

**The Missionary Journey of Father
Peter De Smet, S.J.,**

In What Are Now The Dioceses of Nelson, B.C.,
and Calgary, Alberta, and the Archdiocese of
Edmonton, Alberta, in the Years 1845-46

BY
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The glorious strains of the *Te Deum*, borne shoreward by the voices of Father De Smet and his little band when the coast of Oregon came into sight, served as a sort of prologue to the great play of missionary adventure these heroic souls would present in the name of Christ upon the stage of the wilderness before them, to an audience of children of the forest and of the plain.

The Indefatigable, eight months out from Britain, having rounded the Horn, was, on July 28th, 1844, off the estuary of the Columbia River and had succeeded, "as though borne on Angels wings," in crossing safely the dangerous southern bar over three fathoms of foaming waters; that too, upon the festal day of their founder, Saint Ignatius.

"The genial superintendent" of old Fort George, James Birnie, approached the *Indefatigable*, and taking Father De Smet off in his skiff bore him safely to Astoria, where he remained until August 2nd. Then, ascending the hundred odd miles of the Columbia that lay between to Fort Vancouver, he witnessed the debarkation of his companions at seven in the evening of the fifth.

Joined by M^{sr}. Blanchet on the twelfth, they bid adieu, on the Vigil of the Assumption, to the Governor, "an excellent and truly pious man," Dr. McLaughlin, and proceeded in four canoes and a sloop up the Willamette, where, very soon, there arose their missionary headquarters of St. Francis Xavier, upon the old Indian council-ground of Champeog.

Under date of June 20th, 1845, writing from "our residence of St. Francis Xavier which is completed and will hereafter serve for a novitiate and seminary to prepare young men for the missions," he describes his work among the Flat-Heads during the previous winter, paying glowing tribute to their fidelity and piety; going into some detail of the rapid growth of the Church in Oregon in the material as well as in the spiritual way. There was a College under the care of Father Bolduc, "where 40 young men chiefly

Métis are receiving a Christian education," and the "Canadian Missionaries", M^{sr}. Blanchet, and Father Demers, had between the years 1839-45 baptized 3000 souls.

In the company of a couple of Métis, an Irish lay-brother, J. B. McGean, and "eleven horses laden with ploughs, spades, and pickaxes, scythes, and carpenter's implements," he took the first steps of that journey that led him over, perhaps, 2000 miles of Canadian soil.

Between the difficulties due to "the Cascades of water that descended on every side and beat with irresistible fury upon the rocks over which we were compelled to cross," he noted "great groves of Rhododendra ... innumerable bouquets of splendid flowers ... whitened bones of horses and oxen, melancholy testimonies of the miseries of other travellers through these regions" upon the trail over the North shoulder of Mt. Hood, to the forks of the John Day and on to Walla Walla; and over the Spokane desert to the falls of the Chaudière, where, among the 900 odd Indians present, "his presence did not interrupt their fine and abundant fishery," and to whom he preached a mission giving three discourses daily .

Establishing near there the Mission of St. Francis Regis, sending his horses overland, he ascended the Clarke or Flathead River by canoe to Lake Pend Oreille, where, he "had a very agreeable and unexpected interview – with the respectable Peter Skeene Ogden," accompanied by Capt. Warre and Lieut. Vavasour, whom he would meet later on the Athabaska Pass.

Parting from "the agreeable society," he followed Thompson's great road of the Flat-Heads for some distance before changing his course towards the North-West, to reach the Arcs-à-Plats or McGilvray (Kootenae) near to the confluence of the Yaak with it; and there, on the feast of the Assumption, to establish a mission among those Indians, whom to his astonishment he found to be well instructed by Edward Berland, an employee of "The Honourable Company". The feast of the Assumption witnessed the first Mass ever to be offered in their land, which event was marked by the erection of a cross on the shores of a lake "among a grand salute of ninety guns."

Filled with "gloomy and harrowing thoughts which imagination conjures up in these dismal regions to dismay the bravest of hearts;" "assuming the attitude of a quadruped to pass safely the frightful rocks over which the traveller is compelled for a distance of eight miles to risk his life;" fascinated, yet awed at the "livid gashes of ravines, – unfathomable chasms – water forcing its way mid stern heaven-built walls of rock – the ear stunned by the confused sounds of murmuring rills – impetuous falls, and roaring torrents;" seeing also "inexhaustible quarries, large pieces of coal, great quantities of lead and silver – extensive plain presenting advantages for the foundation of

a city;" pitying the poor Indian who "eyes with tranquil surprise the white man examining the shiny pebbles of their territory;" – such are his records of his emotions and observations, as he gazes forward at "the russet hues of distant slopes, upland turf and rock hung flower" which mark Canada, into which he came at a point near to what is now Newgate, B.C., in the Diocese of Nelson, August 18th, 1845.

The welcome extended to him by the thirty lodges of Kootenays was "a long and boisterous discharge of musketry," greeting an old friend, whom they had last seen forty-one months ago at the great lake Têteplatte.

On the feast of the Pure Heart of Mary, August 19, spiritual possession of the land, now trodden by a Priest of God for the first time, was proclaimed. High Mass was sung, 105 persons baptized, and a large cross erected amid a "general salute of the whole camp." The tribe led by five chiefs prostrated themselves before the Sacred ensign and offered their hearts to Him. This station received the name of Holy Heart of Mary and would be, perhaps, 30 miles S. E. of Cranbrook.

Bidding them adieu on the 28th, he, accompanied by two young Kootenays and an interpreter, pushed northward through "highly picturesque country" filled with "spicy odors of flowers and spirit elating breezes – hoary pines – dark Alpine forests," to camp at the Kootenay traverse near to the present town of Fort Steele, on his way to Columbia Lake, which he reached at noon Sept. 4th. Pitching camp at the S. E. corner he contemplates with "astonished eyes the sublime rocks," seeing in them "castles of bygone chivalry – embattled towers – fortresses – Cathedrals;" apparently ignorant of the legend associated with those rocks, that they were hurled down from above in anger by the Kootenay squaws upon their hapless foe from the east below, who were being forced back against the base of the mountain by their men-folk. What a coincidence that his first contact with the source of the Columbia should be upon a legendary battleground where Indian forces of the east and of the west met in mortal combat, and that on his leaving its watershed he should erect a Cross of Peace with the prayer that peace may ever reign between these same peoples. Whilst wild life abounded around the shores, the air above teemed with aquatic fowl and the waters beneath with fish. With its delightful climate and with its other natural gifts and geographical position, one day this valley will be transformed under the "magic hand of civilized man into a paradise."

Passing "a beautiful hot spring" (Fairmont), "whose waters are soft and pellucid and of the temperature of milk just drawn from a cow," he continues northward to a plain and to his astonishment meets a "Canadian", Old Baptiste Morigeau, hailing from St. Martin, Montreal, who has been in that

district 26 years, faithful to his prayers, and praying that some day a priest may come his way. "Here no one disputes his right of possession. His sceptre is a trap, his law a carbine, – inspecting his furry subjects – some respect his sceptre, others submit to his law – and pay tribute of flesh and skins."

Taking possession of this plain in the name of the Mother of God on the feast of her Nativity, and naming it "the Plain of the Nativity," he offered the Holy Mass, the first ever to be offered at the source of the Columbia, blessed the marriage of Morigeau and his Schuswap Indian wife; baptized her and his seven children, along with six other little Indian children; and erected a large Cross to mark the site in memory of so many benefits. This Cross lying in three pieces was found on the ground Sept. 15th, 1939. His farewell was celebrated by a "banquet" in a "truly royal cuisine", but "à la sauvage." The first dish of bear's feet made him thankful he was in America and not Africa where "this ragout might have given him some alarm; in effect it bears a striking resemblance to the feet of a certain race." This was followed by a "Moose's Muzzle", a "Salmagundi of beef, buffalo, venison, beaver's tails, hare, partridge etc."

Eastward, across the Sinclair Pass, passing under the big red rock, skirting Lake Theaux, today Lake Olive, he directed his course on the ninth, and after a day reached the shores of the Arcs-à-Plats, or Kootenay river. In one of his grandest passages of descriptive writing, in which art he is certainly a master he leaves a beautiful picture of the Sinclair Pass as he saw it during those early September days. "Surrounded by colossal walls," he writes, "the greatest diversity and the most beautiful scenery in nature is spread out before the eye, where the plush and cedar rise majestically in these venerable woods, the graceful poplar waves on high its emerald plumes, and fights its battles with the howling storm, whilst over the precipitous and jagged rocks, the scarcely waving pine fills the brown shade with religious awe. The birch springs from an earth carpeted with moss, and shines like magnificent silver columns, supporting diadems of golden Autumnal leaves, amidst the redolent purpled berried juniper and azure turpentine, of these humid dells and forests."

Crossing the Kootenay he enters a "gorge terrible", a "defile still more wonderful – where all is wild sublimity, in this profound but turbulent solitude. Terrible precipices hang in the fragments overhead – the voice of the deep tongued waves in unconfined flow – sweep wild and free like the spirit of liberty."

Pushing onward and upward through canyon and tangled wood he emerges in the evening and his eyes are refreshed by "a ravishing scene, – the dance of the Manitou and the glorious entrance of departed champions into the

country of souls." Without doubt a display of Aurora witnessed from either the Columbia or Kootenay valleys during the equinoxial seasons is the grandest spectacle nature offers. It will appear as though the whole world were suspended at the base of a gigantic cone, whose apex is at the zenith, and whose sides dance to the accompaniment of the whole gamut of the prismatic scale.

At the summit, the watershed, (Sec. 17. Tp. 21. R. 11. W of 5 Mer.) he erected "the Christian standard the Cross – that it may be a sign of salvation and Peace to all the scattered and itinerant tribes east and west of these gigantic and lurid mountains."

Descending by a steep decline into a valley of "emerald meads" they reach a lake (Lower Spray Lake) where in a few minutes a number of salmon trout are taken by a line. From here he views "the gigantic architectural cliff of nature (Mount Assinaboine) that dwindles to naught the far famed monuments of Cheops and Cephren".

Ambling along the Spray Valley for three days, he "begins his mountainous peregrination again" through the White Man Pass, in which he contemplates in dismay the remains of a forest fire, where "millions of half consumed trees lay extended in every direction," and reaches the Arcs or Askrow (Bow) River at the site of the present town of Canmore.

At the sight of "some vestiges of a Savage party" his guides grow alarmed and try to deter him from proceeding among the formidable Black Feet, by recounting to him their ill omened dreams. Confessing himself to be "beset by a thousand disquietudes concerning his fate," as he was now "on the very confines of a barbarous people from which possibly I shall never return," his "timid fragile mens homo" is encouraged by the thought that "the salvation of souls is at stake," and the preservation of the Mission of St. Mary's depends upon his "going forward."

After two days travel they join, not formidable Black Feet, but wretched Assinaboines of the Forest, whose wretchedness is surpassed only by their filth. Renowned hunters whose voracious dogs left him minus shoes, a leg to his "Culotte de peau, and a colorless cassock; whose cuisine is prepared in such a singular manner that they are entitled to a patent for the happy faculty of invention." This process is confined "exclusively to the female department," and begins by the "dainty cook filling her mouth with water and spitting it with her whole force upon the fated object." The operation of preparing hash requires hours. "Often half a dozen old ladies will sit for hours masticating with their teeth what is destined for the cauldron, and to which is added an exquisite dessert of pulverized ants, grass hoppers and locusts." An old "lady" handed him a wooden platter and spoon, noticing the spoon

was greasy she "had the complaisance to apply it to the broad side of her tongue before putting it into my unsavoury broth."

Eight days were passed slowly along the trail with his new found "docile yet timorous" friends, instructing them each evening and caring for their invalids. He baptized six children and an old man who died two days later and was buried with all the "ceremonies and prayers of the Church."

The setting of these baptisms and funeral is in the vicinity of End Mountain and this is the earliest record of any Baptism and funeral within the confines of what is now the Diocese of Calgary.

The route between the Bow River and his next immediate goal, Fort Rocky Mountain House, is not very clearly defined in his narrative, yet three clues point to the way he followed. First a waterfall, falling from the centre of a rock shows he reached the Red Deer River at the prairie where today the forest rangers' cabin is situated; second, "the sulphur springs on a tributary of the Red Deer," places him next on the James River; and thirdly, "on the thirtieth we continued our route through the valley where a rivulet of clear water meanders," places him on the Clearwater River, the course of which leads directly to Fort Rocky Mountain House. This point he reached the evening of Oct. 4th, 1841, "after having traversed the great chain of Mountains nineteen days in pursuit of Black Feet."

The reception extended to him on the part of Mr. Harriot, an Englishman by birth and a most "amiable gentleman" was warm and had a "politeness and cordiality truly fraternal." The reception he received from the twenty odd Crees who were encamped near the fort was also truly cordial. After the usual handshakes they proudly displayed their medals and Crucifixes given to them by their own Blackrobe, Fr. Thibault; and as Fr. Thibault had not yet baptized three of their children, would Father do so? These three and one of his Kootenay guides were baptized by him on Oct. 5th. These baptisms are passibly the first to be recorded at Fort Rocky Mountain House.

Here he throws a little light upon the condition of the Church in the North West, stating the Bishop of Juliopolis (M^{sr}. Provencher) had established a see on the Red River. Fathers Thibault and Bourassa had penetrated to the Mountains, and other indefatigable priests were employed in this immense diocese in which, of the 5500 souls, 3175 were already Catholic, and there were 730 inhabited houses.

In a letter he has now received dated from the shores of Lake St. Anne, Fr. Thibault informs him of the eagerness of the Indians to receive the faith; that between March and Sept. 1845 among the Mountain nations he baptized 500 souls; that he was planning to go among the Indians of the McKenzie

River, where a rich harvest was waiting; and that his "fellow labourer Fr. Bourassa set out in Sept. to announce the gospel to the Indians residing near the Peace River."

During his sojourn at the Fort, which terminated Oct. 31st, he effected a peace between some of the Cree families. An Indian father and his son had been killed in a quarrel, and now the offending party was present. Seeking the assistance of Mr. Harriot as interpreter, Fr. De Smet gave them a long discourse upon "the necessity of coming to a sincere reconciliation." The matter was discussed by each Indian speaking in turn "with good sense and moderation." The pipe of peace was produced and passed around and the "formal declaration of the entire forgetfulness and sincere pardon was pronounced in smoke."

His search for Blackfeet was rewarded when, on Oct. 25th, thirteen of them, saluted him "with a politeness à la sauvage, rough and cordial," shaking him by the hand and rubbing his cheeks with their "scarlet painted noses". When they learned of the reasons of the visit of Fr. De Smet, their old Chief was kindly disposed toward him, seating him beside himself whenever he visited them at their lodges, inviting him to visit their country, offering to be his guide and precursor among his nation, to prepare the way for his reception among them. Fr. De Smet comments upon the vast difference in the physiognomy between the Indians of the Plains and those who inhabit the source of the Columbia, to the great disadvantage of the Plainsman. In their countenances he discerns "cruelty, craft," and reads the word "blood" in every one of them, while their mountain cousins are remarkable for "mildness, serenity and affability".

The diary of R. T. Rundle, Wesleyan, throws a little light upon the stay of Fr. de Smet at Fort Rocky Mountain House. Under date of Oct. 4th he states, "Rev. Fr. De Smet, Jesuit, came to the Fort from across the Mountains – I found him very agreeable, and we parted – on very friendly terms. He did not interfere with my Indians at all though he had an opportunity of doing so."

To quote Rundle's diary again: "Fr. De Smet celebrated Mass in the Hall in the morning of Oct. 5th" (possibly the first Mass ever said within the Fort) and on the 6th: "Peace was made through the interposition of Fr. De Smet, between the parties at variance respecting the murder of 1843 ... and nearly all the parties professed to be Roman Catholics."

There was living at the Fort a half-breed guide named Bird, who bore an ill name from his employers, and who was already famed for treachery. As he was the only guide available, Fr. De Smet risked his life in his company

rather than abandon his projected mission to the Black Feet, and left the Fort with him on October 31st.

Just what trail he followed for the next eighteen days was known only to the Good Lord and the "Morose Métis", who, it would appear, determined to lose him in the wilderness. "Ten sorrowful days and two watchful nights were passed in the company of this gloomy fellow", and it was a sigh of relief that escaped from Fr. De Smet when, "the day after we met a Canadian", his guide deserted him. With his new-founded friend he wandered in "that labyrinth of valleys" in a vain search for a Canadian interpreter whom, it was supposed, was some distance ahead. "Snow fell intermittently for four days, the horses were exhausted, the wallet contained nothing but crumbs," and there was "no alternative but to repair to the nearest Hudson Bay Company Post, and beg hospitality during the inclement season." He arrived at Fort Augustus, Edmonton, "towards the end of the year" (1845) and, in fact, if Rundle's diary is correct, actually it was December 31st that "Mr. Harriot, arrived with Fr. De Smet." Of his reception there Fr. De Smet says: "its respectable Commandant, Mr. Rowand, received me with all the tenderness of a father, and together with his inestimable family, showed me every kindness and attention."

From the shelter of Fort Augustus he considers the lands over which he has passed since emerging from the Mountains and is impressed with the great economic potentialities they contain. The land is "very fertile abounding in forest, plain and stream – coal, lead, sulphur, iron, copper and saltpetre – the wild beasts will ere long give place to domestic animals, flocks and herds; – the soil will grow barley, corn, potatoes and beans."

Fort Augustus contained the usual winter's supply of food; "30,000 whitefish weighing 4 lbs. each, and 500 buffaloes."

During his stay at Fort Augustus between Dec. 31st, 1845, and March 12th, 1846, he found "sufficient occupation catechising children, giving daily instruction to the more than 80 servants, and reciting the daily prayers for the honourable commander and his worthy servants," and paying a visit to Fr. Thibault at Lac Ste Anne.

Leaving Edmonton, March 12th by the – to him – novel method of travel by dog-sled, which he found "particularly agreeable," his "our dogs and three brave métis, procured for him by Fr. Thibault", directed him swiftly "over the snows and glittering ice" by way of the Sturgeon River, Lac La Nonne, Pembina Crossing, on to the Fort Assinaboine, "built in a meadow on the Athabasca where it is 230 fathoms broad", and where he arrived uneventfully on the 18th.

The next nine days were passed ascending the glittering ice of the Athabasca, and the evening of the 27th, found him at Fort Jasper at the upstream end of Lake Jasper and opposite to the confluence of the Rocky and Athabasca Rivers.

Owing to the scarcity of provisions at the Fort, fifty-four persons and twenty dogs under the direction of Paul Fraser, a son of Simon Fraser, were obliged to leave the Fort and proceed to the "Lake of the Islands" where they remained 26 days. During this period they killed 12 moose deer; 2 reindeer; 30 large Big Horn sheep; 2 porcupine; 210 hares; 1 beaver; 2 muskrats; 1 snipe; 1 eagle; 1 owl; 30 to 50 whitefish daily; 20 trout; and yet the natives complain that "living was hard" and they were "obliged to fast". Fr. Smet's comment upon that complaint is "the mountaineers of Athabasca are blessed with good appetites."

On the banks of the Athabasca he met an old Iroquois, Louis Kwaragkwante, "the travelling sun," surrounded by his family – thirty-six in number, who had wandered in the wilderness forty years without seeing a priest. His greeting to Fr. De Smet was very cordial, "how glad I am to have you come here – to-day I behold a priest – my heart rejoices." This family knew their prayers in Iroquois.

He met Carrière Indians from New Caledonia who had come over to the Athabasca to hunt. These Indians had lived upon roots and herbs for so long a period of time that "many of them had their teeth worn to the gums by the earth and sand they chewed and swallowed with their nourishment." Their method of hunting the deer was both easy and singular. Awaiting at points where the deer enter the water to swim the rivers, the Indians then jump into canoes and with ear-piercing yells drive the hapless creatures back and forth across the stream until the deer are exhausted from exertion and then the carnage begins.

At Fort Jasper he baptized forty-four persons, including the wife of Paul Fraser, and witnessed seven marriages.

Before bidding adieu to Fort Jasper, April 25th, 1846, a little ceremony was performed "to prove their attachment to him, and that their children might remember him who had first put them on the way of life. Each one discharged his musket in the direction of the highest mountain, a large rock jutting out in the form of a sugar loaf, and with three loud hurrahs gave it my name. The mountain is more than 14,000 feet high and is covered with perpetual snow." From this description one would hardly recognize Roche de Smet today; actually it is but 8330 feet above sea level.

A guard of honor of all the men of the camp accompanied him along the trail for 10 miles, and, after an affectionate leave-taking, he continued with his companions of the journey towards the source of the Athabasca. Passing by the falls, and a "high mountain on his right" (Mt. Edith Cavell), he reached "the great crossing" at the junction of the "Trou" (the present Whirlpool River) with the Athabasca.

Along this part of the journey some Indians who were hunting sheep high up on the mountain side, seeing they were whites who were passing by, descended to greet them. Overjoyed to discover a Blackrobe in the party, they entreated him with an earnestness that moved him to tears that he baptize them. They made the sign of the Cross, sang hymns, and recited some prayers. He advised them to return to their own country where a Blackrobe (Fr. Nobili) would instruct them. He baptized, there at the River Miette, two of their children. Their condition was wretched, and notwithstanding their extreme poverty they laid at his feet the sheep they had just killed. One of their party, a young girl of 15 whose family had been massacred, had existed alone in the wilderness for three years on berries and roots before she was found by a good "Canadian" who restored her to her people.

Now at the Eastern gate of "the great crossing" there lies towards the west, between him and his immediate goal, the Boat Encampment on the big bend of the Columbia River, seventy miles of the grandest, the wildest, the most desolate and awe-inspiring sea of rigid waves of ice and snow, that upward toss with joyous thrust such gigantic peaks of everlasting rock that dare intrude their greyish heads between the waves, and there to hold playfully suspended, twixt earth and heaven, whilst all the while their icy feet are gripped upon the green carpeted earth away below.

The challenge to pass the great crossing is not directed toward the weakling but to the brave, the resolute and resourceful; and one of such character was Fr. De Smet. Months before, at Rocky Mountain House, and Edmonton, both Mr. Harriot and Mr. Rowand had expressed the opinion that it would be impossible for him to accomplish this leg of his journey because of his "heavy mould", and tried to dissuade him. But Fr. De Smet was trained in another school, that of the missionary that calmly faces obstacles and perseveres. He had fasted thirty days to reduce his weight, and finding himself much lighter, put on the snowshoes and started out over sixteen feet of snow to follow the snowshoe path marked by Thompson, who braved the hazards and blazed the way over this pass thirty-five years previously, in January, 1811.

The tracks of men of many and various walks of life have commingled upon the snows of this pass. A priest, a governor, a soldier, an artist, a

botanist, fur traders and light-hearted voyageurs, each in turn have left a record of their fatiguing journey. And yet, all have failed to leave behind them the "classical" description of their adventure. Yet in face of the awe and grandeur of that wilderness, one can understand the limitation of human expression and sympathise with the "roughspun unsophisticated Canadian" mentioned by Ross Cox in his journal of 1832 who, "gazing upward for some time in silent wonder exclaimed with much vehemence 'I'll take my oath dear friends that God Almighty never made such a place'," and let it go at that.

Leaving the foot of "The Great Glacier", to-day known as Scott Glacier, on May 6th, the party proceeded up the pass to await at its summit, known as the Committee Punch Bowl, the arrival of the spring brigade from the Columbia, and at evening met the forerunners of the party. In the morning after a march of eight miles they "fell in with the gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company – led by an old friend, Mr. Ermatinger – and two distinguished officers of the English Army, Capt. Warre and Lieut. Vavasour whom I had the honour of entertaining last year at the great Kalispel Lake. Fifteen Indians of the Kettle tribe had accompanied them. Many of them had scaled the mountains with 150 lbs. weight upon their backs." Capt. Warre, describing this meeting in his diary, records, "We had scarcely walked 10 miles when the joyous sound of human voices assured us of more immediate relief, and we soon encountered a party of men sent to meet us with provisions, accompanied by Le Père De Smet, a Jesuit priest from Belgium, and chief of the Roman Catholic Missions in the Columbia District who was on his return to that part of Oregon." The worthy Captain was deeply impressed with the "honesty, civility, sincere piety and great regularity in their religious duties" of his Indian porters, adding, "every morning and evening they were seen retiring a short distance from the camp to sing one or two hymns and join in common prayer. I shall never forget the example these poor savages have given me – I have never seen more sincere piety than they exhibit."

The rest of the journey over the pass was a struggle against fatigue, the Father confessing that, if it were not for the kindness of the men with him, he would have perished. He found snowshoes awkward to use and fell continuously, often halfburied in snow, and assistance was rendered to him by his companions with "great kindness and humour."

Thirty miles were covered during the first day's march; and on the morning of the 9th they began the difficult descent of the western slopes, known as the "Grand Cote", which descent occupied five hours. "Woe to the man, he says, who happens to have a heavy body or make a false step – many times I found myself 20 or 30 feet from the point of my departure, happy indeed if, in the fall, I did not violently strike my head against the trunk of

some great tree" Descending the Wood River they emerged on a flat where "May Poles" abound. Each traveller who passes there the first time selects one and inscribes upon it his name and date of crossing. A young Canadian chose one about 120 feet in height, and after stripping it of its branches, dedicated it to Fr. De Smet.

About noon of May 10th they arrived at the Boat Encampment. After refitting the barge and preparing a meal, with an Iroquois for pilot and ten oarsmen, they began the descent of the great Columbia River. Shooting the first Rapid (Martins), through which their barge "danced and leapt from wave to wave with the rapidity of lightning," and prudently lowering the barge by means of ropes through the next, the great Dalles, they camped for the evening below the rapids.

At dawn of the eleventh, the dangers of the rapids now passed, the waters of the Columbia were hurrying them onward to the Arrow Lake, where, at evening, camp was pitched at about the site of the present town of Arrowhead. The scenic grandeurs of that day's voyage were blotted from view by fog, until "a cheering sun at dawn was tinting the tops of a thousand hills."

Twenty Indian families encamped along the shore of the lake begged him to remain to instruct and baptize them. As they had been absent from Kettle Falls when he was there the year previously, a kindly providence had directed their steps to the shores of this lake at the moment of his passing. After some days of instructions, all were baptized, to the great joy of Gregory, their chief, who, himself, had been baptized eight years previously by Bishop Blanchet.

Passing by the foot of a great perpendicular rock, he saw "an innumerable number of arrows sticking out of the fissures." Against this rock passing Indians aimed and lodged an arrow into the crevasse, in defiance of the Indians who lived toward the west; and from the presence of so many arrows lodged in the face of the rock the name, Arrow, has been given to these lakes.

Drifting lazily along, he reaches the "mouth of the Flatbow or McGilvray River", where he chose "the site for a future Church". Not far from this point to-day stands a Cathedral; and not far distant a great smelter; and here, on May 28, 1846, challenged neither by Customs nor Immigration officer, he recrossed the 49th parallel of Latitude near to the present town of Waneta and brought to a close his work in what to-day we call Canada.

Amidst dangers he entered our country, traversing the steepened slope that in one wild leap plunges into "livid gashes of ravine – fearful and unfathomable chasms – many times obliged to assume the attitude of a quadruped and advance upon hands and knees – whilst the eye rests with

pleasure on the rich and russet hues of distant slopes" [of Canada beyond] of "upland turf and rock hung flower."

He came upon his knees whilst his eyes looked forward and with pleasure upon "the rich and russet hues," symbol of the golden harvest of souls that lay ahead.

And now, again, upon his knees, he leaves, and this time his eyes fixed, not upon souls, but upon the bodies of his "brave young boatmen who, now at the very threshold of home and safety, after all the dangers of mountains and precipitous rapids, are suddenly arrested by a whirlpool in their course and threatened to be buried beneath the angry waves," whilst he, upon the shore, sinks to his knees, "to implore the aid of heaven in favour of our poor comrades who seem to be evidently lost. I saw them borne on with irresistible force to the engulfing centre, the bow of the boat descended already into the abyss and filled, but the whirlpool filled and threw them from its bosom, as it reluctantly yielded up the prey which it had so tenaciously held."

SUMMARY

During the 284 days he spent in Canada, he traversed by pack-horse 495 miles: by dog-sled 260: on snowshoes 110: by barge 260: making a total of 1125; of which total 465 were traversed in the Diocese of Nelson; 110 in Calgary; 550 in Edmonton.

He baptized 27 adults, 149 children, and 20 whole families: witnessed 8 marriages: buried 1 left records of 5 Holy Masses offered; and erected 3 Crosses; of which totals he baptized 21 adults, 98 children, 20 families: witnessed 1 marriage; records 2 Masses (1 High) and erected 2 Crosses in the Diocese of Nelson.

Baptized 1 adult, 6 children: buried 1 adult: records 1 Mass and erected 1 Cross (at elev. 7000 ft.) in the diocese of Calgary.

Baptized 5 adults, 45 children: witnessed 7 marriages; records 2 Masses in the Archdiocese of Edmonton.