

Pierre Potier, S.J.

by

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When the disciples in wonderment heard the Master propound the parable of the mustard seed they could have had no conception of what we from our vantage point in time survey as the glorious missionary history of the Church. We are leaves on the great tree that overshadows the earth, and we know how it has been watered by the blood and tears of a great host of men and women who could not close their ears to the insistent summons of the Great Commission. A mere advertence to the theme calls up great names: Paul and Thomas, Augustine and Patrick, Boniface, Cyril and Methodius, Ansgar, MonteaCorvino and Xavier, Las Casas, Turibe, Kino, Brébeuf and Jogues.

The mission history of the Church can be divided roughly into three stages. There is first the Apostolic age, marked principally by the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. With the disintegration of the empire begins the medieval stage. Next came the conversion of the supplanting alien races accomplished to a large extent through the rise of the great monastic orders, and the synthesis of these diverse elements into that magnificent flowering of faith and human abilities that was the glory of the thirteenth, "the greatest of centuries." The Crusades opened new vistas, and there began a gradual penetration overland to the eastern portion of the land mass that forms Asia and Europe, and along the periphery as far as India and China, keeping pace with the growing science of navigation.

The third stage came suddenly, precipitated by the discovery of the American continents. Portugal and Spain were at the zenith of their naval power, and the trend of their explorations made South America and the lower portion of North America the exclusive field of Spanish and Portugese missionary endeavor. To France, somewhat belated in her missionary enterprise, fell the evangelization of whatever portion of North America she could control, and she penetrated into the continent through the St. Lawrence River and its allied waterways.

The story of the evangelization of New France must be so familiar to all of us that there is no need here to do more than bring in whatever details contribute to our proper subject. Although all the elements of the Canadian clergy shared in the work, the contributions of the Seminary priests, the Sulpicians, and the Recollects though great in themselves, were far exceeded by the tremendous expenditure of zeal and labor displayed by the Jesuits. According to Melançon's catalog three hundred and twenty Jesuits were engaged in this mission field

down to the suppression of the Society and the English occupation.¹

Apart from the missions in the St. Lawrence valley there came to be four, fairly well defined, but sometimes overlapping, areas of Jesuit missionary activity. One of them, the Iroquois mission, does not much concern us. The first extension westward was the Huron mission inherited from the Recollect pioneers. From this site on the Bruce peninsula of Ontario the first important contact with the Indians of the lake region was made. Following the devastation of the mission by the Iroquois in 1649 the Huron began their diaspora. A number of them were escorted to Quebec, where they found refuge first on the Island of Orleans, then in Beauport, in Côte St. Michel, and in l'Ancienne Lorette. In 1697 they were shifted to La Jeune Lorette, where their descendants may be found to this day. The rest of the Huron together with their neighbors, the Tobacco and Neutral tribes, fled for security to the southern shore of Lake Superior.

For ten years the fury of the Iroquois went unchallenged; but the Jesuits could not forget their Huron converts, and in 1660 the tragic figure of René Ménard set out to find them. Five years later Claude Allouez, called by his confrères the "Francis-Xavier of the western missions" finally established a lasting contact. He had reached them by a new approach far to the north of the Iroquois strongholds, by the Ottawa River into Lake Nipissing and the French River into Lake Huron, and then to the Straits of Mackinac and up the St. Mary's River to the spot where Lake Superior begins its mad dash to the lower waters.

The missions established at the Sault and at St. Ignace were, therefore, conceived as continuations of the work that had come to such a fearful end in Huronia. However, the missionaries soon realized that they had found more than the Huron; they had come to a locale that had been known to the aborigines from prehistoric times, and which was now crowded with a welter of Indian tribes driven far to the north from their usual haunts by Iroquois raids through the lake region that reached even to the Mississippi. All the Michigan tribes were there, and in Wisconsin, particularly behind Green Bay, lay large groups of every tribe that had been pushed northward from traditional sites in the Ohio River valley. This was the special field in which Allouez performed his marvels of evangelization, and it together with the missions in Michigan where the Ottawa predominated became what the Jesuits called the Ottawa mission field.

Marquette's exploration of the Mississippi brought knowledge of hitherto unknown tribes, and a fourth mission field was developed which extended to the lower reaches of the river where it met the missions of the Seminary priests, and was called the Illinois mission.

The foregoing is a stark presentation of the background against which we

¹ Melançon, *Liste des Missionnaires Jésuites, Nouvelle-France et Louisiane* (Montreal, 1929).

must soon usher in Father Potier, and our interest of course lies primarily in the Ottawa mission, not only because our local history is involved but because in it more than in the other fields was played out to its conclusion the struggle between men gladly risking death for the soul of the Indian, and yet helpless against the agencies that would inevitably corrupt him. As is well known the two great obstacles to the conversion of the Indian were the liquor traffic attending the fur trade, and the Gallicizing policy of the home government. The Indian was to be civilized by close contact with the French from whom he was to learn virtuous living and the arts of peace. It was Marie de l'Incarnation who said that from such a juxtaposition the only result was that the Frenchmen became Indians, and no one knew this better than the missionaries. And then, when the game of empire began to be played over their heads, and it was judged necessary to maintain troops in the western post to resist English pressure, the Jesuits strove desperately to keep what they had won although they could foresee that the ruin of their missions was in the offing.

The first troops to garrison St. Ignace came in 1683 with La Durantaye. Cadillac was the third commandant at the post, and his determination to have a free hand with the Indians led to a violent rupture with the missionaries. When he was able to begin his settlement at Detroit in 1701, and we must admit his perspicacity in choosing so beautiful and so strategic a location, his avowed intention was to wrest control of the Indians in the north from the Jesuits and to substitute his own plan of conversion and civilizing in accordance with the less rigorous designs of the government. He did succeed in enticing a majority of them but not all, and his exasperation at the Jesuits for holding them back is clearly seen in this report of an Indian council held at Detroit in 1706.

Monsieur de la Mothe, with three strings of porcelin, speaks to the Outtavois; this porcelin represents the black robe, as if he were present at the council. Speak then, black robe of Michilimakinac; you dissuade my children from coming to settle at Detroit; you tell them that I want to make them my slaves, you speak thus to them aside, and in secret, by stealth. This is a proof that you are a liar; for if you were telling them the truth, you would tell them it at a council where there would be Frenchmen and chiefs. But you would not dare, for you well know that the King wishes the Outtavois to come and settle at Detroit. Would you state the contrary before me, black robe? Speak; you dare not; for if you did I would send you to the King for disobedience. What are meddling with, black robe? Are you a man of war, have you a sword at your side? You are all tied up with your long black robe that reaches down to your heels. Is it for you to settle matters? Speak of prayer and I will hearken to you; the Outtavois may hearken. Go and enter your church and pray to God, you are the director of prayer; go into the huts, clasp your hands and teach them to pray; this is your duty. Prayer is your concern, but not the affairs which

are between the tribes. Onontio is the ruler of all the land, and I am ruler here.²

The Ottawa mission had made one extension into the lower peninsula of Michigan, the St. Joseph mission for the Potawatomi, but the establishment of Detroit was a blow from which it could not recover and it gradually merged into the Illinois mission. St. Ignace itself was abandoned in 1741 for a new site near Little Traverse Bay, and there Father Du Jaunay, the last of the Jesuits in Michigan, nurtured his converts whose descendants still make up the Catholic Indian population clustering around Harbor Springs.

We come now to deal with the Huron band which had followed Cadillac to Detroit. From the obscurity which covers the religious history of the post for at least the first twenty years there is little to be gleaned regarding missionary work among the Indians established in its neighborhood. There is abundant proof from the St. Anne registers that the Recollect military chaplains exercised some ministry among them, but the extent of this can only be conjectured. Charlevoix, who could have told us so much, seems to have been in a bad humor when he visited Detroit in 1721. He makes no reference to priest, or church, or religious conditions, and refers to the Indians only to tell us that there are no Christians among the Ottawa, few among the Potawatomi, but that the Huron are all Christian although they have no missionary. Another glimpse is given us by the Recollect, Emmanuel Crespel, who visited his confrère in 1730. Of Father Bonaventure he writes: "With the language of the country he was familiar; and the facility with which he spoke it made him acceptable to many of the Indians, who communicated to him their reflections on all subjects, particularly religion."³ Just what the "language of the country" was we are not told, and we might infer that it was not Huron, for there is evidence that the Huron at Detroit were getting restless, deprived as they were of a Blackrobe, which to them meant a Jesuit familiar with their language. The Huron complaints were finally stilled when Armand de La Richardie came to them in 1728. Their village stood near the river bank at the foot of the present Third Avenue, and their fields of rustling corn extended as far back as Michigan Avenue. From the missionary's own account we learn the heart-breaking failure of his first years among the Huron. The Indians had retained some traditions of the past but had wholly forgotten the exercise of Christian practices. For a while the missionary almost despaired of success and was planning to return to Quebec, but seven years later he had six hundred fervent neophytes who gave him a place in their affection that no successor could ever fill.

In 1738 tribal animosities flared up in the Indian population of Detroit and the Huron fled for safety to the northern shore of Ohio in the neighborhood of

² *Michigan Historical Collections*, XXXIII, 349.

³ Emmanuel Crespel, *Voyage au Nouveau Monde* (Amsterdam, 1752). Edited by John Gilmary Shea, *Perils of the Ocean and Wilderness* (Boston, 1857).

Sandusky. It took the missionary four years to re-establish his control over them, and in 1742 he had them all together in a new mission site, the Island of Bois Blanc, just a few miles down the Detroit River near its entrance into Lake Erie. But the worries of the past few years and the constant strain of his work were beginning to tell, and the missionary was obliged to ask his superior for an assistant. His request was answered by the arrival at the mission of a young Jesuit who had been in New France barely a year, Father Pierre Potier.

Fortunately, there has been preserved for us his *cursus vitte* written by his own hand. He was born on April 21, 1708, in Blandain, a town in the Hainaut, a Belgian province bordering northern France, and entered the novitiate at Douay in 1729. Having finished the usual course of study and teaching he was chosen for the missions of New France and sailed from Rochelle in June, 1743. He landed at Quebec after one hundred and four days at sea and was sent to La Jeune Lorette, where he made an intensive study of the Huron language and wrote his first two Huron grammars, five hundred and sixty-two closely written pages in his characteristic microscopic script. On the 26th of June, 1744, he left Quebec for Detroit and landed on Bois Blanc Island, as he writes, on September 25th at half past four in the morning.

He must have been well pleased with what he saw. There was a large church and rectory, a forge for making tools and a house for the smith, a comfortable home for Jean Baptiste Goyau who worked the mission farm lands and his wife who cared for the church and rectory, several barns, and a trading post in charge of a lay brother. The Indian village was laid out in streets along which stretched rows of bark lodges. Father de La Richardie, in a letter to his Superior gives us a glimpse of his priestly work. Three times a day the Indians assembled in the church to recite public prayers and to listen to an instruction. Between times the priest visited the sick, settled disputes, admonished delinquents, taught catechism to the children, and administered the sacraments. The Huron were matching the fervor they had shown in Huronia a century before.

Father Potier spent two happy peaceful years under the tutelage of Father de La Richardie perfecting himself in the use of the language and learning the details of the mission's administration. He was left alone when the older priest returned to Quebec in July, 1746. There was some restlessness among the Indians at losing their beloved blackrobe, and they had not yet placed their full confidence in the man whom tradition pictures as a tall, spare, rather unemotional and unbending figure, with none of the *bonhomie* that characterized his predecessor, essentially a scholar and always at his books in his free time. He was therefore powerless in the face of the crisis which arose a year later, and which Father de La Richardie might have averted.

One small band of Huron, the black sheep of the tribe, had always kept aloof from the mission and lived under its chief, Nicolas, in the neighborhood of Sandusky. On a day in May, 1747, the Indians took five Frenchmen by surprise,

killed them and made off with their cargo of furs. Knowing that swift retribution would follow they decided that the best way to escape the penalty of their crime was to commit a greater one, nothing less than the seizure of Father Potier and the commander at Detroit, and the destruction of the mission and the fort. In the process of enlisting the support of other disaffected Indians their plot was discovered by a Huron woman at the mission, Father Potier sought the shelter of the fort together with his wards, and the commander made every preparation to resist assault. The Indians were in a fever of apprehension, the deserted mission buildings had been destroyed, and nothing could still them but the presence of Father de La Richardie. Accordingly, he was sent for and reached Detroit on the 25th of October.

The Indians were overjoyed at the sight of their beloved missionary and the tumult died down. To ensure the safety of the Huron he had been empowered to select a new site for the mission, one less exposed to Indian attack. His choice was a tract of land directly opposite the fort on the other side of the river, and your Association is today holding its sessions on the eastern portion of it. With a grant of 5,000 livres from the government a church and mission buildings were erected, and when Father de La Richardie returned to Quebec in 1751 he had succeeded in bringing into the fold even the recalcitrant Huron of Sandusky, and left behind him a contented people in a prosperous and fully equipped mission station.

Father Potier as head of the last Huron mission in the West was now definitely established in his life-work, which was to cover a span of thirty years ending with his death on July 16, 1781. It was an historic period, for during it he saw the last days of New France, and we can only conjecture his feelings as he swore his oath of allegiance to the British crown before the English commander at Detroit. Four years later he witnessed the collapse of the Illinois mission when his confrères were deported in accordance with the French decree of secularization. Ten years after that event it must have been in desolation of spirit that he pondered over the suppression of the Society of Jesus by the Holy See itself. In his declining years he was a spectator of the turbulent scenes in Detroit when it was the center from which the British made their cruel, frantic attempts to stem the tide of American pioneer advance towards the western country.

Every student of the period must regret deeply that we know so little of the activities of Father Potier during it, and regret verges on resentment when we know that he has told us much about it which, there is good reason for believing, has been withheld from us. The writer rather welcomed this opportunity to present a sketch of Father Potier because it afforded him an occasion to bring before your Association the matter of the missing Potier manuscripts, and to plead that you make a determined effort to unearth them, or at least make some breach through the iron curtain that has so far kept them from us.

The Fifteenth Report of the Bureau of Archives of the Province of Ontario presents a convenient listing of the extant Potier papers, but it is not complete

since, to say nothing of its other omissions, it neglects to mention perhaps the most important item of Father Potier's literary remains. The writer knows no better description of it than the one left by Richard R. Elliott of Detroit. He had come into possession of the account book of the Huron mission, and he published it with comments and annotations in a series of papers written between 1891 and 1893 for the United States Catholic Historical Magazine, and comprised in Volume IV of the publication. He had evidently gone to Montreal during the preparation of his manuscript to examine the Potier papers, and his relevant comments are now here quoted.

Probably the most valued collection of manuscripts ... is to be found in the archives of the Jesuit College of St. Mary in Montreal. Reverend Arthur Jones, S.J., archivist of the college, is their present custodian ...

Father Jones showed me a small *index rerum* of Father Potier, a duodecimo of 185 pages; it is very closely filled with the well known minute handwriting of the missionary, every possible space on each leaf having been made use of ... There is an account by Father Potier of his birth, an itinerary of his voyages and daily happenings from France to Canada in 1743, and a detailed account of his journey from Quebec to Detroit, his joining Father de La Richardie and incidents of his first experience in American missionary life among the Hurons. One division of this little book is devoted to his private correspondence in which are copied his own letters to relatives and friends, and those of friends to him. There is a diary of events occurring at the mission, and many witty and curious entries may be found throughout this part ...

Unfortunately the leaves which would contain events and transactions of the years 1759, 1760, 1761, 1762 and 1763, had been removed by Father Potier presumably from prudential motives. The French in the locality, then and afterwards, had a lively fear of the arbitrary influence of the British Commandant; who was the law and power on this frontier during British supremacy. The intimate relations existing between Fathers Potier and de La Richardie and Pierre Meloche, and the close friendship of the latter for the great Ottawa sachem, Pontiac, the intimacy of the latter with the family of Meloche, might have resulted unfortunately for the missionary fathers and their friend, could any positive evidence such as might have been among the papers at the mission house been, possessed by the British commandant. This is the most plausible theory offered for the absence of the record during the years mentioned. Father Jones describes Father Potier as a great humorist; the highest dignitaries of church and state did not escape his sarcasm.

Speaking of the Bishop of Quebec in his correspondence, he mentions this venerable prelate as Monseigneur "'Mitasse" the latter words meant the long red stockings or legging (sic) heavy and warm, worn by travellers in the winter and much of a necessity in Canada. The lower part of the dress of the Bishop was knee breeches, purple stockings and shoes with buckles; the purple covering of the bishop's legs probably suggested the "mitasse" of Father Potier. There are so many funny passages innocently expressed in the *vie intime* that might be misconstrued and turned to harm, that the custodian of this rare

manuscript has deemed it advisable not to have it translated or published ...
This manuscript has never been translated, it has never been copied, and as a
matter of course it has never been published ...

As a companion piece to the foregoing passages from Richard Elliot the writer now quotes from a letter in the Burton collection dated May 25, 1927, written by Father Arthur Melançon, a later custodian of the archives at Collège Sainte-Marie, in Montreal. The letter is in French, and after a reference to Father Potier it goes on:

Where are the cartons which contained his letters? I do not know. Our archives possess only his works on the Huron language, and from them we have extracted and published everything that could have any historical interest. Father F. Martin seems to have had some knowledge of other manuscripts of Father Potier since he gives some details which I have seen nowhere else, but the source from which he could have taken them is unknown to me. As far as I know there are no extant writings of Father Potier in Belgium, France, or in Rome; Father Martin and Father de Rochemonteix who searched through every archival depot were unable to find any ...

After the two foregoing quotations the writer begs leave to inject a personal note. In the course of his investigations into the Catholic history of Detroit he visited the Collège Sainte-Marie, and was denied even a glimpse of the Potier deposit. The writer cannot help thinking that Father Melançon's letter is nothing more than a bit of diplomatic evasion. Neither he nor anyone else has ever stated that the manuscript in question was stolen or destroyed; it has simply been misplaced, or let us say sequestered. Until some clear, unequivocal evidence to the contrary is offered by whatever agency is competent to do so, the writer will go on believing that either from selfish and unworthy motives, or from an antiquated prudery which we have long since outgrown, this most important Potier document has been withheld from us in direct contravention of the standards of Catholic historical scholarship laid down by Leo XIII.

Thus deprived of primary material that would give us an adequate portrait of Father Potier we can do no more than string together the glimpses we catch of him through secondary sources. When Sir William Johnson, the Indian Commissioner and the first high official to appear in Detroit after its capitulation, arrived on the scene in the fall of 1761 he was met by Father Bocquet, the Recollect pastor of Detroit, who at the head of his parishioners came to pay his respects. Both he and Father Potier were later invited to dine with the Commissioner, and the latter's journal states that the invitation was cordially accepted and as cordially enjoyed.⁴ This is the first of several instances showing

⁴ W. L. Stone, *Life of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, 1865), II, 458.

the esteem in which Father Potier was held by the officers at Detroit, and his evident acceptance of the new order.

The bond of mutual respect must have been greatly strengthened two years later, when Detroit survived the greatest crisis in its history, the conspiracy of Pontiac. Had Major Gladwin not been warned in time Pontiac's stratagem might have succeeded, and the English might have been expelled to the last man from the western country. Just who disclosed the plot to Major Gladwin is a question that has never been definitely answered. There are a number of sources from which he might have obtained his information, any one of which is more probable than the story of the beautiful Ojibwa maiden popularized by Parkman. Richard Elliott advanced the very plausible opinion that Father Potier was the real informant. From the account book of the mission we know that the forge supplied hardened steel files for the settlers in and around Detroit. Pontiac planned that his warriors should file off a length of their gun barrels and thus bring their weapons into the fort undetected. An unusual demand for files coming from the Indians must have aroused Father Potier's suspicions, and he may have communicated his forebodings to Gladwin or charged one of the French settlers to do so.

As the writer has said elsewhere the French population of Detroit was in a difficult position. It must have been almost entirely in sympathy with Pontiac's purpose, and had it joined with him he might have succeeded. But friendly contacts with the English had already been established, and the French shrank from the possibility of a general massacre which they might have been powerless to prevent. Moreover, both Father Bocquet and Father Potier had their course marked out for them by the Bishop of Quebec; the oath of allegiance taken by the residents of Detroit was a sacred obligation they were bound to respect.

Father Potier faced the greatest crisis of his life. There was no Father de La Richardie to call upon; he had died five years before. If his Indians joined Pontiac the destruction of Detroit was almost certain. Was his ascendancy over them strong enough to hold them in check? What would be his fate if he dared defy Pontiac? On the morning of Ascension Thursday, just a few hundred feet away from you on the other side of the road where the bridge ends, the drama was played out. We read the account of it in the Pontiac manuscript.⁵

Teata and Baby, both chiefs of the good hand of Hurons which had until then kept neutral, and which would have kept so longer, seeing themselves forced by threats, assembled their band, which numbered about sixty men, and said to them:

My brothers, you see, as well as we, the risks that we all run, and that in the situation of affairs, we have no other resources than either to join our brothers, the Ottawas and the Foxes, or else to abandon our band and to fly with our

⁵ R. Clyde Ford, *Journal of Pontiac's Conspiracy*, 1763 (Detroit, 1912).

women and children, which we will never do, for we will hardly have gone before the Ottawas and the Foxes, and even those of our own nation will fall upon us, kill our wives and children, and force us to do like them; while if we do so now, we shall be assured that our families will be safe in our village. We do not know what are the designs of the Master of Life toward us; perhaps it is he who inspires this war to our brothers, the Ottawas. If he does not order it, he will know how to let us understand his will, and we will be able to retire without being stained by the blood of the English.

Immediately after this address they took their tomahawks, chanted the warsong, and ordered their men to do the same until the hour of mass, which their women chanted, and to which they listened very devotedly. Mass being over, each went to his tent, took the arms necessary for attack, and they crossed the river in twelve canoes, going directly to the Foxes, who uttered cries of joy to see them arrive...

The manuscript goes on to tell us that the Huron fought only two days, and that by Saturday Father Potier again had them under his control and held them by threatening to refuse all ministrations of the Church to those who dared disobey him. He sent them off to a distance out of harm's way, and seems to have overawed Pontiac, for no further attempt was made to molest his Indian wards. As the months passed the hostile Indians grew tired of their futile efforts to dislodge the stubborn defenders of the fort, and by the end of October the siege was over.

In the peaceful years that followed the Huron mission began to lose its distinctive character. As early as 1745 the more venturesome colonists of Detroit had staked out farms on the south, or as we say now the Canadian, side of the river, and the movement was accelerated by the coming of the English, which practically emptied Detroit itself of its French population. In 1765 there were some sixty families living along the south shore from Walkerville to la Petite Côte, and they petitioned the Bishop of Quebec for a priest of their own to obviate the hazards of crossing the river for worship and priestly ministrations. Father Potier at first refused the responsibility and the reason for his refusal reveals his affection for his charges: he could not bear to see his beloved Indians reduced to the inevitable subordinate position that would be theirs in a regularly organized parish. He was finally prevailed upon to accept, and in October, 1767, he was canonically installed by Father Becquet as pastor of "l'Assomption de la côte du sud." In the course of time the Indians gradually withdrew; some of them formed a new group along the Canard River, and others crossed to the American side and became dispersed along the Lake Erie shore between Detroit and Toledo.

Of Father Potier's last years we know very little. We catch a glimpse of him in Detroit when Hamilton was starting out, in October, 1778, to retake Vincennes from George Rogers Clark.

Père Potier, the Jesuit missionary, a man of respectable character and venerable figure, came to the head of our little encampment on the common of Detroit, and having attended to the reading of the Articles of War, and the renewal of the Oath of Allegiance to His Britannick Majesty, he gave the blessing to the Catholics present, conditionally upon their strictly adhering to their oath, being the more engaged thereto as the indulgence and favor of their prince merited their best services ...⁶

Father Potier went on three years more attending carefully to his parochial duties as his meticulous entries in the parish records testify. His last entry in the parish account book is dated July 15, 1781, and on the next day he was found dead before his fireplace, where the sharp end of an andiron had pierced his skull.

There is nothing left to say about Father Potier save to point out the unique position he holds in the Catholic history of Canada. The great missionary effort put forth by the Jesuits to evangelize the hinterland of New France begins with Brébeuf on his way to Huronia in 1626. It ends with the death of Father Potier one hundred and fifty-five years later. The Iroquois mission had long since been abandoned. The Huron mission had been destroyed and he held the last remnant of it. When Father Du Jaunay on his way back to Quebec in 1776 visited him to deposit in his charge, the sacred vessels used at St. Ignace, Mackinaw, Green Bay, and L'Arbre Croche the Ottawa Mission had definitely come to an end. In the Illinois mission there was one confrère left, the seventy year old Father Meurin, who had escaped deportation by moving to the Spanish side of the Mississippi. When he died in 1777 at Prairie du Rocher the Illinois mission had gone the way of the others, and Father Potier became the last of his line, the solitary Jesuit in the West. In Montreal and Quebec there were eleven of his brethren living under the blight of the suppression, and two were to die before him.

Rearguards have had their heroes as well as vanguards, although they may be shrouded by the pathos of dejection and failure, and Father Potier is a pathetic figure as his hands alone hold up the standard he had chosen to live and die for. Just now I used the word failure and perhaps wrongly. Nothing matters as long as the great tree can find a patch of virgin soil, and as you can plainly see it is here firmly rooted. When you enter the parish church offer a prayer for the soul of the man whose remains lie somewhere beneath the center aisle, the indefatigable scholar, the keen observer of men and events, the wit who shot his barbs at pietistic stuffiness and affectation, the courageous missionary, the saintly priest, Pierre Potier, S.J.

⁶ *Mich. Hist. Colls.*, IX. 491.