Belgian; Tadini, a Piedmontese; Hoeken, a Hollander; Menetrey, a Swiss; and Brothers Huybrechts, a Belgian; MacGill, an Irishman; Magrio, a Maltese; Specht, a German; Claessens, a Belgian, and De Kock, a Hollander.

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St. Louis, Nov. 10, 1859.<sup>2</sup>

*Reverend and Dear Father:*

In accordance with my promise, I resume the little story of my long voyage. On my return to St. Louis, I tendered to the Minister of War my resignation of the post of chaplain. It was not accepted, because a new war had just broken out against the Government, among the tribes of the Rocky Mountains. I was notified by telegraph to proceed to New York, and to embark there with General Harney and his staff.

On the 20th of September, 1858, we left the port of New York for Aspinwall; it was the season of the equinox, so that we experienced some rough weather in the voyage, and a heavy wind among the Bahamas. We coasted for some time along the eastern shore of Cuba, in sight of the promontories of St. Domingo and Jamaica. On the 29th I crossed the Isthmus of Panama on a good railroad, forty-seven miles long. The next day I had the happiness to offer the holy sacrifice of the mass in the cathedral of Panama. The bishop very earnestly entreated me to use my influence with the Very Reverend Father General at Rome, to obtain for him a colony of Jesuits. His lordship especially expressed his earnest desire to intrust his ecclesiastical seminary to the care of the Society of Jesus. New Granada, as well as many

<sup>2</sup> From *New Indian Sketches*. See note to chap. II.

other regions of Spanish South America, offers, doubtless, a vast field to the zeal of a large number of our Fathers.

The distance from Panama to San Francisco is more than 3,000 miles. The steamer brought to in the superb bay of Acapulco to receive the mails, and to coal and water: this is a little port of Mexico. On the evening of the 16th of October, I arrived at San Francisco, happy to find myself in a house of the Society, and in the company of many of my brethren in Jesus Christ, who loaded me with kindness, and all the attention of the most cordial charity. The "*quam bonum et jucundum habitare fratres in unum*" is especially appreciated, when one leaves a California steamer in which one has been imprisoned, sometimes with fourteen or fifteen hundred individuals, all laboring under the gold fever, and who think and speak of nothing but mines of gold, and all the terrestrial delights which this gold is shortly to procure them. However, the "shortly" is long enough to allow of the destruction or disappearance of many an illusion. "All that glitters is not gold."

We left San Francisco on the 20th, and in four days made more than 1,000 miles to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia river. The news of the cessation of hostilities and of the submission of the tribes had been received at Vancouver. The task remained of removing the Indian prejudices, soothing their inquietude and alarm, and correcting, or rather refuting, the false rumors which are generally spread after a war, and which otherwise might be the cause of its renewal.

Under the orders of the general commanding in chief, I left Fort Vancouver on the 29th of October to go among the tribes of the mountains, at a distance of about 800 miles. I visited the Catholic soldiers of Forts Dalle City and Walla Walla on my way. At the last-named fort, I had the consolation of meeting Reverend Father Congiato, on his return from his visit to the missions, and of receiving very cheering news from him as to the disposition of the Indians. At my request, the excellent commandant of the fort had the very

great kindness to set at liberty all the prisoners and hostages, both Cœur d'Alènes and Spokans, and he intrusted to my charge to bring them on their way, and return them to their respective nations. These good Indians, particularly the Cœur d'Alènes, had given the greatest edification to the soldiers during their captivity: these men often surrounded them with admiration, to witness the performance of their pious exercises, morning and evening, and in listening to their prayers and hymns. During the whole journey, these good Indians testified the utmost gratitude to me, and their punctual performance of their religious duties was a source of great consolation and happiness to me.

On the 21st of November I arrived at the Mission of the Sacred Heart, among the Cœur d'Alènes. I was detained at the mission by the snow until the 18th of February, 1859. During this interval snow fell with more or less abundance on forty-three days and nights, on seven days it rained, we had twenty-one cloudy days, and sixteen days of clear and cold weather. I left the mission on the 18th of February with the Reverend Father Joset, who accompanied me until we met Father Hoeken, who had promised to meet us on Clark's river. The ice, snow, rain and winds impeded very much our course, in our frail canoes of bark, on the rivers and great lakes: we often ran considerable risk in crossing rapids and falls, of which Clark's river is full. I counted thirty-four of these in seventy miles. We met with several camps of Indians in winter quarters on every side. On the approach of the winter season, they are obliged to scatter in the forests and along the lakes and rivers, where they live by the chase and fishing. They received us everywhere with the greatest kindness, and, notwithstanding their extreme poverty, willingly shared with us their small rations and meagre provisions. They eagerly embraced the occasion to attend to their religious duties and other exercises of piety: attending at the instructions with great attention, and with much zeal and fervor, at mass, and

at morning and evening prayers. On the 11th of March we arrived at the Mission of St. Ignatius, among the Pend d'Oreilles of the mountains.

The Kootenais, a neighboring tribe to the Pend d'Oreilles, having heard of my arrival, had traveled many days' journey through the snow to shake hands with me, to bid me welcome, and manifest their filial affection. In 1845 I had made some stay with them. I was the first priest who had announced to them the glad tidings of salvation, and I had baptized all their little children and a large number of adults. They came on this occasion, with a primitive simplicity, to assure me that they had remained faithful to "the prayer," that is, to religion, and all the good advice that they had received. All the Fathers spoke to me of these good Kootenais in the highest terms. Fraternal union, evangelic simplicity, innocence and peace, still reign among them in full vigor. Their honesty is so great and so well known, that the trader leaves his storehouse entirely, the door remaining unlocked often during his absence for weeks. The Indians go in and out and help themselves to what they need, and settle with the trader on his return. He assured me himself that in doing business with them in this style he never lost the value of a pin.

On the 18th of March I crossed deep snow a distance of seventy miles, to St. Mary's or Bitter Root valley, to revisit my first and ancient spiritual children of the mountains, the poor and abandoned Flatheads. They were greatly consoled on learning that Very Reverend Father-General had the intention of causing the mission to be undertaken again. The principal chiefs assured me that since the departure of the Fathers, they had continued to assemble morning and evening for prayers, to ring the angelus at the accustomed hour, and to rest on Sunday, to glorify the holy day of our Lord. I will not enter into long details here, as to the present dispositions of this little tribe, for fear of being too long. Doubtless, in the absence of the missionaries, the enemy of

souls has committed some ravages among them, but by the grace of God the evil is not irreparable. Their daily practices of piety, and the conferences I held with them during several days, have given me the consoling conviction that the faith is still maintained among the Flatheads, and still brings forth fruits of salvation among them — their greatest chieftains, Michael, Adolphe, Ambrose, Moses, and others, are true and zealous Christians, and real piety in religion and true valor at war are united in them.

In my several visits to the stations in the Rocky Mountains, I was received by the Indians with every demonstration of sincere and filial joy. I think I may say that my presence among them has been of some advantage to them, both in a religious and secular point of view. I did my best to encourage them to persevere in piety, and to maintain the conditions of the treaty of peace with the Government. In these visits I had the happiness to baptize over 100 infants and a large number of adults.

On the 16th of April, in accordance with the orders of the commander-in-chief of the army, I left the Mission of St. Ignatius for Fort Vancouver. At my request, all the chiefs of the different mountain tribes accompanied me, to renew the treaty of peace with the general and with the Superintendent of Indian Affairs; I give their names, and the nations to which they belonged. Alexander Temglagketzin, or Man-without-a-horse, great chief of the Pend d'Oreilles; Victor Alamiken, or Happy-man (he deserves his name, for he is a saintly man), great chief of the Kalispels; Adolphus Kwilkweschape, or Red-feather, chief of the Flatheads; Francis Saxa, or Iroquois, another Flathead chief; Dennis Zenemietze, or Thunders-robe, chief of the Skoyelpi or Chaudières; Andrew and Bonaventure, chiefs and braves among the Cœur d'Alènes, or Skizoumish; Kamiakin, great chief of the Yakimas; and Gerry, great chief of the Spokans. The last two are still pagans, though their children have been baptized.



A DELEGATION OF INDIAN CHIEFS IN OREGON.



We suffered much and ran many dangers on the route, on account of the high stage of the rivers and the heavy snow. For ten days we had to clear a way through thick forests, where thousands of trees, thrown down by storms, lay across one another, and were covered, four, six and eight feet with snow; several horses perished in this dangerous passage. My horse stumbled many a time, and procured me many a fall; but aside from some serious bruises and scratches, a hat battered to pieces, a torn pair of trousers and a *soutane* or black-gown in rags, I came out of it [the "Bad Forest"] safe and sound. I measured white cedars in the wood, which were as much as six or seven persons could clasp at the base, and of proportionate height. After a month's journey we arrived at Fort Vancouver.

On the 18th of May the interview took place with the general, the superintendent and the Indian chiefs. It produced most happy results on both sides. About three weeks' time was accorded to the chiefs to visit, at the cost of Government, the principal cities and towns of the State of Oregon and Washington Territory, with everything remarkable in the way of industrial establishments, steam engines, forges, manufactories and printing establishments — of all which the poor Indians can make nothing or very little. The visit which appeared the most to interest the chiefs, was that which they made to the prison at Portland and its wretched inmates, whom they found chained within its cells. They were particularly interested in the causes, motives, and duration of their imprisonment. Chief Alexander kept it in his mind. Immediately on his return to his camp at St. Ignatius Mission, he assembled his people, and related to them all the wonders of the whites, and especially the history of the prison. "We," said he, "have neither chains nor prisons; and for want of them, no doubt, a great number of us are wicked and have deaf ears. As chief, I am determined to do my duty: I shall take a whip to punish the wicked; let all those who have been guilty of any misde-

meanor present themselves, I am ready." The known guilty parties were called upon by name, many presented themselves of their own accord, and all received a proportionate correction. The whole affair terminated in a general rejoicing and feast.

Before leaving the parts of civilization, all the chiefs received presents from the general and superintendent, and returned to their own country contented and happy and well determined to keep at peace with the whites.

## CHAPTER V.<sup>1</sup>

### RETURN TO ST. LOUIS.

Return to the mountains — Much water — Exciting passage of the woods — Eastward to Fort Benton in July — Blackfeet to have a mission — Horses worn out — Down as far as Omaha in a skiff — His expense account.

**A**S for me, I had accomplished among the Indians the task which the Government had imposed upon me. I explained to the general my motives for desiring to return to St. Louis by way of the interior. He acceded to my desire with the greatest affability, and in an answer which he addressed to me on this matter, he bore most honorable testimony to my services.

About the 15th of June, I again left Vancouver with the chiefs, to return to the mountains. I passed the 7th, 8th and 9th of July at the Mission of the Sacred Heart, among the Cœur d'Alènes. Thence I continued my route for St. Ignatius with Father Congiato, and completed the trip in a week; not, however, without many privations, which deserve a short mention here.

Imagine thick, untrodden forests, strewn with thousands of trees thrown down by age and storms in every direction; where the path is scarcely visible, and is obstructed by barricades, which the horses are constantly compelled to leap, and which always endanger the riders. Two fine rivers, or rather great torrents,— the Cœur d'Alène and St. Francis Borgia,— traverse these forests in a most winding course; their beds are formed of enormous detached masses of rock, and large slippery stones, rounded by the action of the water.

The first of these torrents is crossed thirty-nine times, and the second thirty-two times, by the only path; the water

<sup>1</sup> Continuation of foregoing letter.

often comes to the horse's belly, and sometimes above the saddle. It is considered good luck to escape with only the legs wet.

The two rivers are separated by a high mountain, or rather a chain of mountains, called the Bitter Root chain. The sides of these mountains, covered with thick cedar forests, and an immense variety of firs and pines, present great difficulties to the traveler, on account of the great number of trees which lie broken and fallen across the path, and completely cover the soil. To these obstacles must be added immense fields of snow, which have to be crossed, and which are at times from eight to twelve feet deep. After eight hours' painful climb, we arrived at a beautiful plain enameled with flowers, which formed the summit of Mount Calvary, where a cross was raised on my first passage, sixteen years ago. In this beautiful situation, after so long and rude a course, I desired to encamp; but Father Congiato, persuaded that in two hours more we should reach the foot of the mountain, induced us to continue the march. When we had made the six miles which we supposed we had before us, and twelve miles more, darkness overtook us in the midst of difficulties.

On the eastern side of the mountain we found other hills of snow to cross, other barricades of fallen trees to scramble over; sometimes we were on the edge of sheer precipices of rock, sometimes on a slope almost perpendicular. The least false step might precipitate us into the abyss. Without guide, without path, in the most profound darkness, separated one from the other, each calling for help without being able either to give or to obtain the least assistance, we fell again and again, we walked, feeling our way with our hands, or crawled on all fours, slipping or sliding down as best we could. At last a gleam of hope arose; we heard the hoarse murmur of water in the distance: it was the sound of the water-falls of the great stream which we were seeking. Each one then directed his course toward that point. We all had the good fortune to arrive at the stream

at last, but one after another, between twelve and one o'clock in the night, after a march of sixteen hours, fatigued and exhausted, our dresses torn to rags, and covered with scratches and bruises; but without serious injuries. While eating our supper, each one amused his companions with the history of his mishaps. Good Father Congiato admitted that he had made a mistake in his calculation, and was the first to laugh heartily at his blunder. Our poor horses found nothing to eat all night in this miserable mountain gap.

I cannot omit here testifying my indebtedness to all the Fathers and Brothers of the Missions of the Sacred Heart and of St. Ignatius, for their truly fraternal charity toward me, and the efficacious aid which they rendered me toward fulfilling the special mission which had been intrusted to me.

As Father Congiato keeps the Very Reverend Father-General informed of the present state of the missions of the mountains, it is unnecessary for me to enter into all its details; I recommend, especially, these poor children of the desert to his paternal attention and charity, and to our immediate superiors in this country.

Divine Providence will not, I hope, abandon them. They have already a great number of intercessors in heaven, in the thousands of their children dead shortly after baptism, in the number of good Christian adults among them, who, having led good lives, have quitted this world in the most pious dispositions; they can especially count upon the protection of Louise, of the tribe of Cœur d'Alènes, and of Loyola, chief of the Kalispels, whose lives were an uninterrupted series of acts of heroic virtue, and who died almost in the odor of sanctity.

On the 22d of July I left the Mission of St. Ignatius, accompanied by Father Congiato with some guides and Indian hunters. The distance to Fort Benton is about 200 miles. The country for the first four days is picturesque, and presents no obstacle to traveling. It is a succession of

forests easily traversed, of beautiful prairies, impetuous torrents, pretty rivulets; here and there are lakes, from three to six miles in circumference, whose waters are clear as crystal, well stored with fish of various kinds: nothing can be more charming than the prospect. We called one of the largest of these lakes, St. Mary.

On the 26th of July we crossed the mountain which separates the sources of the Clark River from those of the Missouri, at the 48th degree of north latitude and the 115th degree of longitude. The crossing does not take more than half an hour, and is very easy even for wagons and carts. At the eastern base of the Rocky Mountains the country is mountainous, and almost destitute of timber; we followed up a small tributary of the Dearborn for twelve miles to reach Sun River, and followed down its valley almost to its mouth. We visited the great falls of the Missouri on our way: the principal fall is ninety-three feet high. Father Hoeken and Brother Magri met us in this vicinity.

On the 29th we arrived at Fort Benton, a post of the St. Louis Fur Company, where we received the greatest attention from all its inmates. We feel particularly obliged to Mr. Dawson, the superintendent of the fort, for his continued kindness and charity to all our missionaries. May the Lord protect and reward him! The Blackfeet occupy an immense territory in this neighborhood; they reckon from 10,000 to 12,000 souls in the six tribes which compose this nation. They have been asking for Black-gowns (priests) for many years, and their desire appears universal. In my visit to them in 1846, they begged me to send a Father to instruct them.

Father Hoeken is now in these parts, and I have just read with the greatest pleasure, in the "Annals of the Propagation of the Faith," that the work of the conversion of the Blackfeet has been commenced, with the entire approbation of the Very Reverend Father-General.

On our arrival in the neighborhood, we found a large number of Indians encamped around and near the fort. It was the period for the annual distribution of presents. They manifested their joy at the presence of a missionary in their country, and hoped that "all would open to him their ears and heart." The chief of a large camp, in one of our visits, related to us a remarkable circumstance, which I think worthy of mention.

When Father Point was among the Blackfeet, he presented some crosses to many chiefs as marks of distinction, and explained to them their signification, exhorting them, when in danger, to invoke the Son of God, whose image they bore, and to place all their confidence in him. The chief who related these details was one of a band of thirty Indians who went to war against the Crows. The Crows having got upon their trail, gathered together in haste and in great multitudes to fight and destroy them. They soon came up with them in a position of the forest where they had made a barricade of fallen trees and branches, and surrounded them, shouting ferociously the dreaded war-cry. The Blackfeet, considering the superior numbers of the enemy who thus surprised them, were firmly persuaded that they should perish at their hands. One of them bore on his breast the sign of salvation. He remembered the words of the Black-gown (Father Point), and reminded his companions of them; all shouted, "It is our only chance of safety." They then invoked the Son of God and rushed from the barricade. The bearer of the cross, holding it up in his hand, led the way, followed by all the rest. The Crows discharged a shower of arrows and bullets at them, but no one was seriously injured. They all happily escaped. On concluding his statement, the chief added with energy and feeling: "Yes, the prayer (religion) of the Son of God is the only good and powerful one; we all desire to become worthy of it, and to adopt it."

My intention, when I left General Harney, was, with his

consent, to go all the way to St. Louis on horseback, in the hope of meeting a large number of Indian tribes, especially the large and powerful tribe of Comanches. I was obliged to renounce this project, for my six horses were entirely worn out, and unfit for making so long a journey; they were all more or less saddle-galled, and, not being shod, their hoofs were worn in crossing the rocky bottoms of the rivers, and the rough, rocky mountain roads.

In this difficulty, I ordered a little skiff to be made at Fort Benton; worthy Mr. Dawson, superintendent of the Fur Company, had the very great kindness to procure me three oarsmen and a pilot. On the 5th of August I bade adieu to Fathers Congiato and Hoeken, and dear Brother Magri, and embarked on the Missouri, which is celebrated for dangers of navigation — snags and rapids being numerous in the upper river.

We descended the stream about 2,400 miles in our cockle-shell, making fifty, sixty, and sometimes, when the wind favored us, eighty miles a day. We took the first steamboat we met, at Omaha City. The steamer made about 700 miles in six days, and on the 23d of September, vigil of our Lady of Mercy, we entered the port of St. Louis.

During this long trip on the river we passed the nights in the open air, or under a little tent, often on sand-banks, to avoid the troublesome mosquitoes, or on the skirts of a plain, or in an untrodden thick forest. We often heard the howlings of the wolves; and the grunting of the grizzly bear, the king of animals in these parts, disturbed our sleep, but without alarming us. In the desert one perceives that God has implanted in the breast of the wild beasts the fear of man. In the desert, also, we are enabled in a particular way to admire and to thank that Divine Providence which watches with so much solicitude over his children. There is admirably verified the text of St. Matthew: "Consider the birds of the air, they sow not, but your Heavenly Father feeds them; are ye not of much more value than

they." During the whole route, our wants were constantly supplied; yes, we lived in the midst of the greatest abundance. The rivers furnished us excellent fish, water-fowl, ducks, geese and swans; the forests and plains gave us fruits and roots. We never wanted for game: we found everywhere either immense herds of buffalo, or deer, antelope, mountain sheep or bighorn, pheasants, wild turkeys and partridges.

On the way, along the Missouri, I met thousands of Indians of different tribes: Crows, Assiniboins, Minnetarees, Mandans, Aricaras, Sioux, etc. I always stopped a day or two with them. I received the greatest marks of respect and affection from these hitherto untutored children of the plains and mountains, and they listened to my words with the utmost attention. For many years these poor tribes have desired to have missionaries and to be instructed.

My greatest, I may say almost my only consolation, is to have been the instrument, in the hand of Divine Providence, of the eternal salvation of a great number of little children; of about 900 I baptized, many were sickly, and seemed only to wait for this happiness, to fly to God, to praise him for all eternity.

To God alone be all the glory; and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, our most humble and most profound thanks for the protection and benefits received during this long journey. After having traveled, by land and river, over 8,314 miles, and 6,950 on sea, without any serious accident, I arrived safe and sound at St. Louis, among my dear brethren in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> P. J. De Smet in account with Government [while in its service as chaplain, 1859].

Pay for self as chaplain, etc., in the United States army in Oregon from the 1st of May, 1859, up to the 23d of September, 1859 .....	\$476 72
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Expenses incurred during my voyage in Oregon and in Washington Territory with eight Indian chiefs, Flatheads, Cœur d'Alènes, Spokans,

Kettlefall tribe, Kalispels, and Pend d'Oreilles, in the months of May and June, 1899:

Private traveling expenses from Champoeg to Portland. . . . .	\$10 00
Expenses for Indians, clothing, saddles, etc. . . . .	35 50
To the hire and use of Indian horses from Dalles, Oregon, to Fort Benton, Nebraska Territory, in June and July, at two blankets or \$10 a month . . . . .	120 00
Private servant and assistant from Cœur d'Alène Lake (W. T.) till St. Louis, during the months of July, August, and up to the 23d of September, 1859 . . . . .	65 00
To Indian guides and canoemen from Cœur d'Alène Mission to St. Ignatius Mission, near Flathead Lake. . . . .	72 00
To four Indian guides, assistants, and guard from St. Ignatius' Mission to Fort Benton, twenty days going and coming . . . . .	60 00
To the hire of two Canadian boatmen from Fort Benton to St. Louis, at the rate of \$45 each . . . . .	90 00
To pilots and interpreters from 3d of August till 9th of September, from Fort Benton to Fort Randall . . . . .	30 00
To tobacco, etc., during my intercourse with the Indians, east and west of the Mountains . . . . .	20 00
To provisions for attendants in July, August and September to skiff, etc. . . . .	59 50
To Steamer (for self) from Omaha City to St. Louis. . . . .	18 00
To drayage for baggage in Omaha and St. Louis . . . . .	2 50

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\$582 50

## PART VI.

FROM 1860 TO FATHER DESMET'S DEATH, 1873.<sup>1</sup>

*Relations with the Government, Missionary Work and other Matters.*

Itinerary for the years 1860 to 1873.

1860.

¶ IN St. Louis most of the year — August 24th went to Chicago, returning via Quincy and Palmyra — In September left St. Louis for Europe — Embarked at New York on the *Fulton* and crossed the Atlantic (twelfth time) to Havre — Went to Paris and thence, via Lille, to Belgium — Visited the principal cities of Belgium and Holland.

Distance traveled, 6,803 miles.

1861.

Left Belgium March 27th — Went to Paris and thence to Havre with three novices and took passage on the steamer *Fulton* — Commenced voyage April 2d (thirteenth trip across the Atlantic) — Arrived in New York the night of April 14th-15th — Left New York on the 17th and arrived in St. Louis on the 19th.

“During the summer I visited the East — I was in Washington during the Bull Run battle and witnessed its fatal consequences.

“Late in the fall I had a sick call in the neighborhood of Peoria.”

Distance traveled, 6,780 miles.

<sup>1</sup> All the letters in this part are here published for the first time.

1862.

Left for Washington January 10th and returned February 22d — In April made a trip to Chicago and back — Early in May left St. Louis on the steamer *Spread Eagle* for the Rocky Mountains — Arrived at Fort Benton June 20th — Returned by the same boat to Fort Leavenworth — Went thence to St. Mary's Mission and reached St. Louis in August.

Visited Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, returning to St. Louis by the same route — “While in Washington I heard the roar of cannon at the Battle of Antietam.”

Distance traveled, 9,518 miles.

1863.

Left St. Louis May 9th on the steamer *Alone* bound for Fort Benton — June 21st the boat was stopped by low water at the mouth of Milk river — Passengers detained there about four weeks while transportation was being sent for to Benton — Arrived at Fort Benton August 15th.

Father De Smet decided, on account of danger from the Indians, to return to St. Louis via Panama — Set out August 25th — Crossed the Divide on the 29th — Reached St. Ignatius September 5th — Left on the 8th — Reached the Sacred Heart Mission September 18th — Left on the 23d — Reached Vancouver October 8th.

Set sail from Portland October 13th — Went to Vancouver island — Reached San Francisco on the 21st — Left on November 3d — Crossed Panama on November 18th and same day took the steamer *North Star* for New York, where they arrived on the 26th, Thanksgiving day.

Left New York on December 9th for Washington, where Father De Smet had business to transact relating to the Indians — Left Washington and reached St. Louis December 17th, “safe and sound.”

Distance traveled, 11,782 miles.

1864.

April 16th American Fur Company steamboat *Yellowstone* left St. Louis for Fort Benton — Father De Smet left on the 20th by rail, hoping to overtake the boat — At Leavenworth found the boat fifteen hours ahead — Took stage to Omaha where he overtook the boat, joining it April 28th — Went as far as Fort Berthold where he arrived June 9th — Went principally at the instance of the Government to see if peace could not be brought about with the Sioux — General Sully, however, was determined to fight anyway, and so De Smet returned in order not to compromise himself, as a missionary, in the eyes of the Indians — Reached St. Louis “at the end of August” — On the 3d of September he left for Washington to report the result of his expedition and see about the draft and other matters — Returned to St. Louis October 4th — Left St. Louis October 12th and embarked at New York on steamer *China* on the 20th for Europe (fourteenth crossing of the Atlantic) — Landed in Liverpool about the end of October — Went to Stonyhurst and thence via London to Brussels early in November — Thence to Rome, where he arrived November 19th — Saw the Pope several times — Returned to Belgium in December.

Distance traveled, 14,030 miles.

1865.

Visited Holland, Luxemburg, England and Ireland — Met with success everywhere — June 7th embarked at Liverpool on the *City of New York* with twelve novices and four sisters (fifteenth crossing of the Atlantic) — Reached New York June 19th — Left New York on the 26th and reached St. Louis June 30th — Remained there the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 6,416 miles.

1866.

Left St. Louis April 9th on the *Ontario* — Reached Fort Benton June 7th — Back in St. Louis probably by July 20th — Remained in St. Louis the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 6,200 miles.

1867.

In February visited Washington and New York and returned to St. Louis — April 12th left St. Louis for the upper country — Went to the Yellowstone river where he arrived June 28th — Visited the various tribes on the way — Returned to St. Louis late in August — Remained in St. Louis the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 6,880 miles.

1868.

March 30th left St. Louis by rail with Government commission for Cheyenne — Arrived there April 6th after stops at Omaha and North Platte — Made an excursion to Sherman Pass — Commissioners then went north to Fort Laramie and De Smet went back to Omaha, where he took the steamer *Columbia* for Fort Rice — Left Omaha April 21st and reached Fort Rice May 24th — Remained a few days at the fort preparing for journey to the camp of the hostile Indians.

June 3d set out for the Powder river country where the hostiles were supposed to be — Reached the camp in the valley of Powder river at its mouth June 19th — Remained two days with the Indians and succeeded in inducing them to send a deputation to Fort Rice — Set out before sunrise June 21st — Entered Fort Rice on the 30th — The great Peace Council took place on July 2d.

Father De Smet set out on his return journey July 4th — Stopped at Fort Sully — Resumed journey on 11th — Went to Fort Leavenworth and St. Mary's Mission — Reached St. Louis apparently about August 20th, that

being the date of his first letter after his return — Left St. Louis for New York November 21st — Embarked November 25th on the *City of Baltimore* and crossed the ocean (sixteenth crossing) — Two days before reaching Liverpool he fell during a storm and broke two ribs — December 11th left Liverpool for London, and thence to Termonde where he remained the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 10,000 miles.

1869.

Father De Smet spent the first five months of the year in visiting the principal places in Belgium, Holland, France and England — June 12th embarked on the *City of Dublin* for America — Stopped to coal at Queenstown, Ireland — Continued voyage same day (seventeenth crossing of Atlantic) — Reached New York June 29th — July 2d left New York for St. Louis and arrived there on the 4th — In October made a trip to Omaha and back; in November to St. Mary's and back; and in December to Chicago and Milwaukee and back.

Distance traveled, 9,799 miles.

1870.

In St. Louis until June 1st when he set out for the upper Missouri to see about establishing a mission among the Sioux — Went as far up as Grand river — Returned early in August — During the fall made a journey to Chicago and Milwaukee — Remained in St. Louis the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 4,200 miles.

1871.

Father De Smet remained in St. Louis until June 25th when he left for Europe — Embarked July 1st on the steamer *City of New York* — Crossed the Atlantic (eigh-

teenth time) and reached Liverpool July 14th — There is no available record to show just what Father De Smet's travels in Europe were in 1871, but they must have been extensive. There may also have been some short trips in the United States.

The total distance traveled for the year mounts up to 10,150 miles.

1872.

Father De Smet embarked for America on the *City of Paris* April 11th — Arrived in New York April 21st (nineteenth crossing) — Went to St. Louis and remained there the rest of the year.

Distance traveled, 4,800 miles.

1873.

Father De Smet remained in St. Louis until the date of his death, May 23d, when his remains were taken to the Jesuit Novitiate at Florissant and there interred.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Father De Smet crossed the Atlantic nineteen times instead of twenty-one as the Linton Album records it. Add to this number two Atlantic voyages between New York and Panama and three on the Pacific (one between Cape Horn and the Columbia and two between Panama and the Columbia) makes twenty-four long ocean voyages.

The foregoing itineraries are based primarily upon two records: One in letter-book form comes down to 1853, and the other in the Linton Album comes down to 1872 with a few obscure places. The distances in the Indian country are all greatly overstated, although they were the received distances until actual surveys were made.

There is an important error in both records for the years 1868 and 1869 in the omission of 5,200 miles travel before starting to Europe in 1868.

## CHAPTER I.

### VOYAGES TO FORT BENTON IN 1862 AND 1863.

Six-weeks' voyage up the Missouri — Everywhere welcomed by Indians — Brings supplies to Blackfoot mission — Eastern trip — The 1863 journey — The Sioux war — Pleasant voyage — Water low — Passengers and freight landed at Milk River — Indian attack fortunately averted — Hard wagon trip — Baptizes Crow children — Decides to return by the Pacific.

**E**ARLY in May, 1862,<sup>1</sup> I left St. Louis in the steamboat *Spread Eagle*<sup>2</sup> of the Honorable St. Louis Fur Company. [Pierre Chouteau, Jr. Company, popularly called the American Fur Company.] The respectable and worthy captain, Mr. Charles P. Chouteau, had had a little chapel prepared on board — I had the great consolation of offering the holy sacrifice of the mass every day, during my long voyage. The boat was bound for Fort Benton, in the Rocky Mountain region and upwards of 3,000 miles, by the Missouri river, from the mouth of that stream. The river was bank-full at the time, and a great deal of power was required to stem the current. We were six weeks in making the trip.

At various places or stations we found more or less numerous camps of Indians on the banks of the river. The boat would stop to distribute among the savages the Government gifts or annuities, and I would seize all these precious moments to visit them in their buffalo-skin dwellings or cabins; and on all these occasions I passed my days

<sup>1</sup> Extract of a letter to Reverend Father Boone, containing a synopsis of my trip among the Indians in 1862.— *Author*. (From the French of the Linton Album, pp. 58-60.)

<sup>2</sup> For particulars of this interesting voyage see *History Missouri River Navigation*.

and nights among them. I was welcomed everywhere — they met me most eagerly, with the calumet of peace in their hands, and showed me a most simple but hearty kindness. They listened to my teachings with much diligence and attention. It was most touching and consoling to have the poor Indian mothers come to me, leading their little children or carrying them in their arms or on their backs, and to hear them say “O Black-robe! oh, bless our little children and offer them to the Great Spirit;” signifying in their simple language that they would have them regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. Thus I had the consolation, in these various meetings and visits, of giving baptism to more than 900 infants and to a good number of the sick and aged.

The following little anecdote, connected with the last baptisms administered, may perhaps not be without interest. It was among a band of Yankton Sioux; I had finished the ceremonies of a large number of baptisms, and night was falling. I was about leaving the place for my lodging, when I saw something moving, some distance off, dragging itself along the path. I stopped, in doubt, to see what this strange animal or moving mass might be. On approaching it, I was surprised to behold a poor old Indian woman, covered with wretched rags of buffalo-skin — a cripple, having lost the use of her hands and feet. She had heard the news, that the Black-robe, the priest, had arrived in their camp and was baptizing the children, and she, too, desiring that happiness as well, had dragged herself a considerable distance from her lodge to come to me. On seeing me, the good old woman raised her two palsied hands and cried “Oh, my father, have pity on me — I too wish to be the child of the Great Spirit — oh, pour water on my forehead and speak the holy words! The whites call me Marie — it is the name of the good and great mother in heaven; when I die, I wish to go to my good mother.” I instructed the poor Indian Marie and she received baptism, with the most pious sentiments and in transports of joy and happi-

ness. "*Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam coelum possidebunt.*" Marie had spent several years in a French half-breed family and been instructed in a number of points of our holy religion.

Contagious diseases, especially among the small children, often ravage our poor Indian tribes, since they have no remedies and no treatment but that of their medicine-men. A large number have died since my visit, and already know the bliss of the elect, a precious prize of baptism, through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Indian tribes that I last visited belong for the most part to the nations of the Blackfeet, the Crows, the Assiniboins, Minnetarees, Aricaras, Mandans and Sioux. This last nation is considered the most numerous on the plains, and reckons 30,000 to 40,000 souls (1862). Circumstances did not allow me to penetrate very far into the interior of the Sioux country, on account of the great uprising or warfare made upon the whites by several of their tribes in the northwest. They are said to be very cruel, and there have been frightful and terrible massacres. They have ravaged principally along the frontiers of Wisconsin and Minnesota. More than 300 Indians have been taken prisoners by the American troops. Thirty-eight of them have been hung. Before their execution, thirty-two requested baptism of the priest who was on the spot. There has been a great outcry in the United States against the execution of these prisoners of war, who seemed to be given over to the vengeance of the whites of the frontier. The unhappy Indians are often wronged, insulted and outraged beyond measure by the whites, and there is no recourse open to them for the obtaining of justice. Driven to desperation, they dig up the war hatchet and utter the cry of vengeance against the pale-faces, whom they consider their enemies — woe to those, then, who fall into their hands. With the Lord's favor, I shall this spring (1863) make a fresh effort to reach the

Sioux country, and, I hope, with more success than last year. I commend myself to your good prayers.<sup>3</sup>

On reaching the base of the Rocky Mountains, I met two of our Italian Fathers (Giorda and Imoda), and two coadjutor Brothers, who have settled among the Blackfoot tribes. This nation numbers about 10,000 souls. The meeting was unexpected on the part of my dear brothers in Christ, and the joy was all the greater. I found them in a rather bad way, lacking, in fact, almost everything, even necessaries, and I had expected as much. Thanks to a remnant of the funds obtained in Belgium (in 1860-61), I was enabled to bring them assistance. I had the great consolation to find them safe and sound, and to procure for them, in good order, a fine assortment of church ornaments and sacred vessels, victuals for nearly a year, garments and bed coverings, which they sadly needed, agricultural and carpenters' tools, several plows, some picks and shovels, an ambulance and a wagon — all of which were absolutely necessary, in a new establishment among 10,000 nomadic savages, whom it is desired to christianize and civilize.

These worthy brothers are laboring among the Blackfeet with tireless zeal and courage. At the time of my visit they had been barely six months in that country, and the number of baptisms inscribed on the register came to upwards of

<sup>3</sup> "After leaving Fort Benton I visited several camps of Blackfeet, Crows, Assiniboins, and Mandans, the nation of the Minnetarees or Grosventres, who were all in one place, and the Aricaras. When I left St. Louis it was my desire to visit the numerous tribes of the Sioux or Dakotas, supposed to be thirty to forty thousand in number, and to spend three months among them. An unfortunate incident prevented my doing it. A few days before my arrival at Fort Pierre, the head chief of the Sioux tribes had been killed by his own people, because of his friendship for the whites. Consequently the country was in confusion and much agitated against the whites. It was impossible for me to obtain an interpreter or guides to accompany me into the interior of the country where they dwell, which is very vast. I have put off this visit and mission to next spring." (Extract from letter to Father-General, August 18, 1862.)

700 children and adults. The mission is dedicated to the Apostle Peter. The number of Christians has grown considerably since my visit. The sight of this interesting little Christian community, growing so admirably in that far-off desert, after centuries of abandonment, was to me a most consoling spectacle, showing the power of the Lord's grace over hearts so barbarous and but now so guilty — for the Blackfeet are considered the most barbarous and cruel of all the tribes of the plains.<sup>4</sup>

I offered the holy sacrifice of the mass among them, by way of thanksgiving. An Indian choir, composed of men and women, young men and girls, chanted the litanies of the Holy Virgin and songs to the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, and in praise of his Good Mother, "whom all nations call blessed." Everything was sung in the language of the country. A goodly number drew devoutly near to the holy table.

The Blackfoot Mission, though to the east of the Rocky Mountains, belongs among the western missions; namely, the Flatheads, the Pend d'Oreilles, the Kootenais, the Kalispels, the Cœur d'Alènes and the Kettle Falls Indians. There have been latterly (1864) many conversions and baptisms of children among the Spokans or Zingomenes and the Nez Percés. All these tribes are located on the Pacific slope. Six new little churches were in process of construction.

Upon my return to Leavenworth I visited the Mission of St. Mary among the Potawatomes, seventy-five miles inland.

At my return in St. Louis in August, I visited several of the eastern cities — Buffalo, Rochester, Albany, Boston,

<sup>4</sup> The head chief of the Blackfeet is named Apistotoko, or "Father of a Large Family." He is a remarkable and most exceptional type. The countenance of this savage is almost square; it has something of the lion in it. Apistotoko wears a vest. His head is surmounted with a sort of turban adorned with plumes. He is armed with a shield and a short sabre, larger at the point than at the guard, and ending in a half-circle.— *Author's Note.*

New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and returned to St. Louis by the same route. Whilst in Washington I heard the roar of the cannon at the battle of Antietam.

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University of St. Louis, March 26, 1864.<sup>5</sup>

*Dear and Respectable Doctor:*

I come to fulfill my promise and give you my little story of my last mission and long excursion among the wandering tribes of the upper plains of the Missouri, in the Territory of Nebraska and in the eastern portion of the great new Territory of Idaho, or the Region of Flowers.<sup>6</sup> Idaho lies north of the Territories of Utah and Colorado and west of Nebraska. It covers four degrees of latitude, from 41° to 45° in its eastern half and from 42° to 46° in its western half, and 13° of longitude, from 104° to 117°.

My mission was not as fortunate, nor its fruits as abundant, as I wished, owing to the great and unhappy war waged by the numerous nation of the Sioux, which numbers 30,000 to 40,000 souls in its various bands. They are scattered over a vast territory, stretching from the Upper Mississippi on the east to the Black Hills [of Wyoming] on the west, and from the forks of the Platte river on the south to the Mine-Wakan or Devil's lake, in latitude 48°, on the north.

I had the consolation, notwithstanding, of conferring the holy sacrament of baptism on nearly 500 persons, most of them little innocents, the sick in danger of death, or savages greatly advanced in age. A number died during my stay among them, and had the happiness to obtain the favors of their regeneration in God. Let me add here my little

<sup>5</sup> "Letter to Father Terwecoren, S. J., copied for the album of my friend, Dr. Linton" [p. 61 *et seq.*]. From the French.

<sup>6</sup> Idaho is a Shoshone word, signifying "the lustrous rim shown by the snowy peaks as the sun rises behind and over them."

tribute of gratitude to the ladies of St. Louis and Philadelphia, who have contributed so charitably to the needs of my mission. Besides their pious donations of money and of chaplets, medals and images, they procured for me about 1,000 little shirts and dresses, the work of their own hands, for the infants to be newly baptized. The very sincere and genuine joy of the poor Indian mothers was shown in their happiness at being able to dress their children, in order to present them decently on this solemn occasion. Their distinguished charity will without doubt obtain the blessing of heaven, for it is written "*Quod uni ex minimis meis fecistis, mihi fecistis, dicit Dominus.*"

The unhappy war which is now raging so fiercely over all the extent of the Great Desert, east of the Rocky Mountains, has, like so many other Indian wars, been provoked by numerous injustices and misdeeds on the part of the whites, and even of agents of the Government. For years and years they have deceived the Indians with impunity in the sale of their holdings of land, and afterward by the embezzlement, or rather the open theft, of immense sums paid them by the Government in exchange therefor. The Indians, driven to extremity, after being swindled and robbed through a long series of years, and without being able to obtain any justice against their oppressors, utter at last their terrible war-cry against the whole race of the enemy; in their own words, they "thirst for blood," "dig up the tomahawk," "raise the warclub," "prepare eagle feathers to decorate their hair" (every feather standing for a scalp taken).

For two years the Sioux have been ranging the frontiers of Minnesota, the Missouri and the interior of the great plains in search of victims to sate their terrible and brutal vengeance; without regard either to age or to sex, they massacre indiscriminately all the whites that come to their hand. Over 800 victims are reckoned already as having fallen beneath their barbarous blows since the beginning of hostilities.

This war, according to the reports, has already cost the Government over \$20,000,000. The speculators, contractors and *ejusdem generis* of the region will do what they are able to protract this unlucky war, because it is so much money in their pockets. I speak of this to give an idea of the cause of this war and of its terrible consequences. Last year thirty-seven prisoners were hung in Minnesota — of this number, thirty-four asked and received baptism at the hands of a priest, [Ravoux] who was fortunately in the neighborhood. All the hostile tribes of the Sioux are still plunged in the ignorance of paganism.

On the 9th of last May I left St. Louis, accompanied by two Italian Brothers destined for the mountain missions. Our steamboat trip was pleasant and fortunate. Every day I had the consolation and happiness of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the mass in my little stateroom. Everywhere, at the various posts along the river where the boat stopped, I was received with kindness and respect by all the tribes, eager to hear the word of the Lord. I employed all these precious moments, whether by day or by night, in instructing them and regenerating in the holy waters of baptism the many little ones that they made haste to bring me.

Among the principal tribes that I met along the Missouri were various bands of Sioux, Assiniboins, Crows, Gros-ventres of the Prairie, Piegans and the three joined nations, the Mandans, Aricaras and Minnetarees, forming a single village of about 3,000 souls. The text of Jeremiah may well be applied to them: "*Parvuli petierunt panem, et non erat qui frangeret eis.*" For years these poor savages have been asking persistently for the help of missionaries.

In this water-journey of 2,400 miles, we met no obstacle whatever, neither from the enemies that infested the country, nor from the numerous snags, sawyers, and sand-bars which abound in the river throughout its length. The heat was often very great, even stifling, and more than once the wind was like the sirocco of Africa. The Fahrenheit

thermometer marked more than 100° of heat on several occasions. The water was so low that the captain found himself under the hard necessity of putting all his ninety passengers and all his cargo (200 tons) ashore in the forest that covers the mouth of Milk river, 300 miles distant from his destination, Fort Benton. This was on the 29th of June.

Every passenger chose a spot for himself in the forest and bestowed himself as best he could. General Harney had made me a present of his big camp tent before I left St. Louis; I had my little chapel, my little kitchen, the necessary bedding and provisions, and in less than an hour, with the help of the two brothers, we were properly established, under the shade of some big cottonwoods.

Here we were visited by a great number of savages, Crows and Grosventres of the Prairies. On the 4th of July, as the camp was making ready to celebrate the great day of American Independence, we had an alarm, and escaped a great danger as if by a miracle. A numerous party of hostile Sioux, of some 600 warriors, discovered our camp and attempted an attack. Two of our men were wounded; one received two arrows, in the fleshy parts of the arm and thigh, and the other was shot in the body with an arrow that went in up to the feather. Immediately every man seized his arms and made ready for a desperate defense, with the chances plainly against us, by reason of our small number.

Without thinking long of the danger, but full of trust in God and in the good prayers of a great number of little children, of my brothers in Jesus Christ and of many pious souls, who had promised me their assistance, by their pious remembrance, during all the time of my mission — I went out to meet the scouts of the hostile band. Fortunately, I was recognized, and they expressed their astonishment by cries and gestures. One of the first "partisans" who took my hand exclaimed "This is the Black-robe who saved my sister." It was the son of Red Fish, head chief of the

Ogallalas, the facts of whose case I have related in the *Western Missions and Missionaries*. This meeting was truly providential. I talked to him and his companions for about an hour. On leaving them I made them a little present of coffee, sugar and crackers, and I saw them depart with no further thought of attacking our camp.

Other travelers were less fortunate than we. Several steamboats that left St. Louis at about the same time as ours had to withstand sundry attacks from the savages, in which they lost several men. One large keelboat was sunk and all its crew destroyed. We understood better then that the war-cry was really ringing all along that river, over which our passage had been so quiet and peaceful.<sup>7</sup>

Let me add here a word concerning the Sioux of the Missouri river. Their habitations or buffalo-skin lodges number 3,000, each of which shelters eight to ten individuals, one-fifth of whom may be considered able to bear arms; they can consequently furnish 5,000 to 6,000 warriors. Such is the fresh enemy that the Americans have drawn upon themselves by their numerous injustices. Volumes would be needed to contain them all — at present the hearts of the Sioux are full of vengeance and urge them to turbulence and carnage.

After a wait of four weeks at the mouth of Milk river — after having had my body poisoned and bloated by a plant, commonly called *l'herbe à la puce* (the *Rhus Toxicodendron* of the botanists) with which the soil of the forest was cov-

<sup>7</sup> The perils of navigation on this river in 1863 can hardly be overstated. The Sioux tribes were uncompromisingly hostile. General Sibley was carrying his successful campaign from Minnesota to the Missouri. General Sully was moving up the east bank of the Missouri with a large force. The most constant vigilance was required by the boats to get through at all. A Mackinaw boat containing twenty-one men and three women was attacked at the mouth of Apple creek just before General Sibley arrived there and all the passengers killed. Captain La Barge with the *Robert Campbell* lost three men near Fort Berthold. Father De Smet does not represent the situation as bad as it actually was.

ered — at last, on the 30th of July, we saw a long train of wagons arrive from Benton, to transport the freight of the boat. The good Fathers of the Mission of St. Peter, among the Blackfeet, sent me a comfortable conveyance for the journey, and I took possession of it with the two Brothers.

A journey of 300 miles, with carts loaded with 5,000 to 6,000 pounds, through the midst of a wilderness, where grass had almost entirely disappeared, by reason of the great drought of the spring and summer— for not a drop of water had fallen in months — where all the rivers were dry, leaving only here and there a little pool of stagnant salty water — altogether, this passage was no small affair for the travelers, and for their horses and oxen as well; the whole region bore the imprint of desolation.

We encamped every evening beside one or several of these water holes, which supplied us with fish in abundance. Our cattle and horses scattered over a vast expanse, to graze on the dry and scanty herbage. By night we formed a corral, or circle of wagons and carriages, wherein to keep the animals in safety, protected against attacks from horse-thieves, whether white or Indian, by whom this region is infested. By the way our hunters raised from time to time buffalo, elk, deer, bighorn, beaver, prairie chickens, wild ducks and geese, furnishing us more or less our portion of fresh meat. We crossed three branches of Milk river, the *divière au François* [Willow creek?], the Beaver and the *Sureau* [White Horse creek?], the Marias and Teton rivers, tributaries of the Missouri, and passed below the Little Rocky and Bear Paw Mountains, two isolated chains standing in the plains, east of Benton.

After a somewhat painful journey, we arrived at Fort Benton on the day of the glorious Assumption of the Holy Virgin. There I had the great consolation of meeting Father Imoda, of the Mission of St. Peter, who had come thither to see me. We tarried here several days, to recover from our fatigue as well as to instruct and baptize a goodly number of Crow or Absaroka children. They reached the

fort at about the same time as ourselves, having come to exchange their peltries for such things as they needed. The Mission of St. Peter is situated on the Missouri ten miles above the Great Falls, and seventy-five miles from Benton.

I had thus far fulfilled the wishes of my superiors; I had brought the two Italian Brothers to the first Rocky Mountain mission. My own principal object was a missionary visit to the wandering tribes of the plains; this I had accomplished only in part. When I left St. Louis, I had intended to see a very large number of Indians during the summer and fall, but local conditions and the dangers of the cruel Si<sup>oux</sup> war, had absolutely blocked my plan. The contagion of this war had spread to the upper tribes of the Sioux, who had hitherto been at peace with the whites. The reports that reached us every day, of robberies and massacres committed by the Indians of the plains, on one hand — and on the Salt Lake route by marauders and murderers of another species, the off-scourings of civilization, living by robbery and assassination on the unhappy travelers whom they meet — caused me to take the resolution of returning to St. Louis by the Pacific Ocean. That is not only the safest route, but the most prompt, with its regular line of steamships, by way of the Isthmus of Panama and Aspinwall.



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LIFE, LETTERS AND TRAVELS OF FATHER PIER



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