

PP 30 Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon and the Northwest by The Most Rev. F.N. Blanchet. Ferndale, Wash 1910.

The true name of our river.

It is fit to explain here why the name of our river is called Wallamette, rather than Wallamet or Willamette, as many call it now. The reason is obvious: It is because Wallamette is the true Indian name whereas Wallamet and Willamette are but corrupted and fabricated ones of modern date. Proofs are not wanting to show that from 1812 to 1842 the principal persons in the country either American of Astor and Hunt's expedition or the North West and Hudson Bay Companies always spelled the name with an "a" in the first syllable and a "tte" in the last one thus: Wallamette. The syllable "mette" not to be pronounced "met" as in the French word bouquet; but as "mette" in the word gazette. It was thus spelled by the gentlemen of the H.B. Co, Dr John McLaughlin, James Douglas and Peter Ogden when the Methodist, Presbyterian ministers, Catholic missionaries and many other American citizens arrived here in 1834, 35, 36, 38 and 40. Hence the numerous disciples who adopting the name of our river as spelled by them, made a faithful use of it before 1840, and long after 1842, and even as far down as 1848 and as even to 1859, because convinced of its being the genuine and all that, notwithstanding the strong prevailing use of the spurious one of Willamette. Witness the following instances:

(See Typscript of Blanchet.)

Rogue Indians. Rogue River.

Historical Sketches of the Catholic Church in Oregon and the Northwest  
by the Most Rev. F.N. Blanchet. Ferndale, Wash, 1910. pp 35

..the brigade of the South (H. Bay Co.) ..in Southern Oregon  
it had to pass through a very warlike , wicked and treacherous race of  
Indians, waiting in ambuscade for the purpose of robbing and killing  
animals and men, on all occasions. Hence the name Les Coquins<sup>s</sup>  
The Rogues, given to them and La Riviere aux Coquins, the Rogue river,  
given to the country by the men of the brigade.

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Historic Sketches  
of the  
Catholic Church  
in  
Oregon  
and the  
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by  
Most Rev. F.N. Blanchet

Everndale, Wash  
1910



# Historical Sketches

of

## The Catholic Church in Oregon During the Past Forty Years 1838-1878

These sketches appeared originally in the Portland, Oregon, Catholic Sentinel in 1878. They were subsequently published in book form. This second edition has been corrected by the author, the Most Rev. Francis Norbert Blanchet, DD, First Archbishop of Oregon, before his death which occurred June 18, 1883.

### Sketch 1

(Published February 7th, 1878)

The history of the Catholic Church—even in the most remote regions where its benign influence is felt—possesses great interest not only for those who belong to "the household of the Faith" but moreover to everyone interested in the history of civilization and Christianity. Nations have their religious historical aspect as well as those better known and more studied chapters pertaining to secular advancement, yet, whilst historians love to record the triumphs which mark the pathway of the pioneers of the forest, they are very reticent regarding the labor, the trials and heroism displayed by the pioneers of the Cross. Yet these heroes of heaven-born Faith—armed with no weapons save the sign of man's redemption, and bearing aloft the standard of Christianity—penetrated into the remotest recesses of the earth, guided by the unerring voice of God who calls them to take up their cross and follow Him, until His precepts become known throughout the world even "from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same."

It is our pleasant duty, then, to place before our readers a few glimpses of the toils and trials which the pioneers of the Cross endured in their early struggles to plant the seeds of Christianity in the great Northwest, and in doing so we feel that every Catholic who peruses these sketches will treasure in his heart a grateful remembrance for those whose names will be inscribed in the niche of immortality so deservedly accorded by faithful Catholics to the apostles of the Cross.

The world has its heroes, but to the missionaries of the everlasting Gospel must be assigned a far higher glory, because they are the heralds of a King whose footstool is the universe! It is in His service that deeds of heroism are performed which make all wordly actions pale into utter insignificance. The hero of the world displays his valor for earthly glory alone, whilst the missionary of the Cross is animated by the highest and holiest aspirations that can illumine the soul--the hope of enjoying with God the eternal reward promised to those who scatter the seeds of Faith among the tribes and people who are without the knowledge of the true God.

This, then, was the high and ennobling mission in which the pioneers of the Cross in Oregon engaged when they undertook to cross the almost trackless plains which then separated the Atlantic from the Pacific, and, as we follow them through their long and arduous journey, let us not forget to chant a requiem over the graves of those who have passed to their reward, whilst we accord to those who are still engaged in God's service that homage so justly accorded to venerable age, holiness of office and sanctity of life.

#### The First Catholics in Oregon.

When the renowned Jesuit missionary and subsequent martyr to the Faith--Father Isaac Jogues--first planted the seeds of Faith among the Iroquois Indians on the banks of the Mohawk in 1642, he little thought the grain of mustard-seed thus sown would eventually grow



into a great tree whose branches would reach from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But, when we reflect that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" we need not wonder at such a miraculous manifestation of God's will, and the mutilated hands and tortured limbs of that suffering missionary were accepted by Heaven as so many holocausts offered up for the propagation of the Faith throughout every portion of the American continent.

Another element of population through whose presence in Oregon the Catholic creed was propagated was the Canadian voyageurs, large numbers of whom were engaged to accompany the several expeditions of Lewis and Clark in 1805, John Jacob Astor in 1810 and that of Capt. Hunt in 1811. In Astor's expedition there were thirteen Canadians nearly all of whom were Catholics, and many of these pioneers afterwards settled in the Willamette (originally called Wallamette) valley where in 1838 still resided Michael Laframboise, Stephen Lucier, Louis Labonte and Joseph Gervais. Capt. Hunt's expedition having encountered great hardships on the route across the plains, many of the members deserted from its ranks and remained among the Indians; this fact will serve to account for the presence of a number of Iroquois Indians who were found among the Flatheads in 1816. Large numbers of Canadians and Iroquois Indians were also engaged in the service of both the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company as traders and trappers at their different stations west of the Rocky Mountains. These hardy pioneers led a roaming life, but true to their early education amidst all the scenes of savage life through which they passed, they never forgot their faith, but on every occasion, when danger threatened them, they sought the God of salvation in prayer. In this manner the Indians, by whom they were surrounded, received the first knowledge of the white man's God," and through the Catholics they also learned of the Black-gown long years before they were visited by a priest. To the Canadians and Iroquois



therefore, is due the honor of opening the way for the Catholic missionary in Oregon.

#### The first Colonists in Oregon

In 1824 Dr. John McLaughlin(sic) chief ~~Factor~~ Factor of the Hudson Bay Co.'s posts, with head-quarters at Vancouver, Washington territory, where a fort was erected that year, was appointed governor of the Hudson Bay Co.'s posts. He was one of "nature's noblemen," in every sphere of life. Of commanding presence, strict integrity, sound judgment and correct principles of justice, no man was better qualified for the position he occupied as the father and friend of both the Indians and the whites who then jointly occupied the Pacific Northwest. Dr. McLaughlin was the arbiter to whom both whites and Indians looked for the settlement of their differences, and the friend from whom they sought relief in all their difficulties. His ashes rest beneath the shadow of the cathedral cross of Oregon City where he died in 1857. He was originally a member of the Anglican church, but was converted by Archbishop Blanchet in 1842 and ever after a most exemplary Catholic. May his soul rest in peace.

Under the impartial supervision of this good and great man the business of the Hudson Bay Company ~~prospered~~ prospered amazingly; he preserved peace between the Indians and the employees of the company and established twenty-eight trading posts during the fourteen years he presided over the affairs of the corporation he so ably represented.

Under Dr. McLaughlin's direction a number of the employees of the company whose term of service had expired were supplied with provisions and farming utensils to enable them to settle in that portion of the Willamette valley, which has since been known as French Prairie, and which afterwards became the nucleus of a large and prosperous Catholic settlement. He also extended assistance to every immigrant whose necessities required it, and his good deeds have enshrined his name amidst the most honored of the pioneers of the Pacific coast.



In 1834 the first wave of immigration reached the shores of Oregon. These comprised a number of Methodist ministers sent out by the Board of Foreign Missions. In 1836 a number of Presbyterian ministers arrived, and the following year a second installment of Methodist preachers were sent thither in order to help the first under the ostensible purpose of securing ~~souls~~ souls for the Lord's vineyard, but in reality to secure large tracts of land, large bands of cattle and to enlarge their numerous commercial speculations. Again in 1838 the Presbyterian missionaries were reinforced so that, prior to the arrival of a Catholic Missionary in Oregon the sects were represented by twenty-nine regular preachers, besides a numerous retinue of agents, colporters, and other members-male and female. These forces were pretty well scattered over the country, the Methodists having establishments south of the French Prairie, in Marion county, and also at The Dalles in Wasco county. The Presbyterians were located at Wailatpu on the Walla Walla river among a portion of the Cayuse Indians and also at Lapwai on the Clearwater. Besides these, Mr. Deaver represented the Anglican church at Vancouver, as chaplain of the Hudson Bay co. so that the missionary field was well occupied prior to the advent of a Catholic priest and it is well to understand the situation so that the reader may better realize the amount of opposition which the pioneer missionaries of the Catholic Church had to encounter in their efforts to plant the Cross in Oregon.

Let us now pause for a while in our career (sic) after the cross-bearers of the west, whilst we learn from contemporary evidence the manner in which the sectarian missionaries preached the Gospel to the Indians whom they came to convert. The first Protestant missionaries left the eastern states amidst great eclat, under the impression that they were going to the Flathead Indians for the purpose of having them and all adjacent tribes take up the Bible as their rule of faith. But after a very brief trial, these gentlemen found the situation not



so congenial as they anticipated and they abandoned the Flatheads to their perfidious fate. Mr. Townshend, whose work on the Rocky Mountains is our authority on this point, says that when he traveled a few days in the company of these "missionaries," he soon discovered that their object in going west was not so much for the purpose of spreading Christianity among the Indians as it was "for the gratification of seeing a new country and participating in strange adventures." They candidly admitted to Mr. Townshend that the means of subsistence in a region so remote and so difficult of access were, to say the least, very doubtful. Hence, as these propagandists of Protestant error could not be assured of a well-stocked larder they quietly "folded their tents." and left the Flatheads in the midst of that pagan darkness in which they found them enshrouded. Little did these tourists think when there were those coming after them who would never forsake the mission given them from on high but who would say with St. Paul: "Even unto this hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted and have no fixed abode." (I-Cor. IV. 11.) These are the Catholic missionaries whose efforts we shall find crowned with success, so that the whole Flathead tribe of Indians embraced the Catholic faith, and are to-day among the most happy and prosperous people in the entire republic.

No "missionaries" were ever dispatched to represent the various sects in any land under more favorable auspices than were those ladies and gentlemen belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church who proffered their services to leave their eastern homes for the purpose of evangelizing the savage Indians amidst the "wilds" of Oregon. The history of that memorable band has been written by two of these missionaries in language more truthful than complimentary to their companions.

Daniel Lee and J.H. Frost were two of the evangelical elect who were sent to out to "bring the Indians to grave," and in their work



entitled "Ten Years in Oregon" they give us an ungiassed insight into the manner in which the Master's service was abandoned by these "missionaries," in order that they might enter into the slavery of Mammon. These gentlemen tell us that the Oregon mission involved an expenditure of forty-two thousand dollars in a single year, and no wonder, when there were sixty-eight persons connected with the "mission" each of them represented by a respectable array of figures on the yearly pay-roll.

## Sketch II

(Published February 14, 1878)

### Protestant Missionary Labors in Oregon.

The Methodists, Presbyterians and other sects as we have already seen, were represented in Oregon as early as 1834 by a corps of missionaries sufficient in number-if they only had a divine mission to sustain them throughout their labors--to convert all the Indians from Arizona to Alaska and Dr. Stephen Olin, LL.D, a Methodist bishop, tells us ~~why~~ that very few of the Indians ~~came~~ under the influence of their labor," and adds this rather damaging declaration; "The missionaries were, in fact, mostly engaged in secular affairs--concerned in claims to large tracts of land, claims to city lots, farming, merchandizing, blacksmithing, grazing, horsekeeping, lumbering and flouring. "We do not believe" continues Dr. Olin, "that the history of Christian missions exhibits another such spectacle," The good Doctor was evidently amazed at the transformation from missionaries of the Gospel into land-sharks and horse-jockeys. It is no wonder, then, that he tells us "the mission became odious to the growing population" and he concludes his evidence by asserting that "of all the Indians who had ever held relations of any kind with these men, none now remain" This is not very flattering testimony for the success of Protestant propagandists coming from a Protestant source; but "let the truth be



told though the heavens fall" was evidently a practical maxim in the mind of the Methodist Episcopal bishop we have quoted. Nor need we wonder that missionaries who traded in horseflesh and town lots and who had "cattle on thousand hills" should become "odious" to the settlers around them, whilst the Indians instead of seeking the light of the Gospel as enunciated by these holy horse-traders, sought rather to retire to their primitive wigwams amidst the solitude of the woods.

"where rolls the Oregon

And hear no sound save its own dashing."

than to encounter a civilization the very preachers of which sought first the kingdom of this world, and took the chances of "all things else" being added thereto. Rev. G. C. Nicolay, a minister of the church of England, visited this country in 1843 and has left his impressions of what he saw among the missionaries of the Willamette valley, in a work entitled "the Oregon Territory," which we have before us. He was evidently unbiased in his judgment and speaks his mind only because his experience had received a serious shock in the manner in which he found the so-called missionaries comporting themselves. Under the chapter devoted to "settlers in Oregon" this authority says with truth:-

"It seems but the right and proper order of things that the missionary in uncivilized lands should be the harbinger not only of the blessings of the Christian religions, but of civilization also and therefore that he should be followed, in his track by the settler and farmer, the mechanic and artisan, who obtain as the reward of their superior intelligence and knowledge the wealth and independence which in their own country their simple equality with others could not expect; and this is just, the benefit they confer is incalculable; it does not decrease its value that others in distant lands possess the same, but rather increases it as they means where they may be raised to the same eminence. Now though this is to be expected and desired, it has ever been thought a just ground of complaint against men whose lives are devoted to ~~occupations~~ the service of God and the spread of "His Gospel, if they let other occupations interfere with that which ought to be their primary one, to seek to make a "gain of godliness" and still more if the influence accorded to them, in consequence of their important duty and sacred office, be converted into an engine for political purposes or they teach other doctrine with respect to our neighbors than the words of the apostle-"Follow peace with all men." (Heb. XII, 14)

"In reviewing the history of the settlers of Oregon, all this will appear by their own showing too lie at the door of the American missionaries who have established themselves there; and the necessity for drawing



attention to it is this, that no satisfactory account of Oregon could be given without some notice of the Willamette settlement and certainly no true statement of affairs there can be given without these facts being referred to. In their settlements of Okanagan, Walla Walla, Cowlitz, their principal attention, as Lt. Wilkes testifies, is devoted to agriculture but only the Willamette they sink into political agents and would be legislators. This the history of that settlement will sufficiently evidence..."

"From this beginning the colony increased till when Lt. Wilkes visited it in 1841 it counted sixty families, who, he says, consisted of American missionaries, trappers and Canadians who were formerly servants of the Hudson's Bay Co. and that the origin of the settlement has been fairly stated, may be gathered from the conclusion he arrived at concerning it. All of them appeared to be doing well; but he was, he says, on the whole disappointed from the reports which had been made to me, not to find the settlement in a greater state of forwardness ~~considering~~ considering the advantages the missionaries had; thus making the prosperity and ~~advanced~~ advancement of the settlement depend in a great measure, if not entirely, upon them; but that their missionary intentions have merged in a great measure, in others, more closely connected with ease and comfort, is still more plainly evidenced by the following account given by him of the Wesleyan Mission there; "The lands of the Methodist Mission are situated on the banks of the Willamette river, on a rich plain adjacent to fine forests of oak and pine. They are about eight miles beyond the Catholic Mission in a southern direction. Their fields are well enclosed, and we passed a large one of wheat which we understood was half sown by the last year's crop which had been lost through neglect. The crop so lost amounted to nearly a thousand bushels, and it is supposed that this year's crop will yield twenty-five bushels to the acres. About all the premises of this mission there was ~~an~~ an evident want of the attention required to keep the things in repair, and an absence of neatness that I regretted much to witness. We had the expectation of getting in sight of the Indians, of God, but with the exception of four Indian servants, we saw none since leaving the Catholic mission. On inquiring I was informed that they had a school of twenty pupils some ten miles distant at the mill, that there were but few adult Indians in the neighborhood, and that their intention and principal hope was to establish a colony and by their example to induce white settlers to locate near them, over whom they trusted to exercise a moral and religious influence."

"At the mills, which were badly situated and managed, he saw twenty lay members of the mission under the charge of a principal and about twenty-five Indian boys, who he was told, were not in a condition to be visited or inspected. They were nearly grown up, ragged and half clothed and lounging about under the trees. He might well add, "their appearance was anything but satisfactory and I must own I was greatly disappointed," for I had been led to expect that order and neatness at least (he could scarcely have expected less) would have been found among them, considering the strong force of missionaries engaged here. From the number of persons about the premises this little spot wore the air and stir of a new secular settlement. It was intended to be the home and location of the mission, and the missionaries had made individual selections of lands to the amount of one thousand acres each, in prospect of the whole country falling under the American dominion.

Holding these views and with such interests to incite them, it is not surprising to find these missionaries among the first to excite political changes and to introduce the ~~consequent~~ consequent discussions and dissensions."



Such is the character of the work inaugurated by missionaries who left the Atlantic slope under the hallucination that they were called to preach salvation to those that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, but those trading propensities overcame their religious zeal, until finally the cause of Christianity was wrecked on the shoals of self-aggrandizement.

The foregoing extracts, taken entirely from impartial Protestant sources, will give the general reader a very lucid view of the "severe trials" which the early Protestant missionaries underwent in their so-called "missionary labor" in Oregon, but we have by no means, exhausted the evidence extant on that score as Hon. Alexander Simpson, in his work entitled "the Oregon Territory" tells us, in his ~~own words~~ ~~entitled~~ allusion to the Methodist and Catholic missions in the Willamette valley, that "the latter consisted of about one hundred families, a very regular congregation ministered to by Mgr. Planchet, a most estimable and indefatigable priest of the Roman Catholic faith," whilst the Methodist Mission, he adds, consisted of four families, a clergyman, a surgeon, a school-master and an agricultural overseer." Evidently the temporal welfare of the well-fed Protestant missionaries was far more important in their estimation than any spiritual comforts which they pretended to extend to the Indians.

### Sketch III

(Published February 21st, 1878)

Origin of the Canadian Mission in Oregon, before that of the Flatheads.

In the meantime the Canadians who had settled in the Willamette valley began to pine for the presence of a priest in their midst. The nearest bishop to whom they could apply was the venerable prelate of Red River; they sent him two petitions, one dated July 3rd, 1834 and the other February 23rd, 1835, ~~ending~~ earnestly praying for some priests. In answering them, July 8th, 1834, and the other February 23rd, 1835



earnestly praying for some priests. I ~~One~~ (sic) in answering them July 8th, 1835 and the bishop addressing the governor requests him to deliver them his letter. Those documents are too precious and interesting to be omitted. Therefore we insert them.

The Bishop of Juliopolis to Dr. John McLaughlin. Red River, June 6, 1835

To Dr. John J. McLaughlin.

Sir: I have received last winter and this spring a petition from certain free families settled on the Willamette river requesting that missionaries be sent to instruct their children and themselves. My intention is to do all I can to grant them their request as soon as possible. I have no priest disposable at Red River but I am going this year to Europe and I will endeavor to procure those free people and the Indians afterwards, the means of knowing God. I send them with this letter and answer to the petition which I have received; I request you to deliver it to them; I add some catechisms which might be useful to those people, if there is any one among them that can read. Those people say they are prospected by you. Please induce them to do their best, and to deserve by good behavior to derive benefit from the favor they implore.

I have the honor to be sir,

X J.N. Provencher

Bishop of Juliopolis

The Bishop of Juliopolis to all the Families settled in the Willamette Valley and other Catholics beyond the Rocky Mountains, Greetings:

I have received, most beloved brethren, your two petitions, one dated July 3d, 1834 and the other February 23, 1835. Both call for missionaries to instruct your children and yourselves. Such a request from persons deprived of all religious attendance, could not fail to touch my heart, and if it was in my power, I would send you some this very year. But I have no priest disposable at Red River; they must be obtained from Canada or elsewhere, which requires time. I will make it my business in a journey which I am going to make this year in Canada and in Europe. If I succeed in my efforts I will soon send you some help.

My intention is not to procure the knowledge of God to you and your children only, but also to the numerous Indian tribes among which you live. I exhort you meanwhile to deserve, by a good behavior that God may bless my undertaking. Raise your children and the best way you can. Teach them what you know of religion. But remember my dear brethren, that the proper means of procuring to your children and your wives some notion of God and the religion you profess is to give them good example, by a life moderate and exempt from the great disorders which exist among the Christians beyond the mountains. What ideas do you give of God and of the religion you profess to the Indians, especially, who see in you, who are calling yourselves servants of that great God, disorders which equal and perhaps surpass their own? You thereby prejudice them against our holy religion which you violate when this same religion, which condemns all crime, shall be preached to them, the Indians will object, the wicked conduct of those who profess it as a protest not to embrace it. On receiving this letter which appraises you that probably you will soon receive the priest whom you seem to pray for earnestly, renounce then at once sin; begin to lead a life more conformable to your belief in order that, when the



missionaries will arrive among you, they will find you disposed to avail yourselves of the instructions and other religious assistance which they shall bring you. I wish God may touch your hearts and change them. My greatest consolation would be to learn hereafter that as soon as this letter was read to you, you began to pay a little more attention to the great affair of your salvation.

Given at St. Boniface of Red River on the 8th day of June, 1835. X J.N. Provencher, Bishop of Juliopolis

#### Demand of a Passage for Two Priests

The only means of communication from Canada to Oregon being in the hands of the Hudson Bay Co. by sending every year a number of canoes ~~laden~~ laden with goods and conducted by a number of Canadian voyageurs the bishop of Juliopolis made an application for the passage of two priests in one of the canoes to Oregon, with the design of forming an establishment in the Willamette valley. To this last point the Governor and Committee in London objected, but would grant a passage on the condition that the priests would form their establishment on the

Cowlitz river. The bishop of Juliopolis having complied with the suggestion, Sir George Simpson wrote to the archbishop of Quebec, that if the two priests would be ready at Lachine to embark for the interior about the 25th of April, a passage would be afforded them.

The following is the correspondence on the subject:

Letter of Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson Bay Co. in the Interior to his Lordship the Archbishop of Quebec.

Hudson's Bay House, London,  
February 17, 1838

"My Lord: I yesterday had the honor of receiving a letter from the bishop of Juliopolis, dated Red River, October 13th, 1837, wherein I am requested to communicate with your Lordship on the subject of sending two priests to the Columbia river for the purpose of establishing a Catholic mission in that part of the country.

"When the bishop first mentioned the subject his view was to form the mission on the bank of the Willamette, a river falling in the Columbia from the south. To the establishing of a mission there, the governor and committee in London and the Council in Hudson's Bay had a decided objection, as the sovereignty of that country is still undecided; but I last summer, intimated to the bishop that if he would establish the Mission on the bank of the Cowlitz river or on the Cowlitz Portage, falling into the Columbia from the northward, and give his assurance that the missionaries would not locate themselves on the south side of the Columbia river, but would form their establishment where the Co's representatives might point out as the most eligible situation on the north side, I would recommend the Governor and Committee to



afford a passage to the priests, and such facilities towards the successful accomplishment of the object in view as would not involve any great inconvenience or expense to the Co's service.

"By the letter received yesterday, already alluded to, the bishop enters fully into my views and expresses his willingness to fall in with my suggestions. That letter I have laid before the Governor and Committee, and am now instructed to intimate to your Lordship that if the priests will be ready at Lachine to embark for the interior about the 25th of April, a passage will be afforded them, and on arrival at Fort Vancouver measures will be taken by the Co's representatives there to facilitate the establishing of the Mission, and the carrying into effect the objects therefore generally.

I have the honor to be my Lord,  
Your Lordship's most obedient servant,  
George Simpson.

#### Appointment of Missionaries

The archbishop of Quebec had no sooner received the foregoing letter than he immediately gave the charge of the Mission of Oregon to Rev. Francis Norbert Blanchet, then cure dea Cedres, district of Montreal, by sending him letters of Vicar General under the date of April 17th, 1838, and instructions bearing the same date. His companion, Rev. Modeste Demers, who was already at Red River, was to be named by the bishop of Juliopolis. These instructions were as follows:

Instructions given to Very Rev. F.M. Blanche, and Rev. M. Demers, appointed missionaries for that part of the diocese of Quebec which is situated between the Pacific Ocean and the Rocky Mountains

April 17th, 1838

My Rev. Fathers;

You must consider as the first object of your mission to withdraw from barbarity and the disorders which it produces, the Indians scattered in that country.

Your second object is, to tender your services to the wicked Christians, who have adopted there the vices of Indians, and live in licentiousness and the forgetfulness of their duties.

Persuaded that the preaching of the Gospel is the surest means of obtaining these happy results, you will lose no opportunity of inculcating its principles and maxims, either in your private conversations or public instructions.

In order to make yourselves sooner useful to the natives of the country where you are sent, you will apply yourselves as soon as you arrive, to the study of the Indian languages, and will endeavor to reduce them to regular principles, so as to be able to publish a grammar after some years of residence there.

You will prepare for baptism, with all possible expedition, the



infidel women who live in concubinage with Christians, in order to ~~establish~~ substitute lawful marriages for these irregular unions.

You will take a particular care of the Christian education of children, reestablishing for that purpose, schools and catechism classes in all the villages which you will have the occasion to visit.

In all the places remarkable either for their position or the passage of the voyagers, or the gathering of Indians, you will plant crosses, so as to take possession of those various places in the name of the Catholic religion... Given at Quebec on the 17th of April, 1838 X J seph Signay, Bishop of Quebec.

#### Sketch IV

(Published February 28, 1878) Journey of the Missionaries from Lachine to Fort Vancouver.

Accompanied by the chief trader Hargrave, Vicar General F.N. Blanchet embarked in one of the light bark canoes carrying the express of the Hudson's Bay Company, leaving Montreal on Thursday, May 3rd, 1838, reaching Fort Vancouver on the 24th of the following November. The journey from Lachine, to Red River (2,100 miles) was made in canoes, with occasional portages, in thirty-three days. The journey from Red River to the Rocky Mountains (2,025 mi.) occupied eighty-four days, including detentions. The river route was made in eleven light barges and the land-trip occupying five days, was made on horse-back. Horses were also used in making the tedious trip across the Rocky Mountains, from Jasper's House to Boat Encampment or Big Bend of the Columbia river. This trip occupied nine days, a band of seventy-two horses being provided for the use of the company. It took six days to make the ascent to the plains on the Pacific side, but the missionaries were well repaid for the toils they underwent in the grandeur of the scenery that surrounded them at every step. The remainder of the journey, from Big Bend to Fort Vancouver, about 1,200 miles, was made in light boats down the Columbia river.

Vicar General Blanchet, having passed 35 days at Red River, took his departure in company with Rev. Modeste Demers on July 10th, stopping en route at Norway House and Forts Constant, Cumberland, Carleton, Pitt and Edmonton on the Saskatchewan, and Fort Assiniboine and Jasper's House on the Athabaska river. During this journey the missionaries



baptized one hundred and twenty-two on the Eastern slope and fifty-three on the Western. After passing the summit of the Rocky Mountains the missionaries stopped at the House of the Lakes, and Forts Colville O'Kanagan(sic) and Walla Walla, at each of which immense crowds of Indians assembled in order to behold the Black gowns whose presence they so long waited for. During this long and tedious trip the missionaries had the happiness of celebrating Mass and delivering an instruction every Sunday, and on every day at which they adjourned at the Forts on their route. By this means the consolations of our holy religion were bestowed on many Catholics who for years had been strangers to the presence of a priest.

#### Consecration of the Rocky Mountains to God. First Mass in Oregon.

As the summit of the Rocky Mountains was to be reached and crossed Wednesday, the 10th of October, the missionaries thought it incumbent upon them to celebrate Mass, and pronounce the glorious words which make the God-man descend upon earth, in thanksgiving for God's protection and favors, and to consecrate, in a special manner to their Author, these sublime Rocky Mountains which by their grandeur and sublimity seem anxious to correspond to the invitation of Holy Scripture, "O ye mountains and hills, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all forever." (Dan III, 15) The country or region of the Rocky Mountains appeared as a vast sea of numberless isolated high mountains, and abrupt peaks of all shapes where the eye of the traveler fancied seeing here and there perfect towers, beautiful turrets, strong castle, walls and fortifications of all kinds; as well as barren heights which form the base of higher hills and mountains raising majestically their lofty heads to heaven. Magnificent indeed is the spectacle displayed before the eyes of the voyagers in the greatness of the gigantic nature where the hand of the eternal was pleased to retrace the image of His creative power. Early on that day, therefore at 3 a.m., the vicar general celebrated



the holy sacrifice of Mass to consecrate to their Creator these mountains and abrupt peaks whose prodigious heights ascend towards heaven to celebrate in such beautiful language the praise of the Almighty.

It was on Saturday, the 13th of October, a day dedicated to the Immaculate Mother of God, that, being at the western foot of the most lofty mountains, the two missionaries began to tread beneath their feet the long desired land of Oregon; that portion of the vineyard allotted them for cultivation. Filled with joy they retired a short distance from the place where the caravan was resting on the bosom of a beautiful prairie, and there fell on their knees, embraced the soil, took possession of it, dedicated and consecrated their persons, soul and body to whatever God would be pleased to require of them for the glory of His holy Name, the propagation of his kingdom and the fulfillment of His will. The caravan joyfully reached Big Bend towards the evening. The fact of finding there but two boats instead of four required greatly checked the joy of all. The captain of the expedition decided that one third of the party should remain until the rest having reached the House of the Lakes one of the boats would return to their relief.

The following day (Oct. 14th, 1838) being Sunday, it was on that day that the holy sacrifice of the Mass was offered for the first time in Oregon at Big Bend on the banks of the dangerous and perilous Columbia. At this great act of religion, performed by Rev. M. Demers, the two being much moved, consecrated themselves to the Queen of angels, imploring her special protection for the rest of the voyage. The boats being laden and ready and the last prayer made on the shore, the two missionaries shook hands with their dear companions, whom, alas, they were to see no more, and started at 1 p.m. on the turbulent waters of the upper Columbia. The range of mountains lowering, as it were, amphitheatrically, continues from Big Bend to the lakes. The days are short in so deeply embanked a river which runs fifteen miles an hour, in a succession of rapids or rather cascades. The distance from



Big Bend to the House of the lakes is 165(sic) miles which were run in ten hours; two hours on the 14th, six on the 15th and two on the 16th of October.

The rapid of the Dalles of the Dead is a narrow channel turning nearly at right angles on the left rocky high bank. The boats must keep close to the point on the left bank in order to avoid being rushed into the infuriate waves. That dangerous rapid was run down safely on the 15th, the boats being light with baggage and passengers, and well managed by eight men, six at the oars, one at the stern and the other at the prow with long and large paddles used as rudders.

Eighteen days at the house of the Lakes.

First missionary labors in Oregon.

Loss of twelve lives.

The boats were no sooner arrived at the House of the Lake that one of them was unloaded and sent back to the relief of the party left behind. The House of the Lakes being still in construction the missionaries encamped as usual under their tents. The first week was spent in prayer, celebration of the Mass, teaching the Indians, singing canticles and evening exercises. The Indians of the Lakes soon came to visit the priests ~~and~~ anxious as they were to see and hear the black-gowns so often spoken of by the Canadians. They were found to be of a mild, peaceable character and well disposed to receive the words of salvation. They being the first sheep of the vast fold entrusted to their care, the missionaries took pleasure in instructing them, speaking of God, of the creation, of the fall of angels and man, and of the Redemption ~~obtained~~ by the Son of God. The Indians listened with attention, assisting at Mass with awe; and before the return of the boat, they brought their children(17) to be baptized, regretting not to have the same happiness to make their hearts good. It was painful to the missionaries to leave them unbaptized.



When the day on which the boat was expected had passed without its arrival, a gloomy presentiment began to seize the hearts of all. It increased in intensity the following day. At last, on the 24th at the conclusion of Mass, a boat appeared afar off, half broken, coming in mourning without the usual joyful chant at the arriving. The men were hardly able to move their oars. As the boat approached all ran to the shore. At the sight of so few men, women and children, a heart rendering spectacle took place; an indescribable scene of desolation and shedding of tears began; cries and piercing lamentations were long heard and echoed by the neighboring mountains. For, alas, the boat had capsized, and out of twenty-six souls, twelve had perished.

At Big Bend the boat was found too much embarrassed with baggage; room was hardly left for passengers. At the dangerous Dalles, all went ashore with only a portion of the baggage. The boat started, struck a rock, filled but was brought on shore. Having been emptied and reloaded, the fur packages left in the bottom having got wet, rendered the boat heavier. The passengers embarked with great repugnance. On the next rapid the boat began to fill again. Then commenced a scene of desolation and dread with cries and screaming of women and children. The pilot commanded all to remain still as they were approaching the shore. But Mr. Wallace and English botanist, pulled off his coat, stood up, put one foot on the side of the boat and leaped into the water with his young wife; the boat lost its balance, and upset and of twenty-six struggling persons in the water, twelve lost their lives. Wallace and his wife in the number. Some reached the shore, others were saved on the keel of the boat which fortunately fastened itself on a rock three or four feet deep at the head of a rapid. This calamity happened in the dusk of the evening. The body of a child was found caught under the boat. Sad, long and excruciating was the night. The next day the boat having been repaired, the survivors continued their sorrowful journey.



## Sketch V

(Published March 7th, 1878)

Missionary Labors at Colville, O'Kanagan and Walla Walla.

As soon as the ill-fated boat had arrived and Indian canoe was dispatched to Colville for a boat and provisions which had become so scarce as to threaten starvation and oblige each to receive a daily allowance. The repaired boat was sent the following day to the scene of desolation to look for and bring down the bodies of the lost friends. I brought down only the bodies of three children to whom were given a solemn Christian burial. Wooden crosses were blessed and placed over their graves.

The express boat which had left for Colville on the 16th had returned the one sent for by an Indian express had also arrived with provisions; there were then two good boats. All being ready and the missionaries bidding adieu to the good Indians of the lakes, the caravan left on November 3rd the House of the Lakes where the last ten days of sojourning had been so sorrowful and reached Colville on the 6th. The express boat had announced the coming of the Blackgowns; the news had spread like lightning, hence the gathering there of the chiefs of five nations. As soon as they saw the boats coming they rushed to the shore and placing themselves in file, men, women and children, they begged to touch the hands of the priests where a ceremony took a long time. A large house having been placed at their disposal, they used it to assemble the Indians in, and gave them all the instruction they could, during the short time of four days they spent at this post.

Having baptized nineteen persons and celebrated Mass before the chiefs and their people who assisted at the sacred mysteries as if already fervent Christians, the missionaries left Colville on November the 10th and reached Fort O'Kanagan on the 13th, after having passed through many dangerous rapids, dalles and portages. During the twenty-four hours they remained at this post they had occasion to be convinced that the



Indians who frequented it needed only what is required in order to become good Christians. Fourteen baptisms were made and one Mass celebrated at this Fort. Leaving Fort Okanagan on November 14th, they reached Fort Walla Walla (Now Wallula) on Sunday morning, the 18th. During the twenty-four hours they remained, one Mass, and were visited by Walla Walla and Cayuse Indians, who having heard by the express of the coming of the priests, had come to see and hear them on their passage notwithstanding the contrary orders of the Head of the Wailatpu mission. Holy Mass was celebrated before the Indians, who assisted at it, struck with amazement. In so short a time the priests could give them but a short explanation of the most necessary truths of salvation.

As this is the closing chapter descriptive of the trip of the Missionaries across the plains, and as our recital hereafter will be mainly devoted to events and incidents which transpired during the residence of the missionaries in the Northwest, we think it desirable to insert the following interesting letter of his Grace, Most Rev. Francis Norbert Blanchet, then vicar general, to the archbishop of Quebec, describing in detail the daily incidents of the journey across the plains and the arrival of the missionaries at Vancouver.

Letter of Vicar General Blanchet to His Lordship Joseph Signay, Archbishop of Quebec, Giving an Account of the Journey of the Missionaries to Oregon.

Fort Vancouver, March 17, 1839

My Lord: 't is for me a very sweet and agreeable task to send to your Lordship news from the two missionaries whom, in your zeal for the salvation of the souls entrusted to your pastoral solicitude, you have sent to Oregon, to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord.

After numerous hardships and fatigues, dangers by land and water, in our journey across the continent, we have the pleasure, Rev. Demers and I, to announce with love and gratitude towards God and the blessed Virgin Mary, that we have reached happily the end of our voyage, yet



not without losing twelve of our companions, drowned in the Columbia river. Please join in our thanksgiving to God for the protection of His Providence over us.

As soon as we arrived, we went to work. The field is vast our occupations are numerous, I have scarcely time to write. But I know with what anxiety and interest your Lordship is expecting some notes regarding our journey, the country, the labors begun and the hopes given by the Oregon mission. May the information I am going to give satisfy your expectation and will the ardent desires which you incessantly feel for your flock.

I will begin with an account of my trip from Lachine to Red River (St. Bonifane) where I had to stop to receive the orders of Mgr. Provencher, bishop of Juliopolis, and to take along Rev. M. Demers my traveling companion, already there for a year. I left Montreal, Thursday, May 3rd, 1838. The 70 leagues from that city to Red River were traveled in 33 days, having arrived there on the 6th day of June, on ~~one~~ one of the Hudson's Bay Co's canoes, commanded by Mr. Hargrave, chief trader. The loaded canoes, ~~commanded by Mr. Hargrave, chief trader~~ which started some days after the light ones, ~~came~~ with a number of families, arrived three weeks after.

Everyone knows how dangerous this mode of traveling is. ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> spend days and often nights in an uncomfortable position; to undergo the inclemency of seasons, the gusts of wind and the torrential rains; to run down numberless rapids at the peril of one's life; or to travel on foot ~~along~~ portages through forests, rocks and ponds; to camp out in cold and damp ~~for~~ places; to devour in haste a scanty meal, badly prepared to stop at different posts, inhabited by white people and visited by the Indians for the administration of the sacraments, the visitation of the sick and the exhortation of poor sinners such was, my Lord, the life of the missionaries on their way to the far West.



For eight days we went up, Mr. Hargrave and I, the Ottawa river. We left it and went up another river to its source. That took us a whole day. After that came a portage, three miles in length, where is the summit of the lands dividing the waters of the Ottawa from those flowing into lake Nipissing. At the end of the portage we came down a little river in one day. We were then on lake Nipissing, which we crossed in twenty-four hours. After a short portage we began to go down French river, through which the lake discharges its waters into lake Huron; that also took us a whole day. The crossing of lake Huron to Sault Ste. Marie took us three days. From thence to Fort William on lake Superior, we ascended, for three days, the Tiministigouia river, up to a portage nine miles long, which is the height of lands and divides the waters running into lake Superior from those flowing into lake Winnipeg, and thence into the Hudson Bay. After that long march we embarked near its source, on the river Des Embarras, which flows into the Mille Lacs. We crossed the latter and also lake LaPluie before reaching the Fort of the same name. Our journey from the heights of lands to this post had lasted five days. It took us three days to go down the river La Pluie two days to cross lake Des Bois, three days to go down the Winnipeg, one day to cross lake Winnipeg, and another day to ascend Red River up to St. Boniface, the residence of the bishop of Juliopolis.

Our Canadian and Iroquois traveling companions were exhausted. It was the same with Mr. Hargrave and myself and that for good reasons, for very often we would leave our camp at one in the morning and encamp only at about 7 or 8 in the evening. Many times we were exposed to great dangers, in the middle of lakes, or in the coming down or going up rapids. The current used to set adrift our canoe on hidden rocks and once our small bark canoe was nearly dashed to pieces on one of these hidden rocks. The mournful crosses to be seen above and below the rapids are a sign of the dangers these places afford.

According to my calculation of the hours of traveling I counted



counted from Lachine to Matawan 115 leagues on the Ottawa; hence to Sault Ste. Marie 134; on lake Superior 140; from Fort Williams to the height of lands 56; hence to lake LaPluie Fort, 98; thence to Fort Alexander, down the Winnipeg river, 120; and at last from that place to St. Boniface, between 35 and 37; total 700 leagues, traveled in 488 hours or 33 days of forced marches.

At the extremity of lake LaPluie I met the worthy missionary of Sautruz, Rev. M. Belcourt, who was then visiting the camps of that nation. I crossed lake Winnipeg on the 5th of June, and on the 6th arrived at St. Boniface where I met Bishop Provencher, Rev. Thibeault and Rev. Demers, appointed to the mission of Oregon. Rev. Poiré, missionary in the White Horse Prairie, came two days after. Rev. Belcourt returned from his mission on a buffalo hunt. It was after his return that this gentleman went to Canada with Mr. Belcourt. Rev. Mayrand arrived on the 22nd.

It is easier to feel than express the joys and emotions, the souvenirs and hopes caused by the meeting of those zealous laborers in the vineyard of the Lord. This was the most numerous gathering of priests ever witnessed by the inhabitants of these remote regions. The mustard-seed was beginning to appear as a vigorous tree, already shadowing a multitude of souls drawn from the darkness of idolatry and transplanted in the kingdom of God; precious fruits of the evangelical zeal animating these missionaries. Happy the prognostics of a still richer harvest to be gathered.

Having spent five weeks in visiting all the missions of Red River we started Rev. Demers and I, on the 10th of July for our destination after having sang a high Mass in honor of St. Ann to ask from God the benediction of heaven on our journey; for we had to penetrate into a country never yet visited by a Catholic priest. The rivers, lakes mountains, prairies, forests and hills of Oregon would soon resound with the praises of the holy name of Jesus; the cross would be planted from



place to place, from shore to shore, over the thousand leagues we had yet to travel, and the word of Him who said that said sign would "attract all to Him." in the person of these poor wandering sheep to which we were sent. "What a joy! "What a sweet consolation for missionaries!

From St. Boniface we went, in seven days of dangerous navigation, to Norway House, a small fortress 130 leagues distant from our starting point, and 10 leagues from lake Winnipeg. The commanding chief Factor had the kindness to give us for lodging and chapel the apartments destined for the Governor of the company.

We spent there eight days, saying holy Mass, distributing catechisms, baptizing children and some adults, instructing and exhorting the whites and Indians at the Fort. We also performed two marriages there. On Sunday, the 22nd, there was a high Mass, vespers and two sermons to which some of the gentlemen and clerks of the company assisted. During this brief stay of eight days many small bands of travelers came from

York Factory, on Hudson's Bay, to Norway house, from whence they were all to start together to cross the mountains.

On the 25th of July everything was ready. The brigade assembled and began to march under the command of John Rowand, Esq. Chief Factor of the Company, a Catholic whose attention, kindness, and constant efforts to alleviate the fatigues and privations of the route we will never forget. The brigade consisted of eleven boats laden with merchandise a great number of hired men, women and children. Among the travelers were Messrs. Wallace and Banks, botanists, sent from England by a scientific society.

Having passed the head of lake Winnipeg the river Paskatchewan or St. Peter which we had to ascend for 37 days, appeared with the Grand rapid that requires a portage of everything. We crossed the lake de Travers, Bourbon, des Cedres and des Vases. On Sunday, August 15th we reached the little Fort Constant, built on the right shore. We traveled 93 leagues with oar, perch, sail and line, having been often obliged at the principal rapids, to unload our boats. We had baptized



on the way a child who died an hour later. Having that day sang high Mass in the presence of the Cris Indians of the neighborhood, who appeared to be well disposed to receive the seed of the Word of God, we started right away and arrived on the 7th at Fort Cumberland on the lake of the same name, 36 leagues from Fort Constant and on the 18th at Fort Carleton, 88 leagues from the last. There we performed 36 baptisms and 7 marriages. Among those baptized were the commander of the post, Mr. Patrick Small's family, composed of eight persons of whom three were adults. At Fort Pitt, 87 leagues farther we had 11 baptisms and at Fort Edmonton, also called Fort des Prairies, in charge of chief Factor John Howland, we had 39 baptisms of which 5 were adults, and three marriages.

This last fort whither we arrived on the 6th of September is 101 leagues distant from Fort Pitt, and amidst the Cris. It would be quite fit to become a station for a missionary who would understand these Indians' language. Meanwhile a priest could, in good weather, go on horseback across the prairies from Red River to Fort Carleton in 15 days, hence to Fort Edmonton in 12 days, allowing time to stop at every for along the road (Sis) His visit would do a great deal of good to the employees and to the poor Indians, with whom they trade in furs. On the 29th of September we had at Fort Edmonton a solemn Mass and vespers, and two sermons. On the 10th before leaving we blessed and planted a cross. This we did all along the road wherever we had said Mass either near the forts or on the shore, or in the interior along the road.

For six weeks we had followed the crooked course of the Saskatchewan. We had then to quite it and to change our small fleet for a caravan of 66 horses, in order to reach, by land, across forests, ponds, prairies, rivers, ditches and beaver dams, Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca, a distance of 34 leagues which required five days of fatiguing and dangerous walking. On September 16th we left Fort Assiniboine and



and began to struggle against the rapids and dangers of the Athabaska(st) which we ascended for 17 days. On the 28th we saw for the first time the imposing forms of the Rocky Mountains and were then 92 leagues from Fort Assiniboine. There were there 35 baptisms for the greatest part children of half breeds or free people, living in the woods as Indians and hunting the beaver. Holy Mass was celebrated on the opposite side of the river, far from the noise of Jasper's.

The Athabasca being no longer navigable we changed on the 5th our boats for a caravan of 72 horses, a great deal worse and more imperfect than those of Edmonton. These animals were easily frightened and throwing off horseman and baggage they would either start for the woods or run into ponds or mud holes. The organization was ~~difficult~~ difficult and the departure slow. We went along the right shore of the river which running in zigzags in a valley well timbered and bordered with high mountains produced high and long points that we had to cross straight over, in order to shorten the distance. We had to cross channels and sand bars; we traveled alongside of a lake at the head of which is the Prairie Campment, where we halted. We were three leagues from Jasper's house and had come there in four hours.

On the 6th we had to cross forests of thick woods and climb up hills and rocks dipping into the water. We had to pass on the side of these hills whence the eye would see with awe the yawning abyss. Woe to the rider whose horse would miss a single step. After having climbed very high rocks and traveled four leagues in 3 1-2 hours we camped opposite the rock called the Old Man.

On the 7th after two hours of march over a nice little prairie lightly covered with woods, on a level ground, we took breakfast in a fine prairie. We then went up and down 12 or 13 hills and rocks covered with woods. We crossed four little rivers, the Camp of the Cow, pretty groves of light woods and beautiful willows. Having walked seven leagues in 7 1-2 hours we camped near the south fork or branch of the Athabaska(sic) a place covered with burnt trees.



## Sketch VI

(Published March 14, 1878)

## Vicar General's Letter Concluded.

On the 8th the luggage and people were carried over, in a canoe which had been brought so far with infinite pains and labor from Jasper's.

The horses swam across. This branch of the river was a real torrent, 45 steps or yards wide. The southwestern branch is but 30 feet wide, we had to cross it on horseback from its right shore at a place called The Hole, where the horses lost footing for 18 feet; the baggage and horsemen did not get wet; as to those who were on foot they had to swim, holding the luggage or the horse's tail. Proceeding now along the shore, then on the top of high rocks, we met with many obstacles offered by high rocks, thick timber and fallen trees. A hill appeared; in order to facilitate its steep ascension, we climbed up in zig-zags. We had to dismount our horses in places where the horses had to jump or climb. From the top of this hill appeared the most enchanting scenery. Our sight rested with pleasure on a large valley bordered with forests raising their heads up to one fourth of the mountaineous height. In the middle of this valley we could see the river with its thousand turns and as many points of hills produced by its course. It was a magnificent and enchanting spectacle which caused our hearts to rise to God and which we were sorry to leave. We quitted the river, crossed several hills and groves and again reached the river. We came to Moose Prairie where a nice waterfall several hundred feet in height falls from the top of the mountains into the river. The road had been bad and dangerous that day. The five leagues which the light cavalry had run in 6 1-2 hours were traveled in two more hours more by the loaded animals.

On the 9th we crossed new points and high hills before reaching the first gravel, bordered with mountains and in the midst of which the river seemed to play, making a thousand turns from the slope of the mountains to the other. We crossed a second beach through which the



the river flowed in like manner. That day we had to cross it 25 times in order to shorten the distance. We saw many glaciers in the mountain passes, went through many a snow bank and also saw a waterfall as considerable as the first. It was the Barred Fall. We halted at the Gun Camp, surrounded with high peaks white with snow. We had traveled that day 8 leagues in 7 hours.

On the 10th being all-2 leagues from the top of the Rocky Mountains at 3 o'clock in the morning we celebrated under a tent the august sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb in thanksgiving for all the benefits the Lord had bestowed upon us and to consecrate by the sacrifice of the Cross these sublime mountains to the glory of God of whom they sing the praise and power. Having walked with much fatigue 2 1-2 hours across ponds rocks, fallen trees and other obstacles on the slope of mountains alongside of the narrow but swift torrent we came by a steep way to the gorge or pass half a league in width between the two mountains ranges, Brown and Hooker, whose grand summit perpetually covered with snow rises some 17 or 18,000 feet above the level of the sea. This pass, pretty steep, in its central slope, is covered on both sides with masses of rocks fallen from the abrupt mountains whilst other rocks suspended above seem to threaten the frightened traveler.

Half way in the gorge is a round lake called Punch Bowl. It is 30 yards in diameter. Its waters communicate, underground with two other lateral lakes, where in originate two rivulets. One is the source of the east branch of the Athabasca, the other is the source of the Portage river of the West. These two rivers are supplied by a great many streams from the mountains, so that little at first they soon become impracticable torrents rolling their waters with an extraordinary noise. Here, at Punch Bowl, we were but one league and a half from our morning camp and it had taken us 2 1-2 hours to travel that short distance. We were 27 1-2 leagues from Jasper's, 700 leagues from St. Boniface and 1,400 from Montreal. One may judge, thereby, of the obstacles



encountered in that day, without speaking of the obstacles and dangers met with for six days on the Eastern slope, in the ascent and descent of hills, rocks and heights from Jasper's. We still walked one mile and a half in two hours, going down the western slope, much steeper than the eastern and going over rocks, fragments of rocks and trees along the Portage river. We halted a short distance from La Grande Cote, a great steep hill we had to descend and whither our loaded horses arrived but two hours after those of the light cavalry. They were tired and unable to go any further.

On the 11th the Great Hill appeared with its long circuits in zig-zags to facilitate the steepness of its descent. We descended it in three hours; the first part on horseback, the second on foot and the third on horseback again; after which the caravan rested for some hours on a beautiful h~~og~~ bush prairie, the first portion of the large field we were sent to cultivate. We took possession of it and consecrated ourselves to its cultivation. We crossed the portage river eight times and made four leagues in 5 1-2 hours.

On the next day our riding horses walked 2 leagues in 4 1-2 hours through the mud holes of the great timber Point. It took the laden animals 8 hours to make that distance, because they had to be unloaded and loaded again, every now and then.

On the 13th the traveling was easier and more agreeable, having walked for six hours and crossed several points of woods and hills, we reached Boat Encampment on the right shore of the portage river, some distance below its junction with the Canoe river flowing from the North. We had come down the West slope of the mountain in three days. We were 13 1-2 leagues from Punch Bowl, 41 from Jaspers, 45 from the entrance of the Rocky Mountains of which the range seems to continue up to the lakes, 55 leagues further below.



The Columbia river has its source 50 leagues on the South. From Boat Encampment, it abruptly turns to the west, hence the name the Big Bend is given to this curve. It then flows southwest down to the Spokane river below Co ville; then Northwest to Okanagan; then Southwest to Wallula; thence west to Vancouver, thence northwest to Cowlitz then west to the Pacific ocean, this rapid river, about 60 yards wide at Big Bend which rolls its swollen waters amidst numberless dangers and was to offer us in its rapids its whirlpools, its dalles, its falls, its abysses a thousand more dangers than all the rivers we had yet navigated, was now before us. We had now to encounter its dangers and we were ready to meet them.

On the 14th, it being Sunday, the holy sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated to take us under her protection. It was the first Mass celebrated in the territory of our mission. At 1:30 p.m. the boats were loaded, the prayers having been said on the shore we shook hands with our traveling companions whom we quitted, alas, never to meet again, and we began to sail. Having traveled 10 leagues in 3 1-2 hours we camped in the middle of the rocks, and towards dusk we went down from this bad place to choose a better site.

On the 15th, the grand and famous Dalles of the Dead appeared it seems to be but 20 yards wide. What makes it dangerous is that curved form or elbow of high and perpendicular rocks against which the whole body of water rushes. Hence the fury of the waves and the necessity to pass close to the opposite shore. Here we had to leave the boats to carry off everything. The barge is then conducted by 8 men, six at the oars and one each at each extremity as pilots with long and wide paddles. In that way the Dalles of the Dead was passed without much danger. The little Dalles below, 30 yards wide, was also fortunately run down with loaded boats. We also went through three big rapids and 30 smaller ones, besides a strong continuous current and abysses which threaten the unskillful traveler. My barge broke open in the morning



during a fog, non a hidden rock which put us in great danger. My companion was in the other barge. The river which from the Barges encampment looks as a canal cut through the mountains began to flow, toward evening, in a less mountainous country. In this canal the horizon always appears on a level with the top of the trees of the following rapids and the high walls of rock now crowned with forests and then with beautiful rows of willows, terminate at every rapid by a fall or kind of step making a real amphitheatre. It is a grand magnificent and delightful sight but the dangers offered by the canal prevented our enjoying it. On that day we had traveled 40 leagues in 6 hours.

On Tuesday the 16th, having made 5 leagues in 2 1-2 hours, we reached the House of the Lakes. Two hours later, one of our boats went back to the Barges encampment to fetch down the third of our companions we had left there for want of room. The other boat started for Vancouver with our express. It took 6 days to the first to go up the 55 leagues which separated them from us; it arrived here on the 21st. Next day it started down, got filled with water at the Dalles of the Dead, was emptied, but again filled in the following Dalles; it was going ashore when some one jumping in the water upset it. Hence the loss of 12 persons out of the 26 who mounted it. It was about dusk when this calamity occurred. The broken barge went on its way the following day and arrived on the 24th in the morning at our camps. Great was the consternation at this sad news; an express was sent to Colville for a boat and some provisions. The other one was repaired and went back to the unfortunate spot to bring the drowned bodies out down. That accident detained us 18 days at the House of the Lakes. This time was spent in instructing the Indians who appeared quite docile and well disposed; they were sorry not to have the happiness of being baptized like their children.

At last on ~~next~~ the third of November, having performed 17 baptisms one marriage, and buried three drowned children (the only bodies found)



at the foot of a cross erected a few steps from our camps where we celebrated Holy Mass every day, we embarked in 2 boats upon the waters still keeping in their bosom nine of our companions. We crossed the first lake 13 leagues long, and one mile wide. Then came the second lake, 18 leagues by 2 leagues. Below the lakes on the left is the Kootenay river which appeared to be 300 feet wide; and four hours' distance below, the Flathead river falling into the Columbia, through a beautiful fall some sixty yards wide. The ninth rapid below the lakes forms the Little Dalles where the water passes through a canal 100 feet wide, between high rocks or basaltic columns. We can say that the Rocky mountains extend as far as the lakes. The day before we arrived at Fort Colville, the want of timber abounded up to the Great Dalles--began to be noticeable.

After having traveled 72 leagues in three days we reached in the forenoon of the sixty Fort Colville where we remained 3 1-2 days occupied in the celebration of Holy Mass and in instructing the Indians of five nations who assisted with as much respect as they had been fervent Christians. Having performed 19 baptisms we left that fort on the 10th and went to camp two miles below in order to avoid the Chaudieres falls which stops navigation at that place.

On the 11th in the morning we were traveling upon the Columbia which appeared full of dangers. The grand rapid appeared, 20 others followed. On the 12th we passed the fork of the Spokane on the left shore and that of the Simpoils (sic) on the right. On the 13th we reached Fort Okanagan situated on the right shore 64 leagues from Colville. We had traveled that distance in 3 days passing through innumerable rapids, at the most dangerous of which the people had to land in order to lighten the boats.

We started again on the 14th after having baptized 14 persons, celebrated mass and instructed the neighboring Indians during the 24 hours of our stay at the fort. The little river Okanagan



appeared right away. We jumped 12 rapids on that day. On the next day, the 15th, a rapid was formed by the Rock Islands.

The passengers went ashore and yet it did not prevent the boat carrying our church goods, from striking a rock and breaking in coming down a cascade. It was filling with water as it approached the shore. On the 16th we saw, at a height of 100 feet in the fissure of a rock, a petrified tree.

While jumping the ~~Red River~~ 4 Priest's Rapids, our boat struck on the bottom but did not break. Below these rapids, the high and mountainous shores of the river give place to low and level prairies, over which the sight can extend with ease. On that very day we enjoyed a spectacle of which we had been deprived since we left "Winnipeg, that was the sunset.

The remainder of this day and also the next, we sailed on quite waters. The low shores gave us a chance to see the Blue Mountains South of Wallula and those of Puget Sound or Mount Rainier. We left behind us on the right, the Yakima river, and below, on the left, the Snake river, also called Lewis and Clarke, which appeared to be 500 feet wide.

On Sunday, the 18th, we arrived early in the morning at Fort Walla Walla, built on the left bank of the Columbia, a short distance from the river of that name. Peter C. Pambrun, Esq. in charge of the important post, a Catholic, received the two missionaries with greatest cordiality. He was born in the parish of Vaudreuil, district of Montreal, Canada and was formerly lieutenant at the Voltigeurs Canadiens. His excellent wife was, at the time, at Fort Vancouver with her little girls, Maris, aged 12, Eda, 3 and Harriet, 16 months and the boys, Andrew D., 17 years and Peter C., 15. The girls were baptized with their mother on December 18 and the father had his marriage blessed on the same day. It was a beautiful and happy day for me.



The holy sacrifice of the mass was celebrated after which the chiefs of the Cayuses and Walla Walla came with their people to see the priests. The Cayuses were divided into two tribes; one of which on the Walla Walla river, known as Wailatpu, formed the Presbyterian mission, established by Dr. Whitman in 1836. The other camp, lying on the Umatilla river, 30 miles hence was under the command of the young chief Tanatoo. The day passed in speaking to them of God and religion. They were so glad to see the Black gowns so long expected. There were three baptisms made at this place and on a subsequent visit by Rev. M. Demers the young chief brought his child to be baptized by the priest, Mr. Pambrun having consented to be its godfather which gained for him great blame and displeasure from the Doctor. Since that time the young chief and his band always preferred the priest's religion to that of the minister.

#### Sketch VII

(Published March 21st, 1878)

#### Vicar General's Letter Concluded

On Monday, the 19th, we left Fort Walla Walla with its excellent commander. The little river, Walla Walla on the left, was followed by the Umatilla on the same side. Seven leagues below the fort we leaped the Grand Rapid without accident. From thence we began to see the white summit of Mount Hood, whose base is the Cascades range. On this day, the 20th, our provisions becoming short, two horses were purchased for food, for which the Indians were paid \$10 a piece. The Columbia being pretty low at this season of the year, our two boats touched the ground in descending the 7th rapid on that day. We left the little river John Day on the left.

On Wednesday, the 21st, we saw on the same side La riviera des Chutes (the river of the Falls) so called by the Canadian voyageurs not for having falls but because of its proximity to the falls (Chutes in French) says Father Demers in the report of his first trip to Colville in 1839,"