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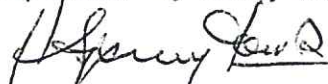
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Dated September 4, 1993, Whitehorse, Yukon



H. Spruyt, OMI

Chancellor

" YUKON VICARIATE "

- By Father Marcel Murie, OMI - Missions, September, 1937

The Premier of the Province of British Columbia has just opened negotiation with the Federal Government in view of annexing the Yukon Territory to his Province. The territory in question extends from the 60th degree N. latitude to the Arctic Ocean and measures 207,000 square miles.

This enlarged British Columbia will have an area of 573,331 square miles, coming close to Quebec having an area of 594,534 square miles.

As to population British Columbia will not gain much; in the Yukon there are only 4350 inhabitants. Twenty five years ago its population was not less than 60,000, attracted by the Klondyke gold mines. Since 1897 the Yukon furnished gold valued at 500 millions of dollars.

After the annexation of the Yukon, British Columbia will have 750,000 inhabitants.

The Catholics of the territory of the Yukon are confided to the care of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Depending previously on the Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie, the territory was erected into an Apostolic Prefecture on March 9, 1908 and into an Apostolic (page 2) Vicariate on November 30, 1916. This Vicariate also comprises the northern part of the Province of B.C. from the 53rd degree of North Latitude. The seat of the Apostolic Vicariate is the city of Prince Rupert at the mouth of the Skeena River.

"Missions", 1899, p.219-248

The establishment of a post of Oblate Missionaries at the Klondyke is an accomplished fact. The "Annales" have already announced it to the congregation.

Some details would be in order about this country of the Klondyke whose magic value has resounded throughout the world and about the circumstances which led the Oblates to pitch their tent therein. The correspondence of our Fathers will furnish the account of their journey, their taking possession and the beginnings of their ministry.

This rapid sketch will enable us to await with patience a more complete and detailed account of the establishment of this mission and of the labour of our missionaries.

TOPOGRAPHY -- When we glance at a geographical map, we can clearly discern the frontier (page 3) outlined which separates Alaska from the Canadian Northwest. This line, determined by an Anglo-Russian convention, signed at St. Petersburg, lies nearly at the 141 degree of longitude from the neighbourhood of Mount St. Elias (18,100 ft. high) to the Arctic Ocean; on its right extends the district of the Yukon, commonly called today the Klondyke, either because of the richest placers (a mineral deposit - not a vein) abound in the places watered by this river (flowing west to the Yukon, the latter being 2,000 miles, flowing into the North Pacific) or because perhaps the name is more sonorous, hence more magical, suggestive accordingly for the American. At any rate the miners crowded to the junction of the Klondyke (River) with the Yukon (River).

The Yukon district embraces generally speaking that frontier of the Canadian Dominion which is bounded on the east by the Mackenzie River basin, on the west by the international border, just alluded to, on the south by British Columbia, and on the north by the Arctic Ocean. It is abundantly watered by the Yukon River and its tributaries. It measures about 600 miles from North to South but it narrows as it goes north. Its length from east to west at the south is 500 miles. It is a new region for the most part still unexplored. Though (page 4) knowledge of the interior is scanty, it is safe to say there is some gold everywhere.

CLIMATE -- The climate is very salubrious. It is, besides, the climate of the whole Dominion, excepting the borders of the Pacific and excepting, too, the degrees of heat and cold according to the latitudes. The winters are long and arctic, but the air is so dry and pure that one feels its cold much less than a glance at the thermometer would lead one to feel; and with the proper clothing one can spend this season agreeably enough. The summers are short and warm. There are four months of summer and eight of winter. Particularly in the Arctic regions, the winter is all night and summer all day. From mid-June till mid-August daylight is uninterrupted. On the other hand, while awaiting the invention of Edison's lamps, night reigns from mid-December till mid-January. If the darkness has its drawbacks, such as causing the exotic dogs to bark and the burning of too many candles, the constant light of the day affords many advantages, among others, it allows the mining crews or trade companies to take turns one after the other thus continuing working at top speed during the whole day round the clock.

Summer in the Yukon district begins about May 15, when the ice which was holding the streams immobile, clears away and releases (page 5) the water of these streams to navigators and their banks to the nugget-seekers. There is on June 1st no snow anywhere. A carpet of verdure replaces the shroud of snow. The bird sings in the air, fish leap from the surface of the waters. People garden, sow. It is a resurrection. If a grain fails to ripen, the vegetables are hardly ever lacking. The

Fahrenheit thermometer rising to 80 degrees and above explains how sowing and harvest are expected in two or three months. God who bestows on the young of the birds their food, does not wish man to lack the necessary in no matter what climate.

POPULATION— There are already a good many towns and villages in the Yukon, if thus may be styled the mass of wooden buildings hastily built for shelter without any pretension of symmetry or art. Here are a few: Dawson City, the chief one by the number of its inhabitants, Selkirk, seat of the Government and of its representatives, Cudehy, Eldorado, Bonanza, etc., etc. The neighborhood of the mineral deposits has brought about their rise from the soil like a rich harvest. The miners are businesslike. They say, "Gold first, and then act". If only they would continue saying, "Seek first the kingdom of heaven (page 6) and the rest will come in addition". We shall however see our Missionaries making serious conquests among them and finding in certain souls a real lode of divine love.

In proportion as new discoveries are made, new towns will rise and become important points in their turn. Along the banks of the Yukon there are aboriginal and unimportant villages and establishments. In the chief mining sections there are stores, hotels, restaurants, etc., and their number increase unceasingly so as to provide for the needs of the new arrivals.

EXPLOITATION OF MINES -- Would you like to have some notion of the work of the miners? Watch them at the job. You must first of all know that in the goldbearing districts, the precious metal is found embedded in quartz buried in the soil or in the sides of the mountains. Usually there is a streak or stripe, a vein or lode more or less considerable running, so to say, through the quartz (silicon dioxide, crystalline rock, the most common of solid rocks). The veins take no fixed directions but go off now in one direction, now in another according to the whim of nature. When they crop up above the surface, particles break off, either by reason of the action of ice fields which, slipping away from their fastenings, drag along with them a part of the quartz (page 7) which they were sticking to, or also by natural erosion due to the torrential rains; those particles are then carried down by the torrents, deposited at the bottom of rivers or creeks, accumulated in the sandbanks which become layers of gold or placers. As the rivers in the long run changed their beds, not seldom are the placers found at a great distance from the rivers.

In the exploitation of the mines there are two distinct periods: One, seeking the gold mixed in the sand lying on the surface of the ground; this is ordinarily the first, easiest, not requiring capital. Any man can be miner in this phase. The mining of the placers takes but a short time. The other period or phase is the extraction of the mineral from the quartz; the last, the hardest, the more

productive or remunerative, but it necessitates powerful hydraulic machinery and capital, therefore this kind of mining is possible only for companies.

A traveller has thus described the placer method of gold mining:

The valleys of the creeks generally are of no great depth, about 400 or 500 feet wide at the bottom. They are wholly covered over with thick brush and small spruce; also there is poplar, birch, and cottonwood. This growth is utilized in thawing out the ground (page 8). A portion of the surface, 10 furlongs by 7 or 8 wide, is stripped of its moss and ice. The miner sinks a pit 6 feet deep by three round and kindles a fire in it. While he is sleeping at night the earth goes on thawing to a depth of from 6 to 12 inches; next morning he shovels out the loose earth and repeats the operation until he has reached the rock bed which generally lies at a depth of 15 or 20 feet. At a depth of about 10 feet, vegetable matter is no longer found and there is met a layer of coarse gravel evincing but small traces of attrition. At the bottom of this layer, close to the rock you reach the pay-vein which is rarely thicker than 3 feet, the richest part of it being on the rock itself. The rock here is not solid but is a mass of angular, broken crevassed tufa, apparently never disturbed since having been lodged in place. The cracks are filled with clay and fine gravel. The miner digs to about a foot at most into this mass. Where does this layer of paying mineral end? Nobody has yet bored through the bed of solid rock so that we are in ignorance of what is underneath. Three weeks and a great amount of work is required in order to get down to the rock by fire.

The second period of the exploitation of the quartz is little more than beginning in the Klondyke but authorities are agreed in predicting it is the great industry in the future of this country. (page 9) The lack of mechanical devices has indeed cheapened the quartz in comparison with the placers; the moment will come when powerful machinery will render the latter's exploitation possible and very productive. It will be the golden era of the great corporations.

ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTION - As it has been stated, the district of the Yukon, wherein the mines lie, belongs to the territories of the Canadian Northwest. From the ecclesiastical viewpoint it belongs to the Apostolic Vicariate of Athabasca-Mackenzie under Bishop Grouard, O.M.I.'s jurisdiction. This district is separated from the rest of the immense Vicariate by the Rocky Mountains which, stretching north to south, present a well-nigh impassable obstacle. Only two very long and very difficult roads permit the traveller to pass from the region of the Mackenzie into that of the Yukon: the first in the south, along the Peace River and the northeast of British Columbia; the second, in the north from Fort Good Hope (near the Arctic Circle) and following the course of the Porcupine River.

On the western side the district of the Yukon is in relatively easy communication with Alaska, former Russian America, now territory of the American Union; the easiest way of all is that of the Yukon River, which takes its rise in British Columbia and, after traversing the Klondyke, drops into the Bering Sea. The Alaska Territory, bordering on the Canadian (page 10) district of the Yukon, was for a long time part of the Diocese of Vancouver Island.

The Rev. Father Jesuits have served the Alaskan Missions for about 30 years. A few years ago this territory was detached by the Holy See from the Diocese of Vancouver Island and erected into Prefecture Apostolic, the first titular of which was Bishop Tosi, S.J. Rev. Fr. Renée, S.J., is his successor at present.

On his return from Europe in 1893 Bishop Grouard, O.M.I., went to British Columbia. He had heard gold mines had been discovered in the northern parts and that people began to crowd in there. The Bishop desired to have information from the clergy of Victoria: Where were the mines? Were they under his jurisdiction? The information was meagre and vague. The limits of Alaska and the Canadian Territories were, in fact, little known. The first Americans arriving in the Canadian district of the Yukon might well, for a certain time, have thought they were in their own possessions of Alaska. For many years the meagre name of the Klondyke had not yet been heard while the Alaska gold mines had long been on men's tongues. Bishop Grouard, failing to get the sought-for information, returned to his Vicariate by the usual way, the Athabasca River.

THE JESUITS IN THE KLONDYKE -- However, as Bishop Grouard had been told, the miners, attracted by the lure of gold, set out really (page 11) for the Yukon regions by the ways which gave access to it from the Pacific Ocean in the Bering Sea. About 1885, they had crossed the Canadian frontier and begun to explore the upper Yukon River. Rev. Fr. Judge, S.J., followed them having requested from Bishop Grouard the required jurisdiction to exercise the ministry, a jurisdiction readily granted for the good of souls. In 1893 the Rev. Father settled down among the miners at Forty Mile, built a house-chapel which he later sold. In 1896 the Klondyke mines were discovered. Thither rushed in goldseekers in great numbers. Again Fr. Judge went with the miners returning to Forty Mile for the necessities. In the spring of 1897, he went to pitch his camp at a wooded point near the spot where Dawson City is today. This city was not yet built. A good Irishman gave him a lot with a frontage of 160 feet and a depth of 600 feet, bounded in front by the Yukon river and at the back by a mountain. Father Judge, an American contractor and a zealous Jesuit began, on arriving, the building of a hospital to take in the sick already numerous in the desert and wild country. Both Catholics and Protestants promised him the resources necessary for building not only the hospital but also a church. The size of the hospital was 26 x 50 feet, of two storeys with a wing

of 26 feet for the Sisters and staff. The Sisters who were expected belonged to the (page 12) St. Ann's Community of Lachine near Montreal who had a province in British Columbia. Those Sisters had been introduced into Alaska when the country depended on the Bishop of Victoria. They had labored at first at the side of the Jesuit Fathers. They were finally under the Jesuit charge when the latter had directives of the Apostolic Prefecture. In 1897 three Sisters set out from the Catholic mission of the Holy Cross, not far from the mouth of the Yukon and came up the river. But reaching Fort Yukon one of them fell sick on the boat. Fearing to be caught in the ice far from a priest, the Sisters turned round and went to spent the winter at Holy Cross. Father Judge, disconcerted but not discouraged, opened the hospital himself, hired men to care for the sick. There was not then at Dawson City a single respectable woman. The hospital filled with sick. The admission price was \$5.00 a day because of the scarcity of provisions and the high salaries paid the employees.

In the spring Fr. Judge built a second wing in three storeys, 26 x 60 feet. June 11, 1898, the first church built was prey to a fire. Two days later Fr. Judge began building a second, 37 x 60 feet. Mr. Alex McDonald, a Catholic millionaire, promised to pay the expenses which rose to \$30,000. (page 13) Shortly after, the expected three Sisters arrived and took over the general direction of the hospital. So considerable then were the numbers of the sick there was no place to put them in. They were, however, installed in a house built to be a presbytery and next they received two sick women lodging them in their new quarters.

Long before 1897 it had become notorious that the Klondyke lay outside the territory of Alaska in that of the Canadian Northwest. The Ottawa Government sent thither agents, a judge and police. It had organized the new regions from the point of view of the mines under exploitation. Hence evidently those regions were situated in the Athabasca-Mackenzie Vicariate Apostolic and in consequence by right they were under the jurisdiction of Bishop Grouard and the Oblates. Incontrovertible circumstances had placed them in the hands of the Jesuits but the fact had to yield to the right, and the Oblates should have possession of a country that had long been theirs. It was important not to delay too long this taking of possession that the Holy See might not detach the Yukon from the Mackenzie Vicariate and attach it to the Alaska Vicariate. Steps to this effect were made at Rome.

OBLATES SUCCEED JESUITS -- At the beginning of 1898 Father Gendreau, O.M.I., of the Canadian Province received from Bishop Grouard, O.M.I. the (page 14) powers of a Vicar General and was named Superior of the Yukon Missions. Fr. Desmarais, O.M.I., of the Mackenzie Vicariate, Fr. Corbeil, a secular priest and the lay brother, Dumas, were adjoined to Father

Gendreau,omi (who was from the Canadian Province). In April, Fr. Gendreau journeyed to British Columbia to make travelling preparations for himself and his companions. Father Lefebvre, O.M.I. wanted to prove experimentally that passage could be made directly from the Mackenzie to the Klondyke by following the Porcupine River up to its joining the Yukon River.

Let us now follow our missionaries in this long and perilous journey which was to lead them to their goal. They are now at Vancouver where they receive the most brotherly hospitality from their brother Oblates and where they quicken their preparations for the Yukon.

FROM VANCOUVER TO SELKIRK: -- On the night of the 23rd of May, after having invoked the protection of Immaculate Mary, whose blessed month was being celebrated everywhere, they set sail from Vancouver.

"At the moment of quitting this city," Fr. Gendreau wrote to his Superior General, "to undertake the journey to the Klondyke, I have learned from Bishop Dontenwill, O.M.I. that the Holy Ghost has designated you as our head and spiritual Father. I was filled with joy before the good God and offered Him (page 15) my heartfelt thanks. At the same time I begged Archbishop Langevin, O.M.I. to reiterate to you the feelings of filial respect and submission which I had conceived in advance".

The distance to be travelled on the Pacific Ocean from Vancouver to Dyea, Alaska, is about 1000 miles. After a fine voyage our missionaries landed at this port on May 27th. Dyea lies at the head of a small bay of the same name which is an arm of the Lynn Canal. From Dyea our travelers walked 30 miles, ascending a mountain 3,500 feet high, the last 1000 feet being steep, which they climbed clinging to a cable solidly anchored in the top.

This high mountain marks the boundary between British Columbia and Alaska. On it there is not the smallest branch for a person to take hold of.

"The thought of this perilous ascent," says the good Bro. (A.) Dumas, O.M.I., "which we were going to attempt, an iron staff in hand, our shoulders loaded with a 25 pound pack, frightened us somewhat, but according as we travelled on, the good Lord took pity on his poor missionaries by sending such a thick haze we could see nothing 20 feet beneath us.

At length we were glad to see the summit. God be praised! We had climbed to the peak through the defile named the Chilcoot Pass. Two months before, a terrible avalanche of snow (page 16) had

surprised a hundred persons, thirty of them remaining buried in a layer 50 feet thick that probably will never melt.

After a frugal meal, we had to descend the opposite slope. It was the saddest part of the journey. God grant that I may not be the less meritorious. A bitterly cold wind, joined with a dense fog, hindered us from advancing. Furthermore, a not very reassuring spectacle, we recognized our route only by countless corpses of dogs, horses, etc.

May 31st we passed over the three lakes, Bennett, Tagish and Laberge, covered over with melting snow sinking therein up to the knees.

However the temperature moderated little by little. We halted at Lake Bennett to await our duffle and boxes which, by a prudent precaution Fr. Gendreau had entrusted to an express company. By means of cables strung from peak to peak baggage went up by air.

There remained still 380 miles to go. After 12 days aboard an expensive rented schooner, we, at length, landed at Fort Selkirk on June 24, Feast of St. John Baptist, patron of our dear Canada and of our Missions.

What fervent thanksgivings issued from our hearts! We thanked especially our Immaculate Mother for having visibly protected her Oblates. We had noticed several accidents along the route. Once at the passage of the Five Fingers Rapids, on the Louis River (page 17) we thought our last hour impended. Those Five Fingers Rapids are five big rocks forming three passages, only one of which is safe. Misfortune for us should we miss it! So it happened. The current swept our schooner along. In less than three minutes it had shot ahead half a mile upon the roaring waves of the Rapid, through the ledges, however, not touching any of them. Since the spring thaw of the ice, 26 persons, an Anglican minister among them, were shipwrecked! A Presbyterian preacher barely escaped with his life; his boat had grounded, his baggage was swallowed up. He turned back, swearing he would never return to the Klondyke.

Fr. Lefebvre, O.M.I., arrived at Selkirk almost at the same time as Fr. Gendreau, Fr. Desmarais and Bro. Dumas. As for Fr. Corbeil, a diocesan priest, he had stopped on the way to act as chaplain for a company of soldiers who were on the way to the same town."

AGREEMENT BETWEEN FATHER GENDREAU, O.M.I. AND FATHER RENÉ S.J.: TAKING OVER

– After some discussions, Fr. Gendreau obtained from the Government a plot of land and sufficient

timber to build a chapel-house at Selkirk.

He then hastened to Dawson City for negotiations with the Jesuit Fathers. With them he soon concluded an amicable and satisfactory religious agreement. He (page 18) immediately sent word of the same by letter to Bishop Grouard which he wrote on the boat while going from Dawson City to Selkirk. We believe this letter should be given to you in extenso though it repeats the facts related above.

You couldn't conceive how delicate, embarrassing and embarrassed the situation was. Father Judge who, for many years followed the miners in Alaska, did not hesitate in going and staying among them at Forty-Mile on our territory about three years ago. He built there a house-chapel which has since been sold.

When the Klondyke, situated 50 miles from Forty-Mile (Fr. Judge) was discovered in the autumn of 1896, the miners flocked to that place. Fr. Judge has followed them, but returned and spent the winter at Forty-Mile.

In the spring of 1897, he went back and camped on a wooded point of ground which today forms part of Dawson. An Irishman, Mr. Newen, gave him a piece of ground 150 x 600 feet bounded in front by the Yukon river and at the rear by the mountains at the foot of which the city is seated. The flat was useless for culture being all rock and ridges.

At this juncture, Father Tosi, S.J., Prefect Apostolic of Alaska, and Fr. Judge's superior, falls sick, resigns, at length dies and is replaced by Fr. René. Fr. Judge, full of the spirit of enterprise, this American quality, and also (page 19) full of zeal like a worthy son of St. Ignatius, but perhaps too independent of the guidance of his superiors with whom indeed he could only with difficulty communicate, began on arriving, the building of a hospital before thinking of a church or a house for himself. The good Lord and he lodged inside the same tent during summer and autumn.

On learning of this, Fr. René went to Dawson in August 1897; he found the hospital walls 6 feet above ground. The Catholics and Protestants promised him to furnish money to Fr. Judge to maintain after building the hospital as well as to erect a church.

Fr. René approved what was done, encouraged its continuance and decided to leave for Rome to obtain the annexation of the part of Canada situated west of the Rocky Mountains to the Apostolic Prefecture.

Fr. Judge first built his hospital a two-storeyed building 26 x 50 feet flanked by a wing 26 x 36 feet, this latter to serve as a lodging for the Sisters and the servant girls; next, a church 30 x 60 feet and presbytery which he has never occupied.

Fr. René sent him three St. Ann Sisters from the mission of Holy Cross. But they got no further than Fort Yukon. One of the Sisters fell sick on the boat and the three returned for the winter to Holy Cross. Disappointed but undaunted, Fr. Judge, relying on Divine Providence, opened the hospital. Because of (page 20) the dearth of respectable women in Dawson he hired men to act as nurses.

The hospital filled with the sick at \$5.00 a day each. But provisions were dear, wages ran very high and there was an enormous waste in the kitchen. Debts accumulated. No matter, Father Judge was not dismayed and he prepared the next spring to build an addition to the hospital, 26 x 60 feet in three storeys.

On June 6, 1898, his church and all its content was destroyed by fire. He set to work, two days later, to build another church 37 x 75 feet upon the promise made to him by a Catholic millionaire, Mr. MacDonald to pay all expenses which probably exceeded \$20,000. Shortly after, Fr. Judge received from Fr. René a letter informing him of the failure of his mission at Rome and ordering him to stop the works till his coming in July. Fr. Judge suspended work on the hospital but proceeded with that of the church, persuaded his superior would approve of it on hearing of the burning of the church and the advantageous offers made that probably would be withdrawn from his successor.

At my arrival here he continued his work *ad majorem Dei Gloriam*. A diversion was caused by the arrival of the three St. Ann Sisters. No place for them because the whole hospital was occupied by the sick. Luckily there was the (page 21) presbytery yet unoccupied. The Sisters were installed in it and soon they received two sick women who got room along with them.

Such was, my Lord, the state of things, the details of which I am giving you so as to enable you to understand my manner of acting in the negotiations that were going to take place.

At my arrival Fr. René assured me the Jesuits were ready to leave at once the position on the condition that I would take over the responsibility for debts from the achievements of the works started and give them a reasonable compensation for the services rendered by them down to the present. He admitted the Jesuits haven't put a cent of their money in this foundation but he added

that the personal popularity of Fr. Judge, Irish and American, to the eyes of the Protection of his own countrymen who had wealth, the spirit of enterprise with which the same Father was endowed, the success he obtained - all that inclines me to think that another would not perhaps have succeeded in founding this establishment. "What do you think you will do?", he asked me.

You see, my Lord, my embarrassment. I had done a good deal of serious thinking and not having anyone to advise me, I prayed a lot.

Finally I answered him, "It is not my intention to beg the Jesuits to leave immediately. In the interests of the two communities and for the edification of souls, we had better (page 22) prepare a transition so as to avoid a shock", and proposed therefore the nomination of Father Judge as chaplain of the hospital and that he would continue lodging there. He would have the territorial management of the institutions until he made the transposition of the property to the St. Ann Sisters. He would remain at Dawson for the time needed to regulate his affairs, which time would be limited by his superiors. As to what concerned myself, I took over at once the charge of directing the parish, leaving Fr. Judge the faculty of hearing confessions when he was asked for and the care of finishing the church which was to be open for worship on the 2nd Sunday of August and also of passing on the titles of the ground, the church and presbytery to the name of Bishop Grouard in his position of Vicar Apostolic of Athabasca and Mackenzie.

My imposition was respected with the greatest pleasure. Father René has fixed the time of residence of Fr. Judge here till the opening of Navigations. He has intimated to Fr. Judge the order to refrain from undertaking any of this building, to regulate all his affairs without delay and to pay all debts. Fr. Judge formally pledged himself to pay off all the debts, whether of the church or hospital, and give their titles to Bishop Grouard and to the Sisters.

But a difficulty arose. The Sisters were now occupying the presbytery and they could not reasonably vacate it till the addition to the hospital was made. Fr. Judge said he could not bother about it before the payment of the old debts. (page 23) The superior of the Sisters had not yet come. The Sisters were loathe to take any engagements and I approved.

I then consented to let the Sisters have the use of the presbytery till Father Judge's departure, who promised to give it over to me together with the clear titles of the property.

Beside this presbytery was a small house touching on the church, too small for our community but one part of it was to serve as a sacristy and the other a room for a priest.

In the meantime I hastened on a house which latter would join with the church by a passage to the actual presbytery. Till then we would be confined but, no matter, we were at home.

Such, my Lord, is the regulation I have concluded to the satisfaction of the interested parties. *Justicia et pax osculatae sunt.* We have promised to be good religious, to work for the glory of God and to promote the reign of peace at any cost. With aid from on high we shall be faithful to do so.

We did not allow Fr. René to depart without a fraternal accolade. He left for St. Michael's, one of their Alaska missions, expressing to me his gratitude on my manner of treating affairs and begging me to do the same to you. The compensation which I shall give him will be regulated in the spring.

He who had signed this convention deserved every approval. He had reached a wise conclusion, sweetly and strongly and without awaking the least susceptability. God will bless such conduct by pouring out before the mission the most abundant graces. (page 24)

MISSION OF SELKIRK - After the departure of Father René, Fr. Gendreau went back to Selkirk where Fathers Lefebvre and Desmarais had remained with Bro. Dumas and whither Fr. ^{Coe}Gobeil had just come. While he was treating with the Jesuits at Dawson to take possession of the mission and of the whole district they at Selkirk labored at the erection of the Chapel-house. Listen to our dear Bro. Dumas describing for us their occupation:

Father Lefebvre and I went up the river three miles from Selkirk to chop down timber for the building. We formed all the pieces as soon as they were ready into a raft and we set forth. We went down with the current easily enough, when suddenly our floating machine struck on a gravel bank and grounded. The shock was violent and accompanied with a grinding noise which was a bad sign. We thought all was lost. Luckily not a log went loose, but we remained aground. What must we do? ...The problem was speedily solved. We still had several cables. We used them in making a second raft in order to lighten the first. Thanks be to God after several hours of somewhat heavy labor, our doubled raft floated again and, without further delay, we moored the timber at our lot with the assistance of a dozen men on the bank waiting to take hold of the ropes that we carried to them from the raft in a small boat that we had taken upstream with us.

All was going well. We began to rejoice as the raft was made fast to a tree, (page 25) when, crack!, the cable breaks. To jump into the water to double the rope, to tie its two ends together was for

your humble servant the affair of an instant. We pulled in with all our might and presently all was saved. Deo Gratias!

It was then ten at night; the sun still shone. At length we returned to our Chateau of Cloth where Father Desmarais did the cooking for the circumstance, preparing a good chunk of pork. O what a treat!

Next morning we were at the building and, on August 10, 1898, we had for shelter a house 20 x 30 ft. built out of squared logs, with a roof shingled by poles, after the manner of this country. We were ready to face the winter. We were at home and not too unfortunate. Food was as necessary here as elsewhere. After the dinner of each day we had to think of the next day's grub. One of us caught up a gun and set off for the hunt, carrying back game in plenty. Every shot brought down its bit. Fr. Corbeil who had arrived some time ago was an expert hunter and no less expert cook.

At length Fr. Superior arrived from Dawson. He declared the community must pack and go at once to the capital. Fr. Gendreau, Fr. Corbeil, and Bro. Dumas left first with Fr. Lefebvre and Fr. Desmarais a week later.

What shall I tell you about Dawson? It is situated at the foot of a mountain of clay upon which not a tree or blade of grass is to be seen. The streets, needless to say, are not (page 26) yet macadamized and at this season of the year, the horses, not to mention the dogs, sink in the mud to their bellies.

The church is built on a very hard rock. Upon this same rock a house must be erected before winter. We had to work hard to lay the foundations. By the 1st of September the frame was in place and at the end of the month we took possession of a two-storey house, 30 x 30. It was not wholly finished but at any rate we were under shelter. About October 15th, when we could put in the windows, the cold began to visit us and it romped through the cotton cloth that took the place of glass. But why the cotton cloth, you will say? Because a glass 10 x 12 inches here costs \$2.50.

November 1st, the thermometer went down to -30° Fahrenheit. The weather became milder afterwards. But I set out the 15th, in company with a workman under the guidance of Fr. Desmarais to build a new chapel at some distance from Dawson. There we had minus 40° of cold. It was too much for my man. He had his toes, fingers and the tip of his nose frozen. I remained

alone on the job. It grew colder day after day and attained minus 50°F. Thanks be to God, I could work on just the same. In December Fr. Desmarais could say Mass in the new chapel.

Our Fathers have plenty to do for the numerous Catholics. There are 1000 or 2000 scattered here and there. Sick calls may take them 40 or 50 miles. Four priests for the task are very few. (page 27)

The hygiene is not the best. Fever and serofula strike down the miners. Many of them seem to have come here only to die well. The good Lord awaited them no doubt to confer this grace on them. Several large fish which had not bitten the hook for 15, 20, 30 years, even 40, were now, properly caught, God be praised.

As to the gold mines, you perhaps think everything is gilt for the audacious ones who have come hither to win their fortune. Be undeceived. Many of them will never recover their expenses. Assuredly the gold is here. But in the Klondyke as elsewhere you must expend money to make money. So long as the miners who labor on their own account have not at their disposal power-drills enabling them to get down more quickly and easily to pay-dirt or to the bed-rock whereon rest more or less heavy layers of gold, they have their labor and trouble for nothing. The work required is killing even for constitutions of steel. Cases happen where a month or two of the most toilsome digging does not reveal a grain of gold, nothing but stone. The luckless miner must start all over and ever with the same uncertainty. I know some who have shovelled the soil for five or six months or even for a year without uncovering a yellow gleam. Some have exhausted their provisions and, unable to find work, have not a cent to pay their way out of the country.

But they are not all so badly off. There are many who make a great deal of money. In particular, (page 28) the companies make millions.

For his part, Fr. Gendreau wrote October 5, 1898, to the V.R. Father General: "Kindly permit me, my very reverend and beloved Father, to present you the respectful homage of our little community and the devotion of the Oblates of the Klondyke, to our religious family, so worthily guided by thy fraternity.

I profit by the occasion of Baron Terwagne into France to send you a nugget in its natural state. It is a fruit of this country.

Do not believe because we dwell in a country of gold, that we swim in abundance. When coming

into this land we looked for a life of sacrifice and privation. We have accepted it! Such it is that it would surprise our Brethren in Canada (or Quebec). Our emaciated figures since our departure from Ottawa indicate sufficiently that we did not have, nor have we yet, all we needed. But thanks be to God our health continued excellent and we bear the cross with a good heart.

In this country really very rich in gold, if fortunes are amassed in a short time, there are lots of failures and downright poverty. Our Catholics are not conspicuously rich. Is it because the good Lord desires to save them? There is one, however, who got in the mines more than his share of treasure. He is a good Christian for all that. He is Mr. Alexander McDonald, a native of Nova Scotia. Judge of his generosity. (page 29) When the old church was razed by fire, he urged the planning of a new church, volunteering to contribute himself all the expenses which amounted to \$30,000.

Last week he came to make his confession to me. After the Mass at which he received the Eucharist he entered the presbytery. I had not yet had the honor of knowing him. He announced he was going to England on business, handing me four bills of \$100. each for our four missionaries and asking us to pray for him and for his departed parents. This charitable miner truly deserves every gratitude.

From now on till spring we shall be short of the necessities of life and obliged to borrow for the building of the Church, but at this time of year when the gold extracted from the bosom of the earth is being washed, the miners are extremely generous. With their alms we shall soon be able to reimburse Bishop Grouard for his advances.

In the Klondyke everything is dear - food, clothes and labor especially. Oh, how precious would be the service the lay brothers might render here! Our dear Bro. Dumas, an able carpenter, does as much as a workman who is paid \$10. a day. His work rates therefore at \$3,000. a year. Our cook gets \$80. a month.

I have not formed an exact idea of the number of Catholics in our district. In a floating population like ours the figure (page 30) varies from day to day. Today there are here, people agree in saying, at least 15,000 Catholics, half of them English and German, and half French Canadian.

August 15, the blessing of the new church took place. It is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, and September 1st, I took possession as Curé. The Catholics appeared pleased with our ministry, particularly of the care we take of the sick: A few days ago Fr. Lefebvre went 60 miles on foot to

minister to a dying man.

Encouraged by the good will of our Dawson parishoners we are building a presbytery 30 feet square in two storeys. We have occupied a part since September 15. We suffered from cold, especially at night, but we are at home. The finishing work will be resumed during the winter.

As you know, Fr. Desmarais, Fr. Lefebvre and Bro Dumas had stayed in Selkirk where, in matter of Catholics, there are only a few soldiers. To avoid the expense of the two houses and to benefit by the services of Brother Dumas, this winter I have concentrated all our forces at Dawson and stopped the building at Selkirk. I shall send two missionaries back there in the spring.

In a subsequent letter, dated Dec. 4, 1898, addressed to Fr. Antonio, first Assistant-General, Fr. Gendreau (page 31) added new details regarding his mission.

Baron Terwagn, who was to leave here more than a month ago and to place in the hands of our Very Rev. Superior-General a specimen of our goldmines, offered by the Oblates of the Yukon, will only tomorrow go away to la belle France, making from here to his boat 700 miles on foot.

He will remit to you a letter with the nugget of gold, for our kind Superior General, and beg of him to pay you our compliments and give you news of our missions. He will tell of our church and of the chapel. Fr. Desmarais and Brother Dumas have put up at Eldorado and Bonanza, 14 miles from Dawson and at which we give service every fortnight, going there on foot! He will speak to you of the other posts which we visit from time to time: of Forty-Mile, Last Chance, Dominion, Stewart River, Selkirk, Thistle Creek, etc., etc.

I will no more than say that we suffer from want of epistolary relations with our superiors, no letters from Paris, none from Montreal, nor from Bishop Grouard, though we hear from our friends outside the Congregation. How explain that? We suffer; we do not complain so happy are we in the good we do to the mining population entrusted to our charge.

Our relations with Fr. Judge, S.J., are amicable and fraternal. Our people are edified. At my invitation he comes to sing Mass and preach in turn with Fr. Desmarais and me, Fr. Lefebvre and (page 32) Fr. ^{COR}Gobeil not having English enough to exercise the ministry in that tongue. This gap will be filled by the new subject you will be so kind as to send us.

When I came here there was no Catholic cemetery. Our people were interred pêle-mêle with the

Protestants, the unbelievers, etc., in an unenclosed field. I contrived to buy five acres just proper for this purpose and a little more than a mile from the city.

We have always some sick. In three months I have interred 31 men, three women and one child. There are more than 100 sick in the hospital of St. Ann in care of the Sisters.

The building of our presbytery goes forward slowly, for I am loath to go into debt. We are safe from bad weather but not from the cold which was 36° below November 6. Since, the cold was 48°. No window frames, no glass in half our windows. A 10-inch square pane costs \$2.50.

While provided with the necessary in food and clothing, our furniture is of the most primitive. For each of us a table, plate and an iron goblet, a small bench and in guise of a spring-bed, a box filled with shavings. Straw would be a luxury here. Of course every comfort can be got for money.

Rich as the country is, it is replete with disappointments, discontent, even poverty among the majority of those coming in the last six months. For our part we accepted the position with the best of good will and as long as we are able to work, we shall look for no change. (page 33)

Seeing the disposition of the places and the impossibility for us to correspond with Bishop Grouard, unless by passing through New Westminster and St. Albert, it appears to me more rational to attach our Yukon district to New Westminster wherewith we can easily communicate. It is even more commodious and more expeditious to correspond with Paris than with Lake Athabasca, residence of Bishop Grouard.

In another week, about December 15, 1898, the sun will no longer shine on the streets of Dawson and that will last a whole month. Fancy all the candles we shall burn!

Well, I finish. I felt the need of speaking to a Father from whom I would be happy to get a word of encouragement!

DEATH OF FATHER JUDGE, S.J.

Writing upon another matter to Father Boisraine! I communicate to you an important but sad news. Father Judge, my predecessor and neighbor here at Dawson died the 16th (of January 1899, at 48 years of age, succumbing to an attack of pneumonia. I was his confessor but absent a

the moment. Father Desmarais, at his request, assisted him during his sickness, gave him the Last Sacraments which he received with great faith and piety, preserving his consciousness till the last instant.

Father Judge was an excellent religious, full of zeal for the salvation of souls and of charity for the sick. Hence he was popular among the Catholic and Protestant miners. I conducted the (page 34) funeral and sang the solemn requiem Mass on the 20th assisted by Fr. Desmarais and Fr. Corbeil, as deacon and subdeacon. Fr. Desmarais delivered the sermon. I also spoke a few words. The deceased was interred in the church near the altar on the Gospel side. His sudden demise definitively regulates our taking over and leaves us entirely in charge of the Klondike mission.

By his will Fr. Judge has bequeathed everything to his superior, Fr. René, with instructions to transfer the property of the hospital to the St. Ann Sisters with whom he adjoined a committee of 3 members to manage the work till the arrival of Fr. René. From now on at the request of the executors I am Spiritual Director of the Hospital, confessor of the Sisters and visitor of the wards wherein there are at the moment 52 patients.

I was absent, as I said, when Fr. Judge was sick and this is why. Our mining country comprises a vast territory over which there are scattered thousands of miners, a great many of them Catholics. Already, several times I have sent out Fr. Desmarais and Fr. Corbeil, side by side, to give sermons in the different places that we visit, in summer by the Yukon River, in winter on foot or by dog trains. As I also thought it my duty to make an annual visit to their different posts, so off I went the day after the Epiphany (1899), accompanied by our good Father Lefebvre who is an expert in those sorts of journeys and I let him (page 35) mush with the two dogs I had hired to draw us. The cold marked -32°F . When not fatigued I walked but I rode when not too cold. Thanks be to God we had fine weather and a smooth icy road. During the entire outing the thermometer held at -30°F . The sun which for a month had not appeared above the horizon pushed up into sight a small part of its disc on the 15th of this month (January).

I was busy with a mission to the Catholics scattered about the creeks - Last Chance, Dominion, Gold Bottom - when a message arrived calling me back in all haste to Dawson because of Fr. Judge's sickness. After a precipitate march I got back on the 16th in the evening but too late. The Father was nearly an hour dead. You know the rest.

What shall I tell you of the country? According to the miners and to my own eyes, we have the richest mining country in the world. Millions and millions of dollars will come out of it. The labor

of extracting it is also the most toilsome in the world. It will not be long before heavy hydraulic hammer drills and scoops will replace stout arms. It will be the rule of the companies with large capital which will control all the ground. Some of them are already in action. For the moment, in spite of our wealth a fraction of which has been exploited, poverty, nay, black misery is rampant.

Out of the 30,000 men herded in the country, probably no more than a dozen or two divide the Yukon gold between them. (page 36) The metal has become the prey of speculators, and three quarters of the population, for a multitude of reasons, curse the country they live in. The public health is in a shocking state. Hardly is there a cheering silver lining in the general wretchedness.

The same mail brings this from Fr. Desmarais. I have journeyed apostolically summer, fall and winter to Forty-Mile, limit of the Vicariate, to Stuart River, Selkirk, Bonanza, Eldorado where I have set up a mission called St. Joseph's Chapel. It is composed of two tents, one of them the sanctuary, the other the nave. It has a floor, a stove and pews. Since November 1st, I have said Mass in it nearly every Sunday, even the Midnight Mass, since the distance to travel is trifling, 14 miles. I do it on foot.

The same as on my Oblation day I repeat here, "It is my happiness to go wheresoever Obedience calls me."

Most interesting are these details regarding our new mission of the Yukon. Would that they were more numerous and more complete! Other elements, we hope, will come and combine with them to give the history of this foundation its last form. In the meantime we pray God and our Immaculate Mother to bless the first and most valiant pioneers of this beautiful but rude mission and permit them to gather here and there some blossom amid their thorns.

(Note:- Dawson, Klondike River and the region south of the river being this name, lies in 64°N. and 140°W. The Arctic Circle is 66° 32' N.) (page 37)

THE YUKON (continued)

MISSION, 1934, ff 400-5

Statistics up to 30 June, 1934:

• Area: about 342,000 sq. miles

• Missionary Personnel:

19 priests, 17 of them Oblates, (7 Canadians, 6 French, 1 Irish, 1 English, 1 German)

1 Oblate Lay Brother of Mary Immaculate (English)

34 Sisters as follows:

17 St. Ann of Lachine (French Canadian)

8 St. Joseph of Toronto (Canadian)

9 of the Holy Child Jesus (5 Canadian, 2 French, 2 Irish)

2 Students of the Grand Seminary.

• Auxilliary Personnel:

4 Catechists, two of them women

8 Schoolmasters

2 Infirmarians.

• Population:

11,953 of which:

8045 Catholics (5410 Whites, 2454 Indians, 90 Half Breeds).

463 Schismatics

2,300 Protestants

45 Jews

1,100 Chinese and Jap Pagans (page 38)

• Ecclesiastical Divisions:

4 districts, 8 parish or quasi-parish

9 principal, and 29 secondary stations.

• Sacred Edifices:

2 churches large enough to contain at least 400 of the faithful.

30 smaller ones

• Works:

2 hospitals (84 beds)

1 Home for old men (12)

• Schools:

6 Elementary (100 boys, 175 girls)

• Catholic Life:

263 Baptisms, 44 of them adults

705 deaths, 138 Emigrants

33,174 Communion of which 2,674 are registered Easter Duties

45 marriages, 7 of them mixed

8 Missions to the people and 1 to Clergy

Civil State

The territory covered by this Vicariate is wholly Canadian belonging, however, to two different civil provinces. The South is in British Columbia; it is by far the most important part. The north occupies all the Yukon properly speaking which was formerly most (page 39) prosperous, but today is very much reduced. There are about 4200 people in all. Twenty-five years ago there were at least 60,000 attracted by the gold mines since exhausted.

The great majority of the population is English and Protestant. The Government is Protestant or rather indifferent to all religion. It grants some small privileges to Catholic hospitals and lets us free to have our schools, orphans, to build and maintain them with our own funds, after we pay our share of taxes for the public schools. In the past, the Bishops of B.C. did their utmost to move the Government to exempt Catholic schools from taxation but without any immediate result. Apart from that we live on good terms with the civil authorities.

Religion

As already stated, we live here in an English and Protestant land. Many are indifferent to all religion. However, when the Government makes the census, they claim for themselves the demonimation of their parents. The Chinese and Japanese immigrants are the only pagans. They number about 1100 according to the Government census. There are 463 Orthodox Greeks and about 45 Jews. The rest, namely 2,300, belong to Protestantism divided into all sorts of sects, and behind Protestantism lurks Freemasonry, very powerful in our parts. These latter years, Communism has made (page 40) considerable gains among the proletarians but not enough to seize the reins of government as yet. In this unwholesome atmosphere our Catholics have to live, 8040 all told. One of the worst results are the mixed marriages for which no prevention is operative. For the protection of their faith, apostolic workers must specialize in zeal, vigilance and tact. In spite of countless obstacles these workers make some conversions among the Protestants themselves.

Schools

The financial depression still rages unconfined by the efforts of the government to banish it. It still grips many of our folk in unemployment and poverty. It is especially hard on the parochial schools. Without the succor of the grant from the Propagation of the Faith the school of my pro-Cathedra would have been closed two years ago. We try everything to collect funds to support it: bazaars,

charity sales, soirées. The parishoners exhibit the best of good will but fall short, just the same, of balancing the budget. The good Sisters of St. Joseph, who have had the charge, teach however for excessively low salaries. The most of our Indian schools are kept going on the small subsidy of the Federal Government.

We have been able to continue our summer or vacation school for the children of families far from the Church and isolated. It permits us to give a little Christian education to those children who are poor and neglected. (page 41) This school has afforded us many consolations. We propose to reopen next summer on as great a scale as possible. Evidently we shall be liable for all the expenses.

New Foundations

We continue to build, replace, repair, going on according to our means. The McDame Church is now receiving its finishing touches and it will be blessed next week; the one in course of construction at Tackla will be finished next summer. Other churches are undergoing considerable reparations.

The Hospital of the Sacred Heart, begun last year at Smithers and terminated this year, is the most important, directed by the Sisters of St. Ann. It was blessed on the 8th of June last and officially opened the same day to the public. It was a great day of rejoicing for the little city. The civil and civic authorities were present with a great concourse of people Catholic and Protestant. That day granted a holiday to the whole city.

Missionaries and Their Special Works

The distances and the resulting isolation are the serious obstacles to be surmounted by the missionaries of northern B.C. The missions are too small to place a priest in every one. Lately, an annual visit to 39 savages at Caribou Hide (page 42) entailed more than 950 miles; a visit to 45 savages at White Water at the source of the Findlay River was about the same in miles; Liard Post is in the same category. The Indians contribute a little, no doubt, to lighten the great expense. The conveyance is by canoe or horseback. Roads have not yet been cut through this country. The airplane is both expensive and its schedule or timetable is apt to be changed or cancelled without notice.

The Apostolic Vicar evidently has his large share in those courses over lakes, rivers and mountains.

He has just come back from Bear Lake whither he had gone after having visited the nearer missions. The excessive devotion which the Indians evince for him enabled to make this long and toilsome journey easily enough. When the Chief of the last camp learned the Bishop wanted to go as far as Bear Lake, there was a meeting wherein it was decided to give him seven of their stalwarts to take care of him and of Fr. Borsh who went with him. It meant giving up three days, 15 hours each. A river floated trees in it that it had uprooted in its course. The trees formed dams which with the addition of 3 natural portages indicates what obstacles our men had to overcome. What labor! That too indicates the dispositions of our savages, their joy at meeting the Bishop and the priest, their fervor in following the exercises of the missions preached to them in those circumstances, in receiving the sacraments (several were confirmed in each camp), and lastly, the reciprocal joy and consolations of the Bishop and the priest. May the good Lord continue to bless them!

(page 43) (We are back to "Mission" 1937, p. 295)

The Yukon and Prince Rupert Vicariate comprises three fairly distinct regions:

The Line, so designated because of the proximity of the great railway from Edmonton to Prince Rupert.

The Coast, extending about 70 miles from the south of Prince Rupert to its entry into Alaska

The North, from the massif of the Rocky Mountains to the waters of the Yukon River.

The Line comprises a long thread of small missions strung to the environs of forts or small towns with four fixed residences over an extent or rather a length of 450 miles. Above and below there are grouped a certain number of branches either Indian or White which permits a Father in charge of a residence to reach his sheep every month or six weeks.

Although the Lejac post will soon look after six churches with a single priest, the future looks brighter, thanks to the reinforcement afforded by the Fathers of the English tongue of the American Province (Buffalo), ready better than anyone for this mixed work in Indian and White parishes.

The Coast part is almost wholly Protestant for many years. There is here a most arduous apostolate. In this region convictions are null and morality is not troublesome. The only means that tells with them is the exemplary life (page 44) of the priest. Those who still have Indian blood in their veins are proud to hear their language spoken during the sermon and catechism.

Those Indians of the Coast are the most numerous and the most polished. They are in permanent contact with millionaire tourists and others who, winter and summer, sojourn in Alaska and th

Yukon.

Our actual missions are in general in the interior. Among them there are a great many Catholics who register as such only if we go and talk to them in their homes. To keep and save this good requires many missionaries. The distances are well nigh impossible. Eleven different languages are spoken in this Vicariate. Protestant ministers bob up everywhere.

The miners belong to all the nationalities. In great part they are shy, obliging the missionary to undertake all the trouble of getting acquainted with them in the remote diggings where they happen to be at work. This apostolate is important because the influence of the white on the savage is great. The more the Catholic element prevails the easier it will be in relations with the Indians, to change these emigrants into lay apostles which certain ones already are.

Practically there are very few Esquimaux in the Yukon. At "Old Crow", a village midway between Herschel Island and Dawson City, which depends on the Yukon River for access has been hitherto visited by our missionaries. At Aklavik there are a few families. His Lordship has hesitated about sending someone. (page 45) Protestants, sticklers, of course, for non-sectarianism, are drifting in. The three whites there are not overly sympathetic. To place a priest there alone, a thousand miles away from any other Oblate, without any sympathy around him, is hardly recommendable.

Besides there are Esquimaux at Herschell Island, straight north of the Vicariate. They are rather birds of passage, spending little time in residence there.

The Indians of the Yukon are scattered in small bands. The parents of a great number of them were baptized by Fr. Clut, O.M.I. and Fr. Grouard, O.M.I. and Fr. Lecorre, O.M.I.. They have passed over to Protestantism without knowing it! The ones living beyond the reach of the minister, and following him only for the few days they spend at the fort selling their furs, will return more easily perhaps to us.

The population of the Territory of the Yukon classified according to the principal religions (1931 census):

2299 Anglicans	239 Lutherans
667 Catholics	14 Baptists
432 Presbyterians	38 Protestants
352 United Church	33 Buddhists and Confucians

Then:

14 Christian Scientists	2 Jews
8 Orthodox Russians	1 Adventist
6 Orthodox Christian Russians	81 Other Sects
3 Mormons	9 Not given

Total Population: 4,230.

(page 46)

TWO DOCUMENTS

On the Religious Situation of the Indians Within the Vicariate of the Yukon

At the memorable meeting in Lejac Indian Residential School, Lejac, B.C., December 11, 1933, you asked why the Oblates who had succeeded in converting the Indians of the interior B.C. have left but a feeble trace on the littoral of the Pacific.

History gives us the reason. Acquiescing to the requests of Bishop Demers, Bishop of Victoria on Vancouver Island and of B.C., Bishop de Mazenod, O.M.I. consented to send him the Oblates who had been at work in Oregon.

The Oblates arrived in Victoria in 1858 and set to work on Vancouver Island. In less than two years they built two chapels in the Esquimalt suburb for the whites at the same lavishing thus cares on the savages of the neighborhood, forming excellent Christians among them. In 1860 a church was built at Victoria itself for both Whites and Red Men. In 1863 the first stone for a school was laid to which Whites and Indians of all religions were freely admitted.

In a peninsula 18 miles long to the north of Victoria there dwelt about 2000 Saanich Indians. They were corrupt, eager for fire water, committing in the drunken state murders with a refinement of cruelty fit to inspire horror. By their zeal, devotion and patience, the Oblates succeeded in persuading the evil-doers to give up their disorders and built, by their own hands, a chapel large (page 47) enough to accommodate a hundred persons and it was filled every Sunday.

After having buttressed righteousness in the surroundings of Victoria and Esquimalt, the Oblates spent ten years exploring Vancouver Island in every corner with a view to preparing centres of religious conversions and of thereafter launching out to the Queen Charlotte Archipelago. The majority of the Aborigines scattered over those vast spaces were barbarians and even cannibals.

From stage to stage the missionaries reached Fort Rupert (Vancouver Island), more than 250 miles from their point of departure. In 1863 they did their best to set up a mission among the Kinsuits, Indians so depraved as to prostitute their wives for the drink that rendered them ferocious and bloodthirsty, refusing to listen to the Fathers and stopping their children from going to them for religious instruction.

In 1864 the Fathers explored the Archipelago of Queen Charlottes (Islands). Meeting with no better encouragement there, they returned to Fort Rupert, there remaining to sow the good seed. After two years of serious labor they reaped no harvest. From there they fanned out towards 14 villages and crossed to the coast of B.C. in front. Everywhere the Indians in their extreme corruption refused to listen to anything. Referring to heaven drew sneers from them. When they were reminded of the torments of hell they stopped their ears. Over along the coast of B.C. the natives were less hostile.

After three years of futile efforts with the Kinsuits the Oblates thought it wiser to try elsewhere. As a centre of their operations (page 48) they selected Rarovais, a small island between the large Vancouver Island and the continent, placing this new mission under the patronage of the Archangel Michael. Around Rarovais there were several small islands inhabited by wicked and depraved Indians. The shameful vices and intoxicating liquors decimated the population, resistant to the influence of the missionaries. The geographical situation of the district of St. Michael between Vancouver Island and the mainland was on the route of the trading ships. Traffickers without conscience and honesty introduced three scourges: irreligion, rum and immorality. Many a time the Fathers put to themselves the question, "Was it not more advantageous to carry the Gospel to better disposed souls?" Nothing could persuade the Indians. They continued to be robbers, assassins, drunkards, even man-eaters. After ten years nothing was to be done by the missionaries except shake the dust from their feet. Even today in 1935 those still living in those camps, though apparently civilized, are not more virtuous in spite of the regular visits made to them by the clergy of all the demoninations in this day when it is so easy to journey back and forth.

In 1864, Father d'Herbomez, O.M.I. was consecrated Bishop, became the first Vicar Apostolic of B.C. (that is, of the mainland part, Vancouver Island being now a bishopric by itself). Thereby British Columbia was detached from the Diocese of Vancouver Island and New Westminster became the residence of the new Vicar Apostolic. (page 49)

Upon a peninsula a little more than 30 miles north west of New Westminster at Sechelt, the Sechelt tribe was the first to be converted and, under the direction of the Oblates, a fine village with a great

church replaced the huts of the bark of trees. The Squamish, dwelling upon the northern shore of Burrard Inlet, straight across from the spot as terminus of the Canadian Pacific railway, imitated the Sechelts and entered the way of Christian civilization.

These successes re-animating the courage of the missionaries to undertake new attempts towards the north of the littoral but with a negative result and from that time they worked entirely for the conversion of the interior of B.C. whither they were called with loud orics to which they could not respond because of the small number of missionaries.

Thus history furnishes us with two reasons for the abandonment of the Littoral:

1. absolute refusal of the savages to open their eyes to the light of the Gospel,
2. small numbers of apostolic workers.

Hoping that these few lines may be sufficient answer to the above questions, Very Rev. Father, I am

Your humble and devoted son in Mary Immaculate,

N. Coccola, O.M.I.

(page 50)

LETTER TO THE VERY REV. SUPERIOR-GENERAL
(December 20th, 1935)

Answer to the Question of the Very Reverend Superior-General

1. In the Vicariate of the Yukon and Prince Rupert the Indians are all Catholics or Protestants. Pagans, properly speaking, there are none any more. According to the report of the Federal Government, the Protestants number about 3334 in British Columbia and 2264 in the Yukon. There are 2500 Catholics in British Columbia and 50 in the Yukon.

2. The Protestant tribes are situated upon the Pacific Coast and from there to 200 Mile in the interior and out in the Charlotte Islands in (British) Columbia. In the Yukon they are in great part strung along the Yukon River. There are a few on the Porcupine and Pelley Rivers to the north.

3. The great reason why these Indians are not Catholics has been the dearth of priests. There are

minor reasons such as the apostasy of Fr. Wilmer in British Columbia. These Indians have been taken in by the Protestant minister long before the formation of the Vicariate of the Yukon and Prince Rupert. They were a free field and no Catholic priest was with them. The Athabasca-Mackenzie administration is responsible for the loss of the Indians in the Yukon and that of New Westminster for those in British Columbia. Bishop Bompas (Anglican) has crossed the Rockies and seized upon the Yukon Indians without opposition from Athabasca-Mackenzie.

4. Small remedy has been applied to the very regrettable situation because of the lack of evangelical workers. We have hardly priests enough to take care of the faithful and to defend them against the invasion of vice and (page 51) our infidelity. Impossible therefore to give ourselves seriously to the work of systematically converting Protestants.

5. The conversion of the Protestant Indians is not so easy as one may imagine. Those hold to the religion of their first baptism, an easy religion that of the great majority of the Whites. Furthermore there is a minister in every little group; there he stands on guard and has the means to keep the priest at a distance.

However, if the conversion of these Indians is difficult it is not impossible. There are points where it may be essayed with different chances of success. The first would be Hagelweiget near Hazelton. Hagelweiget is a Catholic village near this Protestant village. If a Catholic priest, skilful and zealous, could reside in a manner almost permanent at this post he might make contact with the neighbors. Already at this a Protestant just missed becoming Catholic this father himself having asked to be taken into the Church. The movement could be continued. But for that there must be a greater number of priests for, I repeat, we have not at the moment even the necessary to provide for the requirements of the Domesticorum Fidei.

(Extract of a letter from Bishop Bunoz, O.M.I., written to the Very Rev. Father Superior General, December 22, 1935) (page 52)

Fort St. James Mission

Past and Present

The mission of Fort St. James is, I believe, the first mission founded in the Vicariate. It was Sept. 16, 1842, when Father Demers came thither for the first time. He spent three days, instructing the adults and baptizing infants. He went so far as to teach the Natives some canticles. We know no more about Father Demers' visit to Stuart Lake. It was the first time that a priest brought the glad

tidings to this country. Father de Smet, a Jesuit came from Europe in 1844, accompanied by priests and a few Sisters. Among the former was Father John Nobili, likewise a Jesuit, who was given the mission to visit the posts of northern B.C. In consequence this priest set out in June 1845, accompanied by a young lay novice, Brother Noel Saevio, for Stuart Lake and the intermediary posts. The precise date of his arrival cannot be determined. It is known that he remained five days at Fort St. James, from there likely going south. The next year on Dec. 24 he was again at Stuart Lake. He remained there eleven days this time, inveighing not only against the vices common to humanity, but besides against certain customs peculiar to the Carriers, like the cremation of the dead and seduction of the widows to slavery. A big lodge which had served for the incantations of the sorcerers was turned into a church. (page 53).

Father Nobili soon went south and for twenty years no priest visited this remote country. In 1868 the evangelization of this country really began on the arrival of Father McGuckin, O.M.I. and Father Lejac, O.M.I. Fort St. James rapidly became the center for missionaries. Hence they went into the whole surrounding country to convert the Indians. At the same time it was a commercial post for the Indians, the Hudson Bay Company established its stores at this place; Fort St. James has perhaps lost some of its importance. There are several Indian villages scattered along the lake. There are about 300 Indians at this Fort and 12 miles away a village at Pinché; another at Tatché, 28 miles further on, and some small villages down the shore. Besides the Indians I have to look after a small White parish. Vanderhoof, 20 miles from here, is a small town of about 400 people, 300 of them Catholics. I go thither once a month to say Mass of a Sunday. The remainder of the White population in the little town are Anglicans or Methodists, a fact accounting for the 3 churches in the little place. It is very much the same thing in all our towns of Whites in B.C. In Prince Rupert itself I have counted 7 or 8 churches and if we included sects without any determined place of worship the total might be put at 11 or 12. The Masons rejoice in a temple, one of the largest and most majestic in the city, with a sort of (page 54) "Reverend Pastor" who presides at their meetings, their ceremonies, their funerals and very likely at the nocturnal dances of the three-point brethren.

There is not such a diversity of religions among the Indians. The majority are Catholics, the Anglicans next. In the Yukon, the Anglican Indians predominate. Their census is 1220 while our Catholic one includes 136. A great deal of work remains to be done. Recently during the canonical visitation of the Vicariate the Visitor favored a lay staff for the Vicariate.

But returning to my missions I will add that Fort St. James is a tourist region in summer. Thirty tourists from California were here last week. Some say it is one of the most picturesque parts of

B.C. It is possible that this village is to become a gold-mining center. For the last two or three years the number of goldseekers seems to be on the increase. It was thus that I lately met two of Fr. Delalande, O.M.I.'s parishoners going to look for gold 125 miles from here. I was quietly returning from some visits to Indians, walking along a somewhat lonely road when suddenly a voice shouted at me, "Come in! Come in!" I looked. At the entrance to the woods stood a man. I was unable to tell whether he was White or Indian. There was no difficulty about going into his house, for I was in plain daylight. Yet before advancing further, I looked twice, for my man was not the most reassuring in appearance, hair shaggy, beard a week old, a very sharp cutlass (page 55) hanging from his belt without counting that from time to time he flashed out this cutlass whirling it around his head. At length I approached; we exchanged our names. He told me he had been at Aklavik and began to talk of Fr. Delalande, O.M.I. and Fr. Coty, O.M.I. He did not know these as well as I had expected so I began to doubt his identity. In a solemn tone he declared, "I have civilization. I have gone into civilization twice, once to take a fool to the asylum". Probably he fancied that asylums constituted the whole of civilization. I better understood his hatred of civilization when I learned that several days earlier he had spent several days in prison for vagabondage. The poor man had no papers. The police desired to know who he was, so incarcerated him till it was found that in reality he must have been a descendent of Mackenzie and that he was harmless.

Yesterday another encounter, more serious this time. A few hours before I had heard that an individual had organized a Protestant Sunday School for the few Protestant Whites of the village. Nothing astonishing in that; that was probably always the custom. But this Sunday some youngsters went to proselytize an Indian Catholic family. One of the children in this family had even gone to attend the school. In the evening I took a little walk in the village and presently I met the individuals in question recently come from Vancouver.

Those gentlemen informed me how they were members of the "International Association of Bible Students". I saw afterwards how little versed they were in Bible, but instead, (page 56) they were on hand to teach the Holy Bible, the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. That did not amount to much. Even so, there was no need at all of this, since there was on the spot a priest who taught the Bible every day! Thereupon, behold you, they explain that the Bible they teach is not the same as mine!

For them to believe simply in our Lord Jesus Christ will do; very simple, too, is morality. The first principle they lay down is to the effect that the person who believes in Jesus Christ cannot sin. I punch my neighbor and say "I believe in Jesus Christ". My assault and battery is thereby

praiseworthy. Their stupid theories may not convert the Indians. Just the same, I reminded them of the article of the law which prohibits Whites from initiating any propaganda whatsoever on the Indian Reserves. We parted the best of friends and one of them even spoke of making me a visit the next day.

His Lordship, Bishop Bunoz, is gone out on his pastoral tour. At the present moment he should be in Barkerville in this southern part of the Vicariate. Two years ago this place was unknown. Presto! Gold is found. There was a rush of people and a new city rises. More about it anon.

Another news that may be of interest to you: The Sisters of St. Ann are going to found a hospital at Smithers. The majority in this town are Protestants (out of 1000 inhabitants there are only 150 Catholics). The new hospital will be a precious help for the development of Catholicism in this region. (page 57)

My stay of 4 months at Fort St. James was certainly very agreeable. I assure you we feel a famous difference when we compare the piety of the Indians with the frigidity of the Whites who are content with a Sunday Mass. Like Rev. Fr. Louis Coty, I most frequently speak of the dance.

Finally, after much effort, they seem to comprehend and at Fort St. James they have left off all dancing three months ago. Will it last? I can't tell, they are so enamored of the dance. And again some remark how we behave far differently with the Whites on this subject. We are often forced to keep silence with the latter, for we feel our words would not bear the least fruit. Sometimes even certain priests think it better to organize dances in our Catholic halls for the sake of facilitating relations between the young people who are Catholic and thus diminish the number of mixed marriages. In regard to the Indians this danger is not to be feared.

My stay in Fort St. James was further made agreeable by a journey to Bear Lake. Bear Lake is about 225 miles from Fort St. James. It was visited for the last time 20 years ago. His Lordship wrote me at the beginning of August to go there and visit those Indians. I was getting ready to start in my motor canoe on the Lake when I met an individual who happened to be going to the same place by airplane. He proposed that I accompany him and naturally I accepted. That facilitated the journey. All the journey was not by air, only the hardest part, from Takla Lake to Bear Lake. It took me 35 minutes to go and six days to return rowing and paddling, horseback and motor boat.

On my arrival at Bear Lake I found (page 58) about 40 Indians. Some of them had never cast eyes

on a priest. The Bear Lake people were enthusiastic. They had forgotten their prayers somewhat. A few hours with the catechism revived their faith and piety.

I called them together four times a day. At seven o'clock the children were on hand for their instruction. By the way, grown-ups who were still children on this point attended at this hour and at two, more instructions. At seven Benediction and preaching, 8 Baptisms of 1-, 2- or 3-year-olds and 2 marriages. Let us pause a little at those two marriages.

You are about to laugh a little. There were the first two marriages I had the honor to officiate at.

When I came to Bear Lake I heard that two individuals, Atta and Mary, had been married in the absence of the priest in the presence of two witnesses at Takla Lake. All seemed regular. Accordingly a certificate had been produced that left me in doubt as to the validity of this contract. The two, after a year of marriage, separated. Hearing me speak of the indissolubility of marriage, the wife wanted to go back to her husband. This was easy. Indians agree again as easily as they quarrel. I was going to say as easily as they marry. Marriage with such and such a one is for them a matter of circumstance and most of the time they hardly wait to reflect.

The man Atta lived 12 miles from Bear Lake. He had therefore decided that his wife should come to meet him in the woods when I would start out again on (page 59) a return journey from that side, and I would then give them the matrimonial blessing so that they would be completely satisfied and would no longer say, "We have not been married before the priest".

At the same time I would marry on the edge of the forest two individuals who had been living together for two years. The day of departure came. There were ten persons in our bark canoes. After paddling five or six hours we were on the shore of Bear Lake and there we met the two men, Atta and Denis, who indeed were waiting with horses to take me to Takla Lake. They were perhaps a little surprised on hearing that I was preparing to marry one of them and to bless the other's marriage, but they gladly accepted it.

It had been my idea merely to tell them marriage was indissoluble and explain the catechism a little regarding this sacrament, when behold, I remarked the young Atta knew hardly anything about religion.

At my question whether he was a Catholic (Normally we do not put such a question to Indians

around Fort St. James, it being taken for granted that they are all Catholics), he answered he was not. One of my companions said to me, "I really think he's a Catholic; he has been baptized last year by Chief Peter at Takla". After a few questions I knew the whole story.

Atta and Mary decided to get married. To this end, hearing that there was a priest in passage at Takla Lake they went thither last year. But the priest had gone by the time they arrived. (page 60) The Indian chief of the village desired to arrange the affair. He decreed that the marriage should be celebrated before himself and two witnesses. A difficulty came up: the young man had not been baptized, thereby a impediment? No matter! The chief would himself baptize the young man. Behold, in what manner the poor chap had been baptized by the Chief without as much as knowing what Baptism is, and without ever getting any training in religious life. A Baptism in such condition was surely doubtful. In case of doubt about the Baptism, doubt resulted for the marriage. I decided upon instructing the youth next morning. I baptized him conditionally. Next were a conditional confession, a first communion and a renewal of consent for the marriage.

So happy were the two couples lately married that they could not bear to separate any more and they adjourned to the store to regale their unions. On that account and also on account of rain and snow I had to camp under tent for two days before riding off on horseback on the road between Takla Lake and Bear Lake. It was my first experience on horseback and that for two days climbing up and coming down mountains.

But since I am on the subject of marriages, here is another, but this time it was impossible to fix the situation.

Two years ago two individuals arrived one afternoon at Bear Lake, Pascha and Moses. Pascha had a sister-in-law there. Moses was seemingly coming for the first time. Lo and behold, Pascha took it into her (page 61) head to arrange a match between her sister-in-law and Moses. Did she speak of it to Moses at the start? It is hard to say. At any rate, about ten at night she began to ply Moses with liquor and continued doing so till midnight, even perhaps till seven in the morning (so Moses declares). Meanwhile Pascha retired to the Chief's house and arranged with him for the date of the nuptials about 9 or 10 o'clock. There were two witnesses, Pascha and Charlie. Came the hour for the wedding. The cortege went to the church. The groom asserted to me that he had been supported by someone to prevent him from falling. Yet, a queer feature, not a person at Bear Lake told me that Moses was drunk. The couple both answered the "I do" to the traditional questions put by the chief. Then there was the return to the house.

The ceremony was ended. If one could believe Moses, one could declare the marriage invalid. But unfortunately there are certain reasons against him. Surely Moses was not eight days drunk. Yet he admitted to me himself that he had stayed with his wife a whole week. Some even asserted he stayed for two months. An inquiry of some length will help us to clear up the case, which is at least comical. It all goes to show the slight reflection the Indian gives an important undertaking like marriage. Most of the time when you are on the point of leaving them that they come begging you to marry them next day. This last minute request entails omission of the publication of the banns. The priests have hitherto refused their consent or perhaps the youth had thought of marrying in the last day or two only.

I do not know whether I related to you what happened Tuesday to Bishop Bunoz. (page 62) A young couple were to be married, the ceremony being booked for the morning Mass. The two were in the church among the faithful. As was the custom they came forward when they were called to the sanctuary. Through a certain shyness more or less ill-placed they would not come forward by themselves exposed to the gaze of all. The Bishop called, "Let those who are to be married this morning come up." No answer. Second call, the woman came forward. Third call, the men chuckled, pushed the groom. "Go! Off with you!" His Lordship speaks to him, "Come along, Paul. You asked me yesterday evening to marry you this morning!" and the man, overwhelmed with shame, made a sign, "I no longer want to." In the space of one night his idea had changed. Imagine how the bride blushed as she went back to her place. An hour or two later his Lordship was getting ready to leave. Paul approached, "My Lord, will you be pleased to marry me?". Now he was wishing to marry the same girl he had refused in the morning. "And why, then, did you back out this morning?" "Oh, I was ashamed before all the others", Paul answered. It is a fact that mimicry is a characteristic of the Indians, and in circumstances like the above, they easily bandy smiles and quips. No wonder the fellow cringed.

As you see the Indians at Fort St. James are never bored. They make long sailings, easy sailings, however, because of the great lakes abounding in this region. I have not alluded to the wild and ferocious beasts we have met on the route. Lately the Jesuits met a bear on the Alaska mountains and the news went the rounds of the newspapers. For them that is not so extraordinary. We met three along my journey. We fired on one when the animal without mountain for more. (page 63)

Another of the bears, having sniffed at our horse, streaked off like a flash. We were, besides, without a gun at the moment. A third was too far away and as soon as he heard the sound of our oars, he hurriedly made for the top of the mountain.

Pray that the good Master may bless these remote missions, both Indian Missions and White Missions.

Marcel M^Urie, O.M.I.

The Indians of Hagwilget

Prince Rupert, Jan. 19, 1934

His Lordship has sent me to spend Christmas time among the Indians of Hagwilget and. I have returned from there only three days ago. Quite often during my stay among them I had to preach to them twice a day and all the rest of my time was taken up by visits to the different villages.

I am always what I would call "an ambulating missionary". I believe indeed that, if this roving continues, in two years I will have contacted all the Indians in the Vicariate. Ten days in one place, a fortnight in another. And pronto! A new change! There is a great disadvantage in this especially at the starting of the missionary life.

I will humbly tell you a few things about my last stay in the Hagwilget village. It is an Indian Mission, not a White except the school master and his family. All the Indians of this village are Catholics. But 4 miles away (page 64) there is a small town of Whites and an Indian reserve. These latter people go either to the Salvation Army's meeting or to the Anglican and Methodist or United Churches. A certain number are pagan.

Moreover the Indian adherents of the Salvation Army might very often be listed as pagans since several of them have not been baptized, their ministers telling them that baptism is unnecessary. Not having even the lights which the Protestant Whites may enjoy, for the most part illiterate, they avoid association with the Catholic missionary against whom they entertain all sorts of unfriendly prejudices. So far, they give no sign that they are in any way tending to conversion.

However a few, attracted by curiosity, do now and then come to our services (for the Indians are curious). They desire to know what you are doing, where you are going and what you are going to say.

In our churches they remark a certain difference between their own manner of honoring God and the manner of the Catholic Indians. They are edified by seeing our people coming to the church

morning and evening to pray while they enjoy themselves playing the tambour and the big box in the Salvation Army hall after having given ear to the "false prophets" who are willing to rise in this gathering. And the Lord knows how many of those false prophets do rise up among them. For when you permit an Indian to speak in public he hardly knows when to finish.

Do pray, then, that grace may touch the hearts of those poor Indians who possess merely the varnish of Christianity and are still pagans in fact. (page 65)

Up to the present I have not yet felt the cold around here. At Prince Rupert we are on the seashore and the temperature is rather moderate. But at Christmas in the interior it was not the same thing, -40° of frost. But we had plenty of wood and we use it. The Indians too use it and with so little precaution that they burn their houses down. It is what happened in one house during my stay in Hagwilget. A poor old woman, who was sleeping beside the stove, happened to be burned alive on the very eve of the Epiphany. Vain were all efforts to save her. In two or three minutes the house was a mass of fire. All I could do was to give her a last absolution. Nearly all the inhabitants of the village were on the scene, but absolutely impotent to subdue the flames with only snow and ice. At the end of five minutes we succeeded in pulling down the cabin whereupon I could reach the body of the poor thing to give her conditional anointing.

The death of the Indian occasions in the village a series of festivals, vestiges of former pagan traditions. The missionaries have always tried to suppress those rejoicings, disrespectful of the dead and at the same time impoverishing the relatives of the deceased for several months.

There are still some remains of these festivities once called "potlatch" especially in the places where Catholic Indians have held contact with Protestant Indians. They will keep the corpse for five or six days, nay, for a fortnight, and every evening the relatives of the deceased will receive their friends for supper. Men, women, children, everybody goes. They eat, drink, they sing, for the purpose, they explain, of making happy. Therefore it is best to induce them (page 66) to inter the remains at the earliest possible. But often it is nigh impossible to dig the grave, for the belly will not be denied. If people wait two additional days for the obsequies, it means two additional suppers, two additional chunks of "moose", of bear, two additional glasses of "whiskey" perhaps. I have heard how the Hagwilget people hold out the longest possible. Hence not to be taken by surprise I have myself announced the date of the funeral. I have decided that the corpse be brought to the church at 9 o'clock in the morning and the internment should take place only in the afternoon.

When the Indians see the body in the church they feel they must go out and dig the grave.

I am reminded in this matter that five years ago a Father had been called to a funeral in this locality. The Mass was said, the Father left the church in a huff and repaired to the cemetery. Behold the grave was not completely dug. Besides, the deceased belonged to another tribe. Wherefore a dispute between the two tribes. Some wished to inter the coffin in the Hagwilget cemetery; others to take it to the neighboring locality.

Finally the Father quit the procession, let the people dispute. The corpse was borne off 4 miles from there. Their feasting recommenced in a place comprised largely of Protestant Indians. Finally after a few days they received the order of the doctor of the place to bury their dead immediately.

Do not however think such is the case everywhere. In many of the missions there remains only the habit of traditional suffering without excess on the anniversary of the funeral.

Marcel Murie, O.M.I.