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## **Memoirs of Father Peter Minwegen, O.M.I.. May 15, 1977**

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MEMOIRS OF FATHER PETER MINWEGEN, O.M.I.

Foreword

This is part of a story telling us how God in His infinite Wisdom and Love turns evil into good, dire calamities into rich blessings. It is the story of one of the twenty-four Oblates of German descent who during the First World War were driven from their mission field in the British colonies and after lengthy journeys on land and sea finally landed in the United States. Here, isolated, cut off from any communication with the General Administration of their religious community in Rome, they followed the advice of one of their former superiors, "debrouillez-vous", i.e. make the best of a bad situation. Having to shift for themselves, they sought and found plenty of work to do, yet were never oblivious of the fact that they were Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Identified as war victims and priests in good standing, they were welcomed by the Bishops of the country.

A typical welcome was that extended by Bishop Schwesbach of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. "I did not know anything about the Oblates," he told the author, "but I have learned lately that the Oblate missionaries work in the most difficult missions and are experts in doing pioneer work. I tell you, I have plenty of that in my diocese." With that he spread out a map of his diocese showing the spots - he called them dead corners - where plenty of pioneer work could be done.

When on April 2, 1917, the United States entered the war

on the side of the Allies, the future looked very dark for our German missionaries. Fingerprinted, registered as alien enemies, obliged to report monthly to public authorities, they were often suspected as agents of enemy governments, in a few cases openly accused of sedition and espionage. An F.B.I. agent confided to the author that they had on file a classified index of every clergyman with a German name. Each one had his label. Some were marked pro-German; others very pro-German, still others viciously pro-German. A certain dean was called "dangerously pro-German", a bishop was classified as "pro-German, but harmless."

For some of the Fathers, life became a nightmare. One of them died during the epidemic of 1918-1919. Another one, after he had returned to Canada, lost his mind and died there. Two of them considered the life of an Oblate Missionary too much of a burden and accepted the invitation of a bishop who incsrdinated them in his Diocese. The Oblates of the East were approached by Father Henry Grandin, Provincial of Alberta-Saskatchewan, with the request to accept the German Missionaries and incorporate them in their own Province. However the Eastern Province, feeling that the presence of so many "alien enemies" in their midst would embarrass them in their relations with civil authorities, turned down the request. The German Fathers felt this rebuff very keenly, but considering the war hysteria of those days, they could easily understand their Eastern confreres' attitude.

The twenty that were now left remained faithful to their sacred vows. The bond of love and friendship that had bound

them together during their long years of training at the juniorate and scholasticate and which had kept them together in spite of all sorts of troubles, hardships and grievances was never to be dissolved.

Though without visible organization of their own, they felt they belonged to one another; that they belonged together. Being blessed by God with success at their respective posts assigned to them by the bishops, and well aware of the great opportunities for mission work in the Middle-West, they naturally wished that the work they had done in those trying years would remain in the hands of the Oblates when mere peaceful times would come. They hoped against hope that some day they might have a Province of Oblates in the American middle-west. As soon as the shooting was over, they met frequently to discuss ways and means to that end. As corresponding secretary of such meetings, the author had to get in touch with our former superiors and with the General Administration in Rome.

Up to that time, Father Joseph Laufer, O.M.I. had been nominal superior of all the war refugee Oblates in the United States. He preferred to call himself the little French missionary. With a wallet full of railroad passes he traveled the width and length of the United States to preach missions in German. He acted as liaison agent, or intermediary, with the bishops, and as such he was invaluable. No sooner would he hear of a new arrival than he would hasten to see a bishop and the next day the newly-arrived war-refugee Oblate, to his great surprise, would be installed as pastor in a parish.

It happened several times that he had jobs lined up before the arrival of any newcomer.

The Fathers always joyfully anticipated a meeting at which Father Laufer would be present. He may be best described a "homo sui generis!" Well prepared, he did not have his equal in the pulpit. His delivery was unique. The color, inflection and pathos of his voice was such that by quoting a Latin text of the Psalms he could move the German Russian farmers to tears. He possessed a fabulous memory. As raconteur, he could hold his audience spellbound with his interesting stories. He looked upon the rest of the Fathers as the young generation for whom he had conducted retreats when they were still in their "baby shoes" in the Junior seminary. In regard to a future Province, Father Laufer had ideas of his own. He used to say: "Do your duty wherever you are; it does not matter very much whether you are in a "communaute," district or province."

It is to be regretted that, busy as he always was, Father Laufer did not find time to contribute his share to the "codex historicus." That applies more or less to all the Fathers at that time.

Father Bel, Assistant General, who, at the outbreak of the war had been in Canada for canonical visitations, had come to see us and was satisfied to learn that we were still Oblates and doing our work faithfully. He gave up the idea of joining us to the Eastern Province.

Father Kassiepe and Father Pietsch represented our cause vigorously in Rome. With the appointment of Father Joseph

Pothman as District Superior, a great step toward the fulfillment of our wishes had been made. In 1925 our Province of the Middle West was canonically erected under the name of Vice-Province of St. Henry's in Belleville, with Father Pothman as its first Provincial.

When, on January 25, 1956, the very Rev. John P. Walsh, Assistant General, came to Starkenburg, Mo. for a canonical visitation he expressed his regret that he had found very little in the records about the founding of the Central Province in the different houses he had visited. He suggested that each one of the surviving Fathers write the history of his experiences and the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Province. Amplifying on this request of Father Walsh, I might say that if each one of the "old-timers" wrote his life story, it would serve a threefold purpose:

1. It would show how their efforts and perseverance together with the misfortunes of the war, permitted by God's Providence as blessings in disguise, finally led to the founding of the Central Province.
2. Such narratives would throw light upon a period of history which, in these days of cold war, hot war and Communist infiltration, could easily repeat itself.
3. A young man who looks for an active life as a missionary at home or abroad, will make the interesting discovery that the life of an Oblate Missionary may be crowded with heroic deeds and at the same time packed with adventure stranger than fiction. With this in mind I shall add my memoirs to the historical record of the Central Province.

Who could have guessed that the boy on the left of this poor snapshot would play an important role in the history and development our Shrine and our Central Province in the United States!

This picture was taken on a day of May 1907 when I celebrated my First Mass in my hometown of Kempenich, in the German Rhineland. Otto Fuhrmann, with his family, distantly related to mine, had come to celebrate the occasion with us. The boy was impressed, he wanted to become an Oblate Missionary too. So I sent him to St Charles Junior Seminary, near Valkenburg, Holland. There he met a fellow student of the same ideals and enthusiasm. Alike in character and personality the two became fast friends. Not having reached the state of subdiaconate both were drafted into the army and assigned to the regiment of Royal Guards. When the world war I came to an end in 1918, Paul had been a pilot in the Kaiser's airforce and Otto Fuhrmann an anti-aircraft gunner. They survived the defeat of the army and the smashing of the Wehrmacht, the hazards and risks of a country in famine and revolt.

They returned to the major seminary at Huenfeld and were ordained in 1922. Having visited my parents the first time since I left home in 1908 I attended his first Mass in Niederzissen, or neighboring parish. Naturally I told the young priest how the small number of Oblates, driven out of British colonies were working hard to have a province of our own in America. I suggested, he should volunteer to join us. We needed teachers, missionaries, etc.

"No" he said, that would be paradise for me. I do not look for ease comfort and luxury. I have seen so much crime, sin and misery in the world, at home and abroad; somebody ought to make up for it. I have made up my mind to go to the most difficult missions we have and have already asked our Father General to grant me that favor. By the determination on his face I could see, further persuasion would be useless. It was the answer of a victim soul for the sins of the world.

Otto Fuhrmann went to Southwest Africa. From Windhuc he was sent up to Ovamboland, where a savage Negro Chief had threatened he would kill the first white sorcerer that dared to enter his realm. The negro chief was struck dumb by the daring courage of the missionary. The latter had boldly told the chief, "Let me show you what I can do for you and your people."

Within a year he had made one convert, with whose help he built a little chapel. He was thatching the roof with palmleaves when he

wrote to me, May 25th 1925 from a place named Oshikuni: I am now almost a year in my mission station in Ovamboland, I know now from personal experience what it means to start a new station and I tell you quite frankly, that I can understand much better what problems you had to contend with when you were at your beginnings. I had a taste of it when I had to do my work without the assistance of my confreres or the help of any white person, all by myself. ....

if the Lord wants to have a large harvest of souls, he will provide the necessary means One of the laybrothers will arrive here this summer. Another Brother requested I should ask the most Rev. Father General, to let <sup>come</sup> him to my mission, or interceed with the Lord that he might be assigned to this work"

/When I received this letter I had already learned by cablegram that Father Otto Fuhrmann had died of malaria in the vain attempt to traverse the desert to reach a hospital. Father Schulte was shocked when he heard of the untimely death of his dearest friend. He offered to take his place in Africa. His petition was granted. To his dismay he learned that Fr Fuhrmann could have saved his life if he had had a motor of some kind and, passing through the desert, reached a hospital and medication in time. Over twenty Oblates had lost their lives for the same reason. Vehicles faster than an oxcart, was an absolute necessity for our African Missionaries, in fact for all missionaries. At that hour was born in the resourceful mind of the flying priest, Father Schulte, the idea of the MIVA, i.e. an International Vehicle Association in the service of the Foreign missions.

In the mind of Father Schulte an idea of such dynamic appeal called for immediate action. He looked in vain for help from his home province in Germany, but Germany found itself in the throes of an inflation. Letters had arrived from Germany with a postage stamp carrying the face value of \$250.000.00, equivalent to our 5¢ stamp. The Fatherland was literally bankrupt.

Fr Schulte could not be discouraged. Defeat was not in his vocabulary. He knew only Europe could help his cause. It meant planning, campaigning, propoganda, approval of his superiors, though they could offer no financial help. news agencies, the secular Press, alerting hundreds of his friends, Catholic and non-Catholic, in short everything was set in motion to translate his idea into action. He received permission to return to Germany to promote his cause. He called on the Holy Father. Before Father Schulte had crossed the Mediterranean the news of his plans had reached the ears of Pius XI. As soon as he heard his name he exclaimed; I know you Father Schulte. You have my

Father Schulte arrived in Berlin at the time the German Bishops had gathered in the capital city for their annual Eastermeeting.. He submitted his plans now approved and blessed by the Holy Father to the assembled hierarchy. They were skeptical about the practicality of airplanes in the service of the missionaries. The war pilot was ready to demonstrate their practical value. He was offered the use of a plane. A young bishop and Prince Loewenstein were taken along as passengers. He circled high over Berlin to the delight of the onlookers on the ground. Both his guest passengers were enthusiastic about flying. The flying Priest, now inseparable from Father Schulte's name. Soon afterwards with the help of generous benefactors he acquired the first airplane for the foreign missions.

Considering the the different mission fields of the world, he came to the conclusion that the arctic regions of northwestern Canada needed airplanes more than any other country. It was Pius XI who had called these Canadian Missions the most difficult of all foreign territories. So Fr Schulte offered his first plane to Bishop Turquetil, O.M.I. Most of the travelling in the arctic with a temperature of 50 to 70 below zero. Travelling and transportation is done by snowshoes and dogsled. When far from any human dwelling, even an igloo, the missionary sleeps with his dogs under a pile of snow.

In summertime travelling is even more hazardous. To cross rivers with their treacherous cataracts and the vast lakes, the missionary has to carry his boat on his back together with his provisions and a portable altar, vestments, etc. and usually plagued with veritable clouds of mosquitoes and the swampflies.

For these reasons the first airplane was offered to Bishop Turquetil. However the good bishop doubted whether airplanes could be used at all in the arctic zone. He was afraid lest the extreme cold, the fierce snowstorms of the north make flying in these regions simply impossible. He was willing to believe in airplanes if Father Schulte would fly 2100 miles to the arctic ocean where on a floating island one of his Fathers, stricken with double pneumonia, was marooned and cut off from medical help. If the flying priest could fly up there and bring Father Chotard, O.M.I. back to a hospital, he would be ready to accept the plane.

Father Schulte who made the heroic flight attributed its success to Our Lady of the Snow, when he was afraid of an imminent crash during a snowstorm he promised our Lady to spread her devotion under that title, if she came to his aid and saved him in this emergency.

Returning from the far north,,Fr Schulte was assigned to the Central Province of Oblate Fathers. Having been rescued and protected in this most hazardous flight, he began at once a regular crusade in favor of our Lady of the Snows. He soon had thousands of friends joining him in the observance of a Novena, a nine day devotion preceding August 5th, on which day the Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of the Snows. To perpetuate the memory of his spectacular flight in the arctic, Father Schulte induced a famous artist of New York to create an everlasting memorial of the historical event, in the form of a beautiful painting of our Lady of the Snows. (By J. Watson Davis)

The picture, inspired by a detailed sketch and narrative of Father Schulte was to adorn the reredos of the side chapel in the seminary Church

Immense crowds of pilgrims soon came to see that picture, for it is really an historical masterpiece.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Child Jesus on her arms, appears in the white central panel. She looks as if she had just broken through an opening of aurora borealis, those mysterious northern lights, which drop on both sides in a gentle spray of rainbow colors.

On the ground the picture shows an Eskimo family coming out of their igloo, sled and dogteam in front of them. At the right, the Flying Priest, evidently on a sick call, holding a ciborium, accompanying the priest an altarboy carrying the liturgical lantern. Both have just climbed out of their airplane, the bumpers and headlights are visible behind them.

Soon between five to six thousand pilgrims gathered on the Novena's closing day to pray to our Lady before this remarkable painting, When the campus of St Henry's Seminary seemed too small to accommodate the vast crowds, friends of the Shrine suggested a larger site should be selected. About 200 acres outside the Belleville city limits have been chosen for the purpose. On these new grounds a Lourdes Grotto has been built in every detail a true replica of the original Shrine in Southern France.

A Way of the Cross has been erected on the new grounds, each station being a little shrine of its own. The statues of each are reproductions of famous originals created by the well known sculptor, Joseph Fuhrich of Vienna.

On feast days of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mass is celebrated on a huge altar over which extends a graceful canopy in the form of a gigantic M.

In front of this altar there is a hillside which rises slowly into a vast amphitheater with a seating capacity of 25,000 . On novena days in summer time this majestic grandstand is filled to overflow. The attendance in the year 1965 was estimated as very close to a million.

This Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows is visited each of the year by sightseers, tourists and pilgrims out of each State of the Union. But not only excursionists are attracted. So many pilgrims come to pray for favors from Our Lady . Many indeed are the reports of pilgrims who claim to have received extraordinary favors through the intercession of Our Lady.

Who could have ever foreseen or by the keenest flight of fancy ever guessed that the friendship of two young seminarians would ultimately lead to the foundation of the largest open-air shrine of our Lady in the United States. under the title which was practically unknown up to that time in this country and that this devotion to Our Lady of the Snows so popular in Rome would come to the New World, via Holland, Germany , Africa; and the arctic regions of Canada. We admire and adore the ways of divine Providence which can weave out of simple thread a marvelous pattern of beauty in design and color, as it did in the story of Otto Fuhrmann, Paul Schulte, the MIVA, Bishop Turquetil , Father Chotard, Belleville and a poor religious family called the Vice-Province of St Henry's, at that time struggling for its very survival, but now developing such an amazing degree of vitality that it can send out sturdy transplants to Brazil in the South , Japan and the phipinew in the east and DENmark, sweden and greenland in the European North, and still remaining a vigorous and growing Oblate Family in our midwestern American home, all of this, as we must humbly admit, due to the Blessings that came to us with the devotion to Our Lady of the Snows.

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST ASSIGNMENT UNDER THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

During the years of my scholasticate, the study of philosophy and theology proved so interesting and at times attractive that it would not have required much persuasion to keep me on the school benches the rest of my life. The general trend however among the newly ordained was to get out as soon as possible. The young Oblates would not have been normal if, listening to the glowing reports of the old veterans in the mission fields of the world, they had not developed a certain degree of enthusiasm to join them. Having enlisted as Oblates in that part of Christ's army which is especially dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, they were anxious to rush out to the front line of that spiritual war which forever rages between the forces of Christ and the forces of evil. Naturally, we young Oblates built our air-castles and in our day-dreams visualized exploits, conquests and victories on the future mission field. My secret ambition was to join the mission band, preferably the home mission band in Germany. When, shortly after my ordination, I was sent to Fritzlar in Hessen to preach my first sermon, I took it as an omen from heaven that it was delivered at the spot where St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, had felled the mighty oak tree dedicated to the war god Wotan, thereby paving the way for the conversion of thousands of our forefathers.

To follow in the footsteps of St. Boniface, to preach and die for the conversion of the fatherland torn in twain by Luther's unfortunate apostasy and so-called reformation, that would be the ideal! The glamour of such an idealistic conception of my future mission became an all-absorbing fascination.

Of course, nobody would breathe a word to a living soul about such secret aspirations. Fifty years later it can be told without hurting anyone's feelings.

In due time, the first assignment in the name of obedience arrived from Rome, and on July 18th, the feast of St. Camillus, it was handed to me by the Superior of the scholasticate. Some time before that date I had been called in by Father Superior who asked me whether I had any special wishes as to the mission field to which the Superior General would assign me. Grace, triumphing over nature, made me reply promptly: "No, I have no special wishes. Send me any place you wish." Then I hesitated and this time, nature triumphing over grace, I added: "except Ceylon." "Why not to Ceylon?" the superior asked. "Ceylon is a beautiful country, a veritable paradise on earth they say." "That is exactly why I do not care to go there. I do not want to live in a paradise. I should like to 'rough it' and do pioneer work of an Oblate Missionary,"

When on July 18th, 1908, the same Father Superior handed me the first assignment duly signed by the Assistant General, Fr. Favre, ordering me in the name of obedience to proceed "quam primum" to the Vicariate of Alberta-Saskatchewan, the Superior could not help noticing that I did not hide my

feelings of shocking surprise. "It is a surprise," I mumbled. Thereupon Father Superior told me confidentially: "Father Grandin, your future Provincial, has asked for you personally. He wants you to teach at his new St. John's Junior Seminary in Edmonton."

The shock was real. No matter how I tried to sublimate its downward pull, nature put up a terrific struggle to assert itself. However, the confidential disclosure that Father Henry Grandin, the nephew of the saintly Bishop Vital Grandin, would be my superior; that I was known to him personally and that he had asked for me personally, and last, but not least, that I was personally chosen to teach at his seminary, all this felt like a drop of soothing balm on a sore wound.

Three months later, filled with roseate hopes, I arrived in Edmonton, the capital city of Alberta. The reception at the Provincial house was not what I had expected; in fact there was no welcome reception at all. "Who are you?" they asked. "Where do you come from? How do you spell your name?" They looked up the "personnel" to see whether I was listed there. No, nobody had ever heard of me. Nobody had been informed of my coming. They did not need me at all right then. The junior seminary had been completely staffed. There was no opening for me at the seminary nor was there any vacancy for me in the missions. When Father Vicar and his council put their heads together to deliberate what to do with me, I felt like sinking through the floor. I found that it is comparatively easy to conform to the Holy Will of God in the

abstract, but when it comes to you in the concrete from the hand of man it can mean a fierce trial in spite of all efforts to supernaturalize the moment. I had to scrape the bottom of my reserve supply of faith, charity and vow obligations to prevent an outburst that I would have regretted later. I did not explode, but I am sure no novice master could have ever devised a more efficient scheme to let the hot air out of an inflated ego than this unrehearsed reception of mine at the provincial house in Edmonton.

Next morning, after Mass, my feelings had calmed down almost to normal. I regained composure, and with it peace of mind. Now I imagined I was perfectly reconciled to the Will of God. While I thought I had everything under complete control there popped up from the darkest recess of my subconscious self the wish to have just one more farewell meeting with the superior of the major seminary who, though with the best of intentions, had seen fit to sugar-coat what he considered the bitter pill of my first assignment. God's Providence came to the rescue. I did not remain at the provincial house at St. Joachim's but a few days when Father Forner was reported seriously ill at his mission in Fish Creek, Saskatchewan. And I was sent there immediately to take his place.

My first assignment, with its subsequent reception at Edmonton, was a forceful initiation into active mission work. Its shock treatment made me practically immune for years to come to any emotional upset. It was to be the pattern of all later assignments to come. I have never received an assign-

ment I liked, but in each case in less than six weeks I was so well adjusted to it that I felt it was Divine Providence which had sent me. If it had depended upon myself I would still be at Fish Creek tending to the Indians and half-breeds of that poor mission.

## Chapter 2

### THE METIFS OF FISH CREEK

I arrived at Fish Creek on the eve of All Saints. It was a small parish of Cree Indian halfbreeds. To call them halfbreeds would have been considered an insult. The French missionaries called them Metis; the Indians preferred to be called by the more euphonic sounding Metif. It did sound more friendly. My first superior was Father Theophil Nanzick. How glad I was to meet him; for he had been a senior in the junior siminary of St. Charles in Holland when, in 1895 I entered the same seminary as a freshman and was assigned to the desk next to him in the study hall.

"Here you are," he greeted me, "pastor of the Mission of Fish Creek and of Rosthern 12 miles from here. I'll show you your horse and buggy to get there. By the way, are you ready for your sermon?"

"How can I? I do not know English."

"You do not need any English. In Fish Creek we preach in French. But by Christmas you will have to preach an English sermon at Rosthern."

We had had good professors in French and we had learned

fairly well; but conversing moderately and preaching in a foreign language are two different things. I sat up all night, wrote every word of the sermon and committed it to memory verbatim. After Mass, I hurried to the church entrance to meet my new parishioners. After a few bashful introductions the men began to talk freely. Upon the question "Did you understand what I said?" an old fellow remarked: "Notre Pere ne parle pas comme nous autres!" -Like the Poles they talk to you in the third person.- "Our Father does not talk the way we do."

"Well then, how do you talk?"

"We don't say 'il pleut', we say 'ca mouille", and we don't say 'un petit peu', we say 'un petitbrain'." And he went on to mention a few more expressions peculiar to the Metifs of the Northwest.

Next Sunday I made sure to intersperse such idiomatic phrases into my sermon to the satisfaction of the old folks who nodded approval while I was speaking. "A icid, notre Pere parle comme nous autre Metif," was their comment.

When I heard an old Metif call his wife "creature", I did not think it very nice, and when an old farmer called his cow by the same name, but pronounced it "critter", I thought it positively rude. I was to learn a lot more about idiomatic English and American slang in years to come.

I learned to love these good Metifs. They were poor, but their poverty did not seem to make them unhappy. They were happy-go-lucky, never worrying about anything. They shun servile work, avoiding it whenever and wherever possible. They have an instinctive aversion for strenuous exertion of

Both the families now join Jimmie and they finish his supplies.

The women are usually very good cooks; they bake excellent bread. If there is any garden work to be done the women take care of it. The men after a long tedious winter await the coming spring.

The debacle of the frozen Saskatchewan is a magnificent sight which no Metif wants to miss. For over a week waters from more southern parts have flowed over and somewhat mellowed the ice in spots. Suddenly there is a crack in the ice somewhere, a crash and a sharp detonation accompanies it. It is the signal that the debacle of the frozen Saskatchewan may come any time now. In a moment all the Metifs are on their feet to watch nature's impressive drama as seen from the high bank of the river. A second break soon follows, a third one, a fourth one close by and each one accompanied by either the rumblings of an earthquake, the friction and clash of a mountain of broken glass, or at times resembling blasts of artillery. A huge block of ice, a quarter of a mile long now broken loose from its anchorage on the bank, begins to move, sideways, right and left, up and down; it rises, sinks, heaves up again, shakes and trembles as if in convulsions, and finally splits in the middle, both sheets of ice plunging into the deep where warmer waves of water lubricate them for a savage onslaught on the solid mass ahead. Forced by the strong current the first sheet of ice rises out of the water and slides down in the middle of the frozen river. A second one follows, a third one piles on the second, a fourth and a fifth one, each five to ten feet in thickness brings the mountain of ice to towering heights.

No frozen river can carry such weight. With a fearful crash the whole structure comes down and crushes everything beneath it. Every four or five miles the same scene is staged until at last the wild Saskatchewan settles to its own level and hurriedly pursues its way to the Arctic Ocean. As soon as the last ice floes have passed, the ferry is let down to resume public transport and the Metifs get their rowboats ready to go fishing.

The Metif are honest people although at times they find it difficult to observe the elementary distinctions between mine and thine. They may take things that do not belong to them, yet they do not mean to steal. They seem to be of the opinion that what God has given to some people may, under certain conditions, also be claimed by other people, for instance by some needy Metif. In their day they did not know anything about the "Share the Wealth" theory, but they practiced it long before Huey Long mentioned it.

As regards property or things that belong to the Padre or the Church, they are somewhat communistically inclined. In the absence of the priest or the brother, they help themselves and feel no qualms of conscience about it. Naturally, our good Brother Guillet did not approve of their communistic tendencies and after a few sad experiences, he kept the bread, pies and jellies under lock and key. On a certain day the Brother had stewed a quart of prunes for breakfast. When he reached into the cupboard to serve some, the bowl was empty. The Brother was provoked. "It must have happened last night when I was busy in the church. Now this is the third time they did it; but this time I shall fix them." He went to town, bought a new chamber pot, put his stewed prunes

into it, covered it neatly and set it under his bed. Though it was in full sight, his mess of prunes was never disturbed again. If I had never known the good Brother's stratagem, the prunes would have been more appetizing to me.

On another occasion it was my privilege to become acquainted with their liberal interpretation of the seventh commandment. On the day of the pilgrimage, when thousands of Letifs flocked together at the grotto and Shrine of Our Lady of St. Laurent, a dozen priests heard confession, for want of a chapel, in the open air. I had sat up my chair under a shady tree, laying my overcoat over the back of the chair. One penitent after another bowed down to recite the act of contrition and vow a firm purpose of amendment, but one of them, forgetting what he had just told the Lord, took a fancy to that fine new overcoat of mine, and cleverly, without my noticing it, walked away with it. I missed the overcoat very much, but I made up my mind, that, if the case turned up on Judgment Day, I would not press charges against the poor Letif, who might have needed that overcoat much more than I did.

### Chapter 3

Father Theophil Wandzick, O.M.I.

Here I was in Fish Creek, my first home in the new world. Fish Creek was located on the high banks of the North Saskatchewan River, and was noted for its enchanting scenery and beautiful surroundings. Yet a real home is not what material surroundings, but what human beings really make it, and if it happens to be a religious community, it is the religious family spirit that makes it a home. Thus from the very start I loved my new home because of the two fellow Oblates that belonged to it. Father Theophil Wandzick, the Superior, Brother Guillet, the factotum of the house, and myself, the junior missionary, made up the religious family.

Father Wandzick had done missionary work in South Africa, but when 70,000 Poles and 60,000 Ruthenians had settled in western Canada and had no priests to look after their spiritual welfare, his superior had recalled him from Africa and sent him to Canada. As he was a polyglot of at least six languages which he could speak fluently, he could preach to both Poles and Ruthenians. He established regular parishes among the Poles and Ruthenians near Vonda and Fish Creek. Besides, he was called frequently to faraway settlements to give Catholics who spoke a Slav language an opportunity to fulfill their Easter duty. He had scarcely a day of rest between such calls.

He left me in charge of the French halfbreeds - or Metifs-

of Fish Creek, and the mixed mission of Rosthern, which is best described as a little town with an immigrants' camp where immigrants gathered before they set out to take possession of their homesteads.

The Polish mission Father Nandzick looked after was thirty miles from our place; the Ruthenian mission over fifty miles. To travel such distances every Sunday, Father had two teams of horses; one, a pair of trotters, the other, a pair of pacers. Ordinary horses would have never made the long-distance trip every Sunday. The Galicians, as the Ruthenians were known in western Canada, were deeply religious Catholics. Although they belonged to the Greek Catholic rite, they were satisfied with the ministration of the Latin rite. At that time there was only one Ruthenian priest of their rite in the Canadian West, Father Androchovich, who like Father Nandzick was busy traveling to visit all the members of his widely scattered flock.

Father Nandzick, with his sermons, baptisms, marriages, sick calls and trips, was kept too busy, and when he returned home was too tired to relate his various experiences in the mission field. One day he came home, took off his clothes, wrapped them in a nice bundle and buried them in the nearby garden. "It's the only way," Brother Guillet had told him.

"What had happened?" I asked. He told me the story of five little kittens, beautifully striped black and white, he had picked up on the road. Such beautiful little things he had never seen in the old country. Carrying them on his lap, driving over the rugged deep-rutted prairie roads, the little things became restive and began spraying their

protest over his overcoat with the result of the most offensive attack that had ever been made on his olfactory sense. He threw them out and stopped at the next creek to wash his clothes and to get rid of the all-pervading stench; but to no avail. When he arrived an hour late at his Polis mission and had to hear confessions for an hour, he heard through the little window back of his seat a heated discussion going on outside. The congregation was blaming the building committee for using such an ill-smelling varnish to paint the new confessional. The padre did not have the courage to tell his people what had happened to him.

The only relaxation Father Nandzick enjoyed was an occasional hunting trip. I, who came from Germany, which a few years later would be known as the most militaristic nation in the world, had never handled a gun and never fired a shot in my life, and therefore did not join him. Saskatchewan in those days was really a hunter's paradise. One day when his brother from Winnipeg, also an Oblate, had gone along, they came home with 102 rabbits, 40 ducks and a dozen partridges and prairie chickens. Nobody seemed to know whether there were any legal limits to bag.

Father had a very fine water Spaniel named "Braun", who accompanied him on most of his cross-country trips. The hound was a pointer, Irish setter, and retriever all trapped into one. If there was any game in the vicinity he would find it, and having found it wh would turn and look straight at his master. While Father raised his gun to aim, the dog would stand in rigid suspense, but as soon as the shot was fired, he would dash in the direction of the shot and without fail re-

trieve the game anywhere on land, lake, or river. As a hunting dog, Braun was invaluable. When he saw Father appearing in the doorway with a gun slung around the shoulder, he used to get wild with excitement; then make a bee-line for the stables to alert the horses, and while Father hitched up the team, our spaniel, with playful leaps and bounds would run circles around horse and buggy, and as soon as Father was seated and took up the reins, the hunt was on and Braun took the lead.

Imagine the dog's surprise, when one morning, Father appeared on the scene with a brand new Model T Ford car. Neither the Metis, nor the spaniel had ever seen anything like it. True, over in nearby Rosthern they sold Post cards marked "Horseless Vehicles", but it showed the picture of an ox instead of a horse, harnessed up in the buggy. When Father came out of the house with his gun, the dog, after cutting a few joyful capers around him, went straight to the horse stable; but this time Father did not hitch up his team. The spaniel looked perplexed. He could not make out the nature of this horseless contraption. He jumped aside when Father turned the crank and got the motor started. The roar of the engine frightened him. Then suddenly the puzzle became as clear as daylight to his canine intelligence. As soon as Father stepped on the gas, which released a veritable canonade of ear-splitting backfires, the mystery was solved. You could almost see the dog's face light up with understanding. Why, this infernal machine is nothing else but a huge gun, a hunting device that will bring down any monster that roams the bush or prairie. Forthwith his canine loyalty was transferred from the horse team to the model T Ford.

One Sunday afternoon, Braun did not come home with Father from his mission. An hour later he appeared at the door with a duck in his mouth. Another time that Spaniel was late he came home with 15 pounds of goose in his mouth. Only then did Father, who had never driven a motor car before, admit that he had not been able to stop his Ford quick enough to avoid driving right into a flock of geese that were grazing by the way side. Of course our water spaniel considered what his master ran over as legitimate hunter's quarry.

Father Nandzick worked in Fish Creek and its missions until the end of the First World War. During the war, he had been accused of pro-German leanings. Once he was hailed into court in Prince Albert, because he had insulted an Englishman and thereby given comfort to the enemy. The chief point of his indictment was that he named one of his dogs. Kitchenen after the great British war hero, and that he had given the dog a kick in the back publicly in the streets of Rosthern where he used to do his shopping. He extricated himself by proving that he had another dog to whom he had given the name of Bismark, and if Bismark did not behave, he gave him a kick too. "Dogs," he said, "must be disciplined when they do not behave, regardless of their names." He was acquitted with the warning however to be loyal to his adopted country.

When, after the First World War, there was hope that Poland would be a great Catholic and independent country again, Father Nandzick was sent to Poland where they were in great need of priests. Here he died in 1943. R.I.P.

## Chapter 4

### Learning English

When I arrived in Fish Creek, Saskatchewan, my superior, Father Theophil Nandzick, told me to say Mass the next morning, and as it happened to be All Saints Day, to preach a sermon. The expression on my face told him very plainly that I was not prepared for the ordeal, as I did not know any English. He could not very well expect me to preach a sermon in a language I did not know. "All my people here are French halfbreeds; so preach in French." Now we had received a fair knowledge of that beautiful language in our junior seminary, but we had no opportunity of practically using the language in conversation. So I made a virtue out of necessity, sat up all night, wrote the sermon, learned it by heart, and gave it the next morning.

By Christmas, my superior told me, you will have to preach an English sermon in our mission church at Rosthern. By Christmas I had elaborated a five minute sermon, which I closed by wishing them all a Mary Christmas, thinking it very nice on the part of an Englishman to bring in the name of Mary; I had not the slightest idea that it was supposed to be Merry Christmas.

I knew it would require years of study, listening, writing, and talking to use the new language fairly well. My aim was to master the English language sufficiently so that at a moment's notice I could express any idea that occurred to me and to do it correctly, easily, and fluently. That ambition, never

fully to be realized, implied hard work and tenacity at work.

I soon found that a sense of humor was indispensable. Let people laugh, and join them in laughing at your own mistakes. It would also require a willingness to accept and even invite correction. Sensitiveness in that regard would be fatal.

On the supposition that what you can not express in writing is seldom clearly in your mind I began writing not only sermon material, but everything I wanted to use in conversation.

What made it really difficult was that none of the German Fathers had time or opportunity to take a regular course in English, but had to learn the language as spoken in his immediate surroundings. Some Fathers had to learn English among the German-Russians, whose English vocabulary was restricted to the kitchen and the barnyard. There were not educated people in such settlements with whom to converse. A dictionary a grammar and the very popular little volume called the "Sermons from the Flemish" were the only aids to get ready for the Sunday service. During the week we had to listen to a mixture of French, German, Russian and English, resulting in a dialect we could not very well use in the pulpit.

Some of the Fathers had to learn English among their French confreres, who like ourselves had to learn the language of the country. One of the French Fathers, extolling the beauty of his mother tongue, called it the language of songbirds, compared it with the clear waters hurrying over the pebbles of the forest brook... light-footed, with daintily measured steps. He said it dances over words and phrases, while the Anglo-Saxon tongue drags along with a chief accent on each word and a heavy

lighted to hear him repeat it: "No, I came by de drain."

Careless pronunciation by native Americans accounted for many mistakes when we repeated words we had heard without checking them in the dictionary. We did not go as far as the boy who thought he had repeated correctly what he had heard by saying in the recitation of the Apostles' Creed: "suffered undor a bunch of violets" and finishing his act of contrition with: "I firmly resolve to end my life," but some one who had learned the Lord's prayer from hearsay asked God to give him his danish bread, and when corrected, he changed it to: "Give us today our daily spread."

One of the Fathers who never took the trouble of looking up the word dandelion, actually wrote of it as tender lion.

Had the same Father looked up the word "mock turtle", he would have discovered that mock turtle is not turtle at all, but beef, and should not have been used, as he claimed on a certain occasion once for all to solve his Friday problem.

Using a word which when mispronounced assumes a different meaning can lead to embarrassment to both speaker and listener. One of the Fathers, at a card social told his partner, a refined matron, that if she had played her ace they would have gotten that trick, caused an embarrassing blush on the face of the good lady and snickers at the neighboring table. When puzzled about the incident, he reported it to Sister who gave him private lessons, who was horrified to learn that he had used the German pronunciation for ace, namely ASS.

Making Sunday announcements and telling the people to come up for Communion through the "main ale" was funny enough, but when another Father on a similar occasion pronounced it "main esel", those of the congregation who understood German

smiled when he called a doughnut a "duffnut".

One of us, having in mind the "w" before the "a", as in war, to his dying day called a candle a wox candle. Another one in his Sunday pulpit announcements invited his parishioners to the newly installed "bawling" alley. "Whom" became "womb"; "developer" was rendered as "Devil-oper"; and translating literally from the German, one declared in a sermon that the road to hell is "plastered" with good resolutions.

As beginners we found it hard to distinguish between long and short syllables. For years I used to say "rellroad" instead of rail road. Father Vachon of St. Paul's Church, Saskatoon told me one day, referring to the prayers I had recited after Mass that the devil is not a piece of textile. "You called him Satin."

A doctor returning from the community infirmary where he had visited one of the Fathers suffering from a bad toothache, grinned and remarked drily: "Father complains that his tits hurt him very much."

It was quite a problem to distinguish between soft and sharp consonants. One would always say "Dezember", instead of December, "zacund", instead of second, "zon" instead of son, and "zun" instead of sun. And when disgusted he would say: "It makes me zick." Veil was turned into a "whale", which of course was illfitting when the Blessed Virgin was supposed to wear it around her head. Giving instruction to bride and groom, he was heard saying: "Marriage is something very holy, very serious; for marriage is a "wow"." The same priest who started his prayers in the church by saying, "Let us bray" was asked at a deanery meeting whether he came by car or by bus. His mischievous friends knew his answer, but they always de-

one for each sentence.

Those who studied English in a French community may not call St. Joseph exactly a "carpenter" but by their even measured, accentless syllables they betray the influence of their early French surroundings as soon as they open their mouth. The fact that according to an English Professor, Sir Alfred Laurier's French accent had a peculiar charm and added to the prestige of his eloquence, was small comfort for us poor foreigners who had not been blessed with the other talents that made Laurier the most famous orator of his day.

Whenever a person asked me, "How is Father today?" and throughout the conversation addressed me in the third person, I knew he was either Polish or had learned English in a Polish settlement. If I heard someone greet me "Fader", or listened to a priest preaching on one of the three Divine "Parsons", or speak of "Gawd", I knew I was among the Irish or Scotch, among whom I was to learn the language of the country. Many years later, with the arrival of the radio, it became gradually clear which of the many different American dialects might be the right standard of pronunciation to adopt.

In retrospect, it is amusing to recall some of the silly mistakes we made in those early days. Each one of us furnishes his share of blunders and bonors, which at times caused ridiculous, even embarrassing, situations.

One of the chief difficulties in acquiring an English vocabulary and the cause of many mistakes was the lack of definite rules of pronunciation. The pronunciation of some vowels and diphthongs seemed to be quite arbitrary; you had to learn each word by the dictionary. You heard somebody say couch, enough, touch; and a priest wondered why everybody

laughed aloud.

We greenhorns, as they called us the first few years, found some consolation in the fact that confreres, much older than we, also made their mistakes. One of the old-timers of Edmonton, assisting Archbishop Legal, O.M.I. at a confirmation, wanted to tell the children at the communion rail to kiss the bishop's ring. Having forgotten the word "ring", he substituted the French work "bague" for it, and made the children wonder why and how they should kiss the bishop's back.

Such blunders put us on our guard. We frequently learned by the mistakes of others. The example of one of our Canadian Fathers from the East who had been transferred to our Juniorate at Strathcona taught us not to take too great risks in the beginning. After two months of intense study of the King's English he asked for the privilege of giving the students the 15 minute morning meditation. It happened to be Christmastime. When he told the boys that the holy Family traveled to Egypt on their ass he had the boys in stitches, and thinking that he had said something very clever, he repeated and stressed: "They did not have such chetive little asses as we have-... in our zoos, but big strong asses." By that time pandemonium had broken loose in the pews before him.

Our experienced elders warned us: "When you go to town to do some shopping, be sure to know what you want and what to ask for." They treated us with the story of the young German who went to the department store to buy a cushion, called "Kissen" in German. Naturally the young lady across the counter blushed with embarrassment when the impudent fellow asked for a "Kissen"; but when he flourished a five dollar bill in her face she did not seem unwilling to comply with his re-

quest. Now it was the young man's turn to feel embarrassed. No, no, that was not what he wanted. When he tried to explain that he wanted something to sit on and pinnted to his back, the young lady definitely backed out of the deal.

Translating literally and therby missing the idiomatic English term can cause serious misunderstandings. Shopping at a hardware store, I called for laundry hooks and had the helpless clerk guessing what I had in mind. He looked over his shelves, opened one drawer after another, consulted catalogues and finally admitted they did not carry such an article in stock. I was ready to leave when I espied the coveted article on a shelf. "Now Father," said the surprised clerk, "that is what we call a clothespin."

A brother, after reading a few lessons in a booklet called "Conversational English", thought he knew enough to go to town with it and do the shopping for the community. Among the things he was to buy was the order to buy a pint of traffic jam. The very tactful clerk told him that for the moment they were all out of traffic jam, but that he should come back the next day when they would have a new supply of it. The brother realized he had been fooled and did a little more studying before he ventured out on another shopping tour.

A priest who had been in ghe country less than six months had learned the language so well that he was able to give lectures on the foreign missions. He had learned English rapidly. He heard some boys speaking of a GUY. He asked a highschool student what it meant. The ready answer was: "A guy is a fine fellow, a great man." The following Sunday our Father went into the pulpit and informed the congregation that St. Anthony was a great guy.

The joke of fooling a foreigner boomeranged in a very sad case that happened in a hospital at Lethbridge, Alberta. A humble charwoman, popularly called Hungarian Kate, unable to learn English because she was illiterate, was sick at the hospital. When on Fridays, the Ladies of the Flower Guild brought her a small bouquet, she smiled gratefully, but did not know what to say. Her next-bed neighbor, who had been operated on for appendicitis suggested that she should express her gratitude in words, or say something to the friendly lady.

"Say what?" she asked.

"Just say, 'Very nice lady, damn you!'"

The following day she had an opportunity to express her gratitude in the way suggested, whereupon the lady that had advised her went into such violent convulsions of laughter that she had an internal hemorrhage and died of peritonitis.

A very important lesson we all had to learn was to choose the correct synonym of those on hand. A bishop sent me to a bookstore one day to buy a certain book for him. At the bookstore I called for the book entitled "Handshake with the Saints". The book clerk smiled and said: "I know what you want, Father", and handed me the book entitled "Handclasp with the Holy".

The choice of the wrong synonym was more unfortunate in the case of another priest. He was to preach his first sermon in English and it was to be given in the cathedral. He had prepared it well, had it censored by a confrere and was ready to deliver it. He intended to conclude it with the flourish of a well-rounded sentence. He had in mind the equivalent of a German sentence which closed with the words: "May the Lord keep you and bless you." Among a variety of synonyms expressing the German word "beware" he found "keep, preserve, pickle, etc."

He took a fancy to the word "pickle" and ended his sermon with the solemn wish: "And may the Lord pickle you forever, Amen." Receiving no comment from anyone in the congregation, he was satisfied that everything had been correct. However he was soon to be disillusioned. A few days later he went by train to a neighboring town. Across the aisle in the same car with Father sat an old fellow who was deadly drunk and who had vomited all over the seat. A passenger ahead of the priest remarked to him: "Father, isn't he pickled?"

"Pickled, you said?" asked the priest.

"Yes," repeated the stranger emphatically, "he is pickled."

We can imagine how mortified he felt when he learned that the word "pickle" also had a slang meaning and that last Sunday he had wished it upon his whole congregation in the Lord's Name. Experiences like this were apt to make us very cautious in the choice of words.

Collecting a passive vocabulary to use in reading and understanding a book or conversation is comparatively easy; but to acquire an active vocabulary, ready at any time for public speaking, is a difficult task.

One of the Fathers, being introduced as teacher of religion at the girls' academy, found after the first few questions that they were far behind with their allotted lessons and told them bluntly: "that they were pretty behind." Some of the young ladies giggled, others wondered whether their pink slip was showing.

If you wish to learn a new language you must be ready to add to your vocabulary everyday. I was willing to avail myself of every opportunity that came my way. On several occasions I had the chance of living among our Catholic colored

people. Somebody had told me that colored people speak excellent English. I got proof of it when their pastor who had invited me to conduct a mission for him introduced me to his chief usher.

"Mr. Miller," he said, "this is the Missionary Father who will be your pastor for the next few weeks."

Mr. Miller, a handsome, middle-aged gentleman with a gold chain across the projection of his white vest, rose to the occasion with an air of dignity and without hesitating a moment greeted me most cordially, saying: "Reverend Father, we are pleased to welcome you into our midst and we shall do our utmost to make your stay amongst us a most pleasant one." At the time I sighed. If I could only extemporize with the ease of that man and improvise a short speech with his fluency and spontaneity.

Next day, the Mission for the colored people was to be opened with a High Mass. I was ready in the sacristy, waiting for the clock to strike. A stout Negro woman acted as sacristan. She had laid out the vestments and had taken care of everything. The clock struck the hour, the bell had rung, but the men were still standing in front of the church smoking and visiting. It was five minutes past the time; still they would not come in. I turned to the colored lady. "Are these people always late for Mass on Sundays?" I asked.

"Oh no, Father," she said, "today they are rather remarkable for their procrastination."

What choice vocabulary, I thought. Standing in the open doorway of the sacristy, ready to proceed to the altar, I noticed that the antependium had not been changed from white

to green for that Sunday. I called the good lady's attention to it.

"I am sorry, Father," she said, "do you want me to disrobe at once?"

"For heaven's sake, no," I replied, "there is no time for that now."

It was obvious that the style of these good people cannot always be imitated as a norm for good English.

An old Irish Father warned me about the use of slang in the pulpit. I had consulted him about a synonym for potatoes. That day I had sat down at the dinner table with the boys. One of them called for "pataks" at the other end of the table, a second one wanted the "spuds", a third yelled: "Shoot down those 'Murphies'! And each time potatoes were handed down the line. Father Tom Murphy had to admit, to get along in life you have to know some slang.

It seems some people cannot express themselves without slang. I was surprised one day to get a sample of it even in the sacred precincts of the confessional. It is my habit to dismiss the penitent by saying either, "Praised be Jesus Christ," or, "Go in Peace." A young street urchin, who had not been in the Catholic school more than six weeks, after making a good confession, did not react to either dismissing sentence. He would not leave the box. I used both greetings several times and each time got a "Heh?" for an answer. After the third "heh?", I said: "Yes, you may go now, you are through."

"Oh! Skidoo? O.K." he said and left the box.

When a short time ago I got hold of a large dictionary of American slang, I discovered that slang has built a whole

literary world of its own and that it cannot be ignored entirely if we wish to understand our American people.

Now I have tried to speak the language of the country for fifty years, a longer period than I spent in the use of my mother tongue, yet I feel that the task of studying idiomatic American will never come to an end.

As a matter of fact when a few years ago I heard the first radio broadcast and heard that bulls were steady, cows weak, lambs frisky, sows down and hogs on the upswing, I was puzzled; but when the sports newscaster blared over the air: "St. Peter shaded St. Charles three to two, St. Stanislaus trounced the Immaculate Conception, and the Brewers trampled over the Sacred Heart; I was convinced I had to learn the American language all over again.

Now for a practical conclusion. If the superior plans to send Fathers to a foreign country, he might deem it wise to send such Fathers to a school or college for at least a year to master the essentials of the language which he is to use in the future field of his priestly activity. It would be a great help to all who receive such an assignment. It would save much precious time, spare much grief and worry, speed up efficient work from the start and prove to be of an incalculable benefit to all concerned.

The experiences related above make up an interesting chapter of the early history of our Central Province. The necessity of learning a strange tongue, of becoming acquainted with the customs, the racial and national issues of the country imply a most serious problem. Its eventual and final solution is indicated by the policies of both Pius XI and Pius XII, who

for the last twenty-five years have insisted on training native clergy in every mission field of the Church.

## MY FIRST ENGLISH SERMON \*)

The first year I spent in this country I did not mind being called "Greenhorn", a kindly nickname given to foreigners who go through this slow process of adapting themselves to the language, customs and way of life in the New World. The priest who arrives from Germany is no exception to this rule. I had to learn English, and I had to learn it, you might say, from scratch without teacher or tutor, left to my own resources which consisted of an English grammar, a German-English dictionary and my determination to make the best of the situation.

The time arrived for my first sermon. The reverend pastor had given me a small sermon book from which I gleaned the words and parts I considered best suited for my first attempt in the American pulpit.

Of course, the ending of my first sermon had to be original and impressive. The self-made conclusion, in close imitation of a German-style sermon would finish with the words, "May the Lord bless you and keep you." Looking up the word, "erhalten", I found it to mean "preserve, keep, pickle, protect, etc." Having been told that wherever there is a choice to prefer an Anglo-Saxon word to a Latin derivative, I chose the word, "pickle", and with a bold sweep of the pen I added to the text of the sermon the cordial wish: "And may the Lord bless you and pickle you, Amen." I took the friendly grin of the audience next morning as approval and endorsement of all that I had said in that memorable Sunday morning sermon.

\*) As told me by the party to whom this happened

I had entirely forgotten about the sermon when a few weeks later, by accident, I met with a grim reminder of the incident. I was returning on the Northern Pacific from a trip to the Twin Cities. In my coach, across the aisle there plumped down an untidy individual who seemed to have imbibed somewhat too freely. He held a large newspaper in front of him, pretending to read, probably to hide the fact that he was more than just a little tipsy. By the way he hiccupped I could not help noticing that he faced an intestinal revolution which might reach its climax any moment. Suddenly there was a violent eruption, but he had enough presence of mind to catch it in the yellow press sheet in front of him. I thought he could not have chosen a better shroud in which to bury it. The pungent odor of the malodorous performance pierced the atmosphere like the poisonous fall-out of a nuclear bomb.

"Father," said a man in front of me, "isn't it a pity that fellow is pickled?"

"What did you say, 'pickled'?"

"Yes, pickled. Isn't it a shame!"

So that was the meaning of the word "pickle", and I had used it in my first English sermon in the presence of Bishop Wehrle in the cathedral of Bismark, North Dakota.

## IN ROSTHERN, SASKATCHEWAN

Rosthern was the immigration center, or clearing house for immigrants, seeking a homestead in central Saskatchewan. Immigrants arrived here from all parts of Europe: Germans, Poles, Ruthenians and large contingents of German Russians from the shores of the Black Sea and the neighborhood of Odessa. At the land office of Rosthern, they "filed" on their homestead for a fee of \$10.00. Many immigrants, not satisfied with a homestead of 160 acres, reserved the right of pre-emption of a neighboring, adjoining farm for members of their family. Having little cash with them, they remained at Rosthern to work and earn funds to buy the most needed equipment. Some remained several years. Having no money to buy or rent a house, they "squatted" on a free lot, dug themselves a basement, laid a few planks over it for a roof and thus found an inexpensive home, cool in summer and warm in winter. After making enough money to buy a team of oxen, a bobsleigh, a team of horses and a wagon, they proceeded to their homestead. Some went as far as 500 miles to Edmonton and then an additional 500 miles to the Peace River District to establish their new home.

Rosthern was located in the richest wheat belt of Saskatchewan. Its soil showed the most fertile humus, often five or six feet deep. If there were no killing frost at the August full moon they would raise bumper crops. Fifty to seventy bushels of wheat per acre was the rule.

Seagner Wheeler, a local farmer who experimented with different kinds of wheat raised a # 1 durum wheat which matured ten days sooner than the usual kind. He was given \$60.00 a bushel for his new product and was granted a prize of \$1000.00 in gold by the Dominion Government. He told us the secret of his success when he revealed that for three or four years he had his children select each grain of wheat for its shape, size and color to obtain the most perfect seed grain.

It was to this place that I was assigned after my nine months' stay in Fish Creek. I was to build a church, a priesthouse, and be their first resident pastor. The population of the town consisted of Lutherans, Reformed Evangelicals, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, but mostly Mennonites, named after a reformed Dutch priest named Menno. There were eleven churches in Rosthern and I was to build the twelfth one.

Having no place to stay, Mrs. Trask, wife of the non-Catholic hotelowner let me have a room at the Queen's hotel.

As the ecclesiastical discipline of Canada demanded that the priest wear the cassock all day long, clerical decorum was strictly enjoined, even the straw hat had to be black. At the table'd'hote, where all kinds of people met; the lumber jacks fro the north, cowboys of the prairie, commis-voyageurs, and the staff of the local school, the petticoated priest was quite an object of curiosity for these Protestant people. After three months of very often embarrassing moments, I decided to change my garb to a Prince Albert coat and a stove-pipe hat, called a Senator, for head gear. No sooner did my clerical neighbor find out about my change of

ecclesiastical garment, when he reported me to the Provincial. I was dressing like a Protestant minister he said. I was fraternizing with heretics, in danger of losing the faith, etc. Fr. Henry Grandin sent this report and warning to my Bishop, Pascal of Prince Albert, and I was promptly informed: "Le port de la soutane est de stricte rigueur dans mon diocese." I was summoned into the presence of the Ordinary but was determined to take a chance on the broadmindedness of the bishop. When I appeared in my modern garb, the bishop smiled graciously, "Well, well," he said, "is that what you wear?" I had to turn around. After inspecting my "tunica brevior" from all sides he could not help saying: "Mais c'est jolie ca!" and with that gave his official "O.K." for the new style of clerical attire.

Fr. Grandin, our Provincial, came to see me shortly afterwards and smiled approval too. He had a special reason for doing so. When I accompanied him through the streets of Saskatoon, I in the Prince Albert, and he in the soutane, a frivolous youth who met us on the sidewalk and could scarcely pass by Fr. Provincial, who at that time considerably favored obesity, said loud enough for Fr. Grandin to hear it: "That fellow is in his sixth month."

"I begin to see your point," Fr. Grandin said, turning to me.

The petticoated priest of Rosthern was from now on treated like a gentleman.

The first thing to do was to build a church and a rectory. The Benedictine Fathers had occasionally said Mass in a one-room house. To this I added a steeple in front and

and a sanctuary in the rear, and our church was ready for regular Sunday services. Nick Thille, one of the German-American immigrants from Nebraska was the experienced carpenter who did most of the work. The best feature of the new building was that it was paid for. With \$1,000.00 on hand, we started excavating a basement for the rectory. I borrowed a scraper and an old horse and went at it. The nearby brickyard let us have the off-color brick for nothing. The six-room priesthouse cost us \$1,100.00.

I took in a penniless family from Transylvania rent-free, reserving two rooms for myself, an office and a bedroom. The Holicki family gave me the daily meals, which meant I could start my pastoral life without major expenses or financial worries.

Talking about finances, owing to a queer incident, I got the reputation of having a magic touch that could find money any place. Pat Malone of about 45, whom I had introduced to a pretty, old Irish spinster which led to our first wedding at Rosthern, was bound to me in everlasting gratitude and offered to take me in his buggy to visit all the families of the parish and collect funds for the building of the rectory. He had scarcely said to his pony: "Get up!" when I told him to stop. I had noticed something in the street, got off the buggy, bent down over a pile of "horse-apples", and pulled a green dollar bill out. I had noticed the edge of it sticking out from under the pile. Our parishioners claimed I must have a sharp eye for hidden treasures and I had no trouble collecting funds for the church from that time on.

With the Protestant minister I lived on friendly terms, at times interesting, even amusing. As the great majority of Lutherans, Reformed and Mennonites spoke German, our German-speaking parishioners were welcome in the community. Naturally, the Roman Catholic Church; the latest newcomers in the town, was then an object of curiosity.

Rev. Rossiter, the Episcopalian minister, in garters and flat hat, showed fatherly condescension toward the youthful Catholic priest. He did not let anybody forget that we were living in a British colony, and when in 1911 Pope Pius X published his "Ne Temere", the British senior of the the ministerial association felt it his duty to remind his Holiness that he, the Pope, had no business to dabble in matters concerning marriage, which was a field strictly reserved to the State and the British Crown. His article in the local paper to that effect was promptly answered by a Catholic telling the whole story of matrimonial entanglements of Henry VIII and the Virgin Queen Elizabeth which effectually silenced the minister. He left the Catholic church alone from that time on.

The Mennonite minister passed by the open door of the Catholic Church on an October evening when the congregation recited the Rosary. He stopped, listened attentively and waited for me at the door.

"Excuse my curiosity, Reverend," he said, "What kind of strange prayer is this continued mumbling of "Hail Mary, Holy Mary" without end?"

I told him it was the Rosary.

"Where did you get this monotonous rattling of prayers

to the Virgin?"

I invited him to the rectory, and there told him that the strange prayer originated in the Bible. The Angel's greeting reminds us of the greatest message that ever came from heaven. When I opened the Bible and quoted the words of the Archangel and the inspired words of Elizabeth, he took the book out of my hand, and doing so said: "This must be a forged copy of the word of God," and to his surprise he found the Bible to be the King James version. The good man had skipped the text before.

I met him again shortly afterward at the Post Office, waiting for the mail to be distributed. He began talking about the Bible, and insisted Catholics were not allowed to read it, and as a matter of fact did not know much about Bible truths. I cut him short by asking the question: "Can you save your soul without the Bible?"

"Of course not," was the prompt answer.

"Then explain how over a million faithful Christians could die for Christ and become martyrs at a time when the Bible as a whole was not even known among the Christians?"

He promised to have an answer to that question, but he never came back with it to the rectory....

Mr. Purvis, the Presbyterian minister, was a very fine gentleman of the liberal brand. He catered to society and was not very much concerned with small dogmatic differences of belief. When, in 1911, the Dominion Government faced the issue of Reciprocity with the U.S.A., and needed every vote to carry this issue, a member of Parliament named Graham came to visit Rosthern. Being a Presbyterian, he announced he would give

a campaign speech in the Presbyterian Church. Rev. Purvis, the minister let him in full charge of the Sunday services. Mr. Graham's idea of serving the Lord's supper, -providing an extra quantity and quality of sacramental wine-, met with the enthusiastic approval of both the minister and his congregation.

On a certain occasion I had to disappoint the ministerial association. One of them came to see me about joining them in their efforts to clamp down on alcoholic beverages. When I explained the attitude of the Catholic Church, they were greatly disappointed. Five or six of them came back a few days later to win me over for a campaign in favor of local option or national prohibition. They insisted their efforts would be in vain unless the Catholic Priest cooperated with them. I was supposed to be on the same platform with them and contribute a vigorous speech on the issue. The success of the campaign would depend entirely on my cooperation. At last I gave in. I was willing to be on the same platform with them, expose the evils of alcoholism and to root out the evil entirely, preach total abstinence from all alcoholic beverages. To show that we meant business, I said I shall in the presence of the entire audience at the City Hall, take a life-long pledge of total abstinence, and with hands on the Bible, swear an oath that I would keep this solemn promise to the end of my earthly days. To show that we are not hypocrites, I shall invite each one of you to follow suit and swear solemnly that you will forever abstain from all intoxicating liquor. Not one of them was ready for this decisive step. They never returned with another invitation to take

part in their campaign.

Some of my parishioners were Polish immigrants. It gave me an opportunity to get closer acquainted with them and learn how they love their country and their language which they will never forget.

One Saturday afternoon a little girl came to see me. She was accompanied by her mother who did not know one word of English.

"Father," the child said, "Will you baptize my little baby brother. My mother who cannot talk English wants to know."

"Yes," I said, "tomorrow after Mass."

I knew how the Polish people like to hear words in their mother tongue, so I learned a few words by heart. "Co jest imie twoje?" (What is your name?), etc. When next morning I used these words and started them on the Our Father and Apostles' Creed, they naturally were surprised. "Our Father can talk Polish" was the news that spread like prairie fire over the Peace Plain. Next Saturday we can all go to confession in Polish. Late into the night I spent each day over my Polish interpreter, and by Saturday I knew the examination of conscience by heart. When they came in a crowd on Saturday, all I had to do was make the confession for them by asking questions, with an occasional "Ile razy?", (How many times) to make it complete and the question "Niec nie wiency?", (Is there more?) which with the answer "Nie!", (No!) brought each case to a happy conclusion. I was deadly afraid they would ask me a question for if they had done so I would have been stumped. From the time on I was worshipped by my Polish people and in

all things had their hearty cooperation.

A large number of Catholics of my parish belonged to the Ruthenian rite. I had the fortune of meeting their Primate, Archbishop Szepticki, the Polish nobleman who became a Basilian monk and devoted his life to the care of the Ruthenians who for centuries had languished under the yoke of Polish princes. He came to Rosthern, invited the Ruthenians of the district to attend Mass in their Greek rite at which the people heard again the familiar incantations in their old Slavonian tongue. Archbishop Szepticki heard confessions from early morning until late at night. The two hour long Mass made a deep impression upon our parishioners of the Latin rite. The third day we had a dinner and a public reception to which we invited not only all the neighboring priests and Oblate Fathers, but also the non-Catholic dignitaries- mayor, members of Parliament, etc.

We had occasion to admire the linguistic talent of the great guest. Six months before, when he intended to make this trip to America, he had taken up the study of English. Everybody marveled at the fine accent and the fluency of his speech. He was also master in handling the French. When one of our French missionaries from the north, in connection with his story, wanted to mention a certain plant and hesitated, trying to remember its name, he kindly supplied the name of the rare plant.

Greatly admired for his gigantic appearance - seven feet one inch, by which he towered high above the crowd that waited his arrival at the railroad station, after the three days of his work in our midst he impressed us still more with the

greatness of his mind, his intellectual power, and the zeal, kindness and humility of his extraordinary personality.

N.L. Years later I was told Archbishop Szepticki, Primate of all Ruthenians and civil Governor of the Austrian province of Galicia would have been made a most distinguished cardinal of the Church had he not given the "imprimatur" to a book written by Prince Maximilian of the royal house of Saxony, in which this priest and scion of royalty had treated the historical development of the Sacrament of Penance in the early Church and happened to add a line or two that was "pias aures offendentes."

The account of religious bodies in Rosthern would be incomplete without mentioning one of the rarest manifestations of sectarian aberrations which had made its appearance in Saskatchewan at the turn of the century. They were the disciples of the naturalist philosopher Tolstoy, and called themselves Doukhobars. Longing for salvation they would go out in solemn procession to look for the Savior. Taking Christ's word literally and carrying out his precept of detaching themselves from the world, they would shed their garments and appear in this procession out in the open prairie in perfect Adam's suit without even a shoe on their feet or a ring on their finger. Shouting, praying and singing with hands outstretched toward heaven imploring God to send his Savior to them. The entire settlement, men, women, and children all had to take part in these religious demonstrations.

One of our Oblate missionaries, Rev. Father Rossignol, O.M.I. who was visiting one of his Indian missions near Prince Albert ran into one of these weird crowds. He was

short-sighted himself, but his horse team which had never seen such an unfamiliar sight of animals on the open prairie got frightened, pranced straight up, and before the bewildered Missionary realized what happened he landed in a deep muddy ditch. Immediately the kind Douhkobour crowd was at his side to pull him to his feet and put him back into his buggy. When he, still numb in body and stupified in mind, cleaned his mud-bespattered specks and looked around to see himself surrounded by hundreds of nude figures, he doubted whether he was still living in the flesh or whether he had awaked up in paradise. It was a vision he had never seen before in his life. The strange experience he told us later, never faded from his memory.

If Fr. Theophil Wandzig, O.M.I. had not taken a picture of the wild crowd he ran into on the way to one of his Galician missions, I would have never believed that such things could happen in a civilized country. Warned several times by the authorities of their unbecoming behavior, the British Government finally lost patience with them, loaded the entire colony of Douhkobours into cattle trains and transferred them into British Columbia where they could live up to their ritual without shocking the normal human neighborhood too much.

Rosthern was not the only place I had to take care of. It was the center of mission district as large as a diocese. All the mission on the Canadian Northern had to be visited. Langham, Radisson, Paynton, and the district north of it to the last homestead surveyed by the Dominion Government, was entrusted to my spiritual care. I had to travel by train to Paynton, Saskatchewan which required all day. Trains

were never regular. During one winter, my C.N.R. train was 18 hours late. On that occasion I had to go 75 miles next morning from Paynton to what is now St. Walburga. The journey was made in an open mailcoach drawn by a team of horses. After the first forty miles we stayed overnight at the Post Office, -a large barn-, where we all slept on the floor. When we awoke next morning, we noticed fine streaks of snow which had penetrated through every small crag and fissure of the wall and roof. When I washed my face, the skin came off with the towel, for the day before, facing the cold wind and a temperature of fifty below zero, my whole face had frozen. From that moment I had lost my sense of smell completely, fortunately without losing my sense of taste. As 95% of the prevalent odors are on the shady side of aromatics, I never regretted the loss of my sense of smell very much. But when meeting a skunk I have to rely on my eyesight.

## WIDENING THE SCOPE OF OUR OBLATE WORK

First mention of a Province of our own.

Rosthern was centrally located between the two large colonies, or settlements of German immigrants, forty townships east of Saskatoon and forty townships west of that city. The eastern district went by the name of St. Peter's colony and was organized by the Benedictine Fathers who had come from St. John's Abbey, Minnesota. The Western settlement was known as St. Joseph's Colony to honor the memory of Fr. Laufer who with Frs. Krist, Schweers, Brabender, Bieler, and Schwebius had been the first Oblates to look after the spiritual needs of the German immigrants.

The bishops and religious superiors of Canada had learned a lesson from the neighboring republic of the U.S. where thousands of Catholic immigrants had gone to a southern state, were left 30 to 40 years without the ministrations of their church and were absorbed by their Baptist and Methodist neighbors. When the Catholic immigrants arrived in the Canadian West they found parish districts defined and priest waiting for them.

The Dominion Government of Canada followed a very wise policy of discernment when selecting their immigrants. Instead of admitting the riff-raff and every malcontent of Europe as they seemed to do in the United States, the Canadian Government sent reliable, qualified agents, among them two Oblate Fathers, to interview personally efficient farmers in Germany, Austria, Poland, Transylvania and invite them to

their homesteads in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Wave after wave of immigrants arrived. By 1908 there were 75,000 Germans, 60,000 Poles, 40,000 Ruthenians (usually called Galicians). Comparatively few Irish farmers founded parishes in the West; Jews were seldom noticed in a crowd of immigrants. They usually turned up one or two in a German community to do a thriving business.

Beginning a new life in this new world was attended by untold hardships. Little cash on hand, facing one failure of a crop after another was discouraging for the less hardy and heroic man. There was no building material, no forest of the kind they used to have in the old country. Water was found only in deep wells. The first churches and homes were built of sod cuts piled one on top of the other. A few 2 x 4 planks and boards covered with earth made the ceiling of their new shelter. Newspaper served as wallpaper and decoration of the interior.

Hardships and disappointments seemed to be endless, but a healthy physique and a determination to succeed carried them through all their trials. Failures of crops were the worst disappointment in the beginning of their farmer's life. It meant a struggle with the elements and Mother Earth without end. The first furrow made by a Massey-Harris plough revealed a solid block of ice. No July sun had ever penetrated the velvety carpet of growing and ever drying prairie grass. The ploughshare that ripped this coat of soft insulation open was like the prick of a pin in a frozen continent, but when thousands of acres were turned over and the fine black humus was facing the sun for about four months of the year, the earth

had absorbed enough warmth to make the grain of wheat come to life, produce stalks and ears. Whenever the full moon of August did not intervene with its killing frost when the wheat was in its likely stage, farmers actually saw a harvest. And if they had a harvest every five or six years it would pay, for the virgin soil would produce seventy to seventy-five bushels of the best durum wheat, - the most highly priced grain in the world. With the harvest reaching very often to 10,000 bushels and the price going up to one dollar the time of prosperity had come to the farmers of Saskatchewan. Churches and fine homes were built everywhere. Banks, business places and school buildings sprang up everywhere.

The fact that the Canadian Government permitted separate schools for Catholics and turned the taxes paid by a Catholic over to the Catholic school district made first class schools possible in every community.

With prosperity in sight and the young generation learning the language of the country the awakening immigrants began to realize that it was time to shed their inferiority complex and claim a full share of the rights and blessings of their new country.

They had been too timid to risk a business venture. Officials of the government were strangers to them, the school trustees in the public school district and members of the provincial and Dominion parliaments were often Masons, Orangemen and enemies of the church and the so-called foreigner. The language barrier compelled the German farmers to rely on officials who looked down with contempt on the "Greenhorns" that could not transact business in the language of the coun-

try. As a result, these people were taken advantage of by unscrupulous people who exploited them.

There was only one way to solve this social, economic, and political problem. Our Catholic people must be organized. As all the Fathers had come from Germany, we had the same idea about our plans. While in the scholasticate, -the major seminary-, we had, "annuente superiore", a voluntary social-economic club. Our professor of dogma, Fr. Leyendecker, and our teacher of sacred eloquence, Fr. Philip Scharsch, had filled our hearts with enthusiasm when relating the story of the "Kulturkampf", that struggle between the church and the Prussian Government under Bismark. The great German leaders, Windhorst, Reichensperher, Malinckrodt, were the heroes of those days who forced Bismark to surrender, and they had done it by organizing the German Catholics into the "Volksverein", an association of Catholics who became a decisive power at the polls.

The 70,000 German Catholics, the 65,000 Poles, the 45,000 Ruthenians welcomed this form of a closer cooperation in all political and economic problems. which more or less reached over into the domain of religion and moral law. To talk matters over, we called for a meeting in St. Paul Rectory, Saskatoon. Fr. Vachon, O.M.I. offered us his very friendly hospitality.

All the Oblate Fathers either came to the meeting or voiced their unanimous approval of everytning we might decide to do in the way of organizing our people. Two very important points were discussed. First, the question of an association of our people, and secondly, the establishing of a mission

house. As corresponding secretary at all such meetings I submitted our request, signed by each one of the fathers present; first that of the need of an organization to obtain our economic and political rights, and secondly the need of a mission. I made it clear to Rev. Father Provincial, Fr. Grandin, that it was time for the Oblate Fathers to conduct missions and retreats in our parishes. The Oblates had been in the West since 1845 and never had preached a mission in English. The Basilian Fathers, the Redemptorists, and the Jesuits had in a few years' time begun doing mission work. A Franciscan Father, Fr. Boniface, O.F.M. was the only one who could have conducted a Mission in English and German, and he had come into the west only two years ago. So we begged permission to start a mission band.

The answer of Fr. Provincial was disappointing: "On n'a pas des superieurs pour ca." Added to this refusal was the warning not to dabble in politics and what sounded like an outright disapproval of our meeting and collective action was his declaration that we had no right to secede from his vicariate and start a province of our own. Fr. Joseph Paille, who had been eavesdropping at St. Paul's Rectory, had spread the false rumor that the chief object of our meeting had been to start a province for the German Fathers.

As a matter of fact not a word about such an idea had transpired at that meeting. I told Fr. Grandin so in my answer to his letter and added: "Now that we feel we can do real Oblate work of preaching missions and retreats only if we have a separated district of our own, the idea of a province of our own might not be such a bad idea at all." From that

From that time on the idea gained in strength and was discussed regularly at our periodic meetings. Not waiting for an official establishment of a mission house, we began our mission activities at every opportunity that offered. Fr. Hilland and I conducted our first Mission in Cleveland, Ohio in 1909. We helped one another by substituting for the Fathers on Mission and soon had much more work than could be done. Our second Mission had been preached in Regina's St. Mary's Parish. Missions and Forty Hours in both St. Peter's Colony and St. Joseph's Colony made the Oblate Mission work known all over Saskatchewan.

Hand in hand with this we began to organize branches of the "Volksverein", or Catholic Association. Bishop Pascal was won over. Abbot Bruno Doerfler, O.S.B., of Munster, who had obtained through Bishop Pascal the rare privilege of an "abbatia nullius" was heart and soul for the Catholic organization. The German weekly, "West Kanada", under the clever editorial management of Frs. Riedinger and Bour, took up the fight for the Catholic cause. The Poles joined in their "Gazetta Catholicka" and finally the somewhat hesitating French Canadians under the leadership of Fr. Auclerc published the "Patriote" of Ducklake and induced the French settlers around Gravelbourg to make common cause for Catholic rights through organization.

At the Catholic Convention in Regina all the Oblate Fathers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, representing the dioceses of Regina, St. Boniface, and Prince Albert came together to tell the world about the growth of our Catholic Association. Bishop Pascal had come in person to bless our campaign, Abbot

Bruno Doerfler gave a very fine speech to encourage his audience. Archbishop Langewain sent his representative and blessing. The results became evident in our next provincial election. Alphone Turgeon, an exemplary Catholic member of Parliament, was made Premier of Saskatchewan, and one of my parishioners of Rosthern, Dr. Uhrich of Hague, Saskatchewan, became Minister of Education. The success of our work naturally gave us a sense of satisfaction. It made us happy and spurred us on to further expanding and improving our Oblate mission work.

We just had another one of our periodical "conveniat" at which were present the following Fathers: Krist, Schweers, Bieler, Bour, Schwebius, Guth, Funke, Palm, and Minwegen, when I received an obedience or assignment which would take me far away from this field of action in Saskatchewan. Fr. Grandin assigned me to our Junior Seminary in Edmonton. On the way to my new scene of work I was interrupted at Saskatoon. A telegram arrived telling me to remain at St. Paul's Rectory in Saskatoon and take over the mission field of Fr. William Brabender who was on a six months' leave of absence visiting his folks in Germany. I had to look after Allan, Young, Manitou, Keeniston, Hanley, etc.

It was my first experience as pastor in the German-Russian community of Allan.. All the other places were settled by Germans and Irish coming from the United States. The latter had enjoyed the blessings of culture and civilization for several generations. The German-Russians of Allan were still the first generation of immigrants. Hearing so much about them that was not very favorable I was somewhat prejudiced

about them. They had been described to me as people of strong physique, stubborn will power, very good farmers, with all the great characteristics of their German ancestors and also all the shortcomings and weaknesses of both Germans and Russians, and at present still unregenerated and completely untouched by the culture and civilization of the new world.

Their religious attitude may be described as fanatically Catholic. It was a new brand of Catholicism I had never discovered anywhere else. The priest is their appointed or elected servant. The temporal, and most of the spiritual, affairs of the parish are run by the parish trustees whom they call "Kirchenvater", or Fathers of the Church. Calling them "fanatically Catholic" evidently is an exaggeration, but there is certain truth in the name. A German or an Irishman may have a serious dispute with his pastor and, as a result, quit the church. The German-Russian cannot be driven out of the Church by any priest; he will remain at the Sunday Mass in spite of any pastor.

It was my business to get acquainted with all their good, bad and neutral characteristics which meant only gradually. My first impression was a very favorable one. After Mass on the first Sunday I was with them, one of their leaders came to hire me as their resident pastor. I was obliged to tell him my residence was at St. Paul's in Saskatoon and from there I had to look after another five mission churches. I added: "By the way, how could I stay here in Allan when you do not even have a priesthouse here?"

"Father," he replied, "our parish counts over 80 families and if they do not build you a rectory, I'll do it alone."

When I asked him why he was so anxious to have a resident priest, he said: "I have a family of nine children and more are coming. The next few years will tell whether they will grow to be good-Catholics, and without a local priest there will be no Catholic education for our youngsters."

This good man owned a few sections of land, had a ten thousand dollar harvest, and no doubt was sincere in his heroic offer to sacrifice several harvests to build me a Rectory. However, I had to answer his earnest pleading with a "No!" In my later life as a missionary I often remembered that man of Allan when I visited parishes half the size of Allan which had resident pastors but show little appreciation and less gratitude for such privilege.

On my first Sunday in Allan I met with an incident that was typical of this German-Russian congregation. A member of the parish, a middle-aged man, came to see me after Mass, introduced himself and asked me how much a three or four foot statue of St. Anthony would cost. It had to be, not St. Anthony of Padua, but St. Anthony with the sow, meaning St. Anthony in the desert, the hermit. I told him such a statue would cost at least \$65.00 He said it would make such a fine ornament for that corner on the epistle side and he was ready to pay the amount then and there. After the man left, another member of the parish who had watched our conversation from a distance came up to me and asked what that man wanted. He described him as "no good", that he had two wives living and still wanted to be a "Catholic in good standing", etc. When he heard that the man had offered to pay for a statue on the Epistle side of the altar, he offered to buy one for

the Gospel side. It seemed to be a nice case of jealous rivalry. I found out that the parish was divided into a number of factions; what one proposed was promptly rejected by the other and what one affirmed was on the general principle of contradiction and meanness denied by the other party. Whenever I wanted to obtain a certain favor or project to be accepted, I privately invited a certain clique to oppose my plans at the next parish meeting, a sure sign for the other parties to accept it and then afterwards for the first party to give up their resistance and make the acceptance unanimous. A "sneaky" way of getting things done, but it usually worked.

The second Sunday I visited them I had to announce the third and last banns for a wedding next day. Immediately after Mass a young man accompanied by some men came to the sacristy to tell me I could not marry this couple. The prospective bride did not love the young man whose banns I had just published. She had a few days ago sent her engagement ring back to him with the message she loved the young man who now came to see me. The match had been arranged by the parents of both bride and groom without asking for their mutual consent. I found that was more or less the general custom among the German-Russians; the parents chose the mates for their young people. What could I do in the case? The young man brought witnesses to prove his statement about the bride. Her father owned only one quarter section of land, the father of the groom was the proud possessor of two sections which would be inherited by their only son.

Under no circumstance could I marry the couple the next day, so I called for a meeting at the bride's home the same

Sunday afternoon. The parents of both the bride and the groom were invited, also the former fiance, the only one whom the bride claimed to love.

The hearing began with an investigation of the facts in the case. The young man who was supposed to be married next morning admitted the bride had returned her engagement ring to him with a note that she did not love him.. The young man testified to this. Upon the question: "Do you really love this young lady?" he hesitating . finally said: "I guess...I do." He repeated his statement when the parents were called into the room.

Now the girl was invited into the room.

"Did you return the engagement ring and tell your fiance that you did not love him, and did you tell your former fiance that you wanted to marry him instead?"

"Yes," she said.

Then I invited the parents to come into the room, and the same questions were asked. Without asking anybody's leave the mother of the bride, a huge, 300-pound individual, took over to make her own investigation of the case. Raising both her forefinger and her shrieking voice, towering high above her trembling daughter, she yelled: "Now tell us the truth. Did you return the ring to your fiance?"

"No," she answered.

"So you still love him and want to marry him tomorrow?"

By this time the poor creature was crying and shaking and trembling, sobbing.

"Say, 'Yes, I will,'" shrieked the mother into her ears.

At last, shaking with fear the girl was heard saying: "Yes, I will." Upon this I read again the sworn statements

the couple had made less than an hour before without the presence of their parents.

In my mind the verdict was clear, and I solemnly announced: "There will be no wedding tomorrow."

A bomb thrown into the room could not have had a more devastating effect. The woman who called herself the mother of the coming bride stretched out arms to the ceiling, went with hands through her disheveled hair, then let out an unearthly scream that seemed to pierce the walls of the room, then rushed upon her daughter as if to tear her to pieces. With a last appealing glance from her tear-filled eyes, she promptly fainted. Overcome with rage the mother followed suit and likewise was picked up from the floor unconscious. Both were taken out into the barn to be revived.

The next day was forever memorable for me and for all who attended that wedding that did not take place. As all the invitations had been sent and the elaborate wedding dinner had been planned and there was no means of reaching all the invited guests and there was still a faint hope that the priest might compromise and have the Nuptial Mass after all, promptly at ten o'clock the Church was filled with wedding guests. No bride and groom appeared on the scene. The Mass was offered for the good of the parish and in the sermon on the Sacrament of Matrimony it was explained what makes the marriage contract valid and indissoluble. All parties concerned had to accept the laws of the Church and returned home peacefully.

Believe it or not, this story had an unexpected, but favorable, ending that satisfied everybody. The young man

who had first been in love with the young lady and who reported the case to me, on account of the damaging publicity of the case did not claim his former fiancée. The disappointed groom did not have the gumption to look for another girl friend. The result was that now both, isolated and without any friends, met again to lament over their mutual desolation. This time they fell in love and less than a year later were happily married by Fr. Brabender.

## ROSTHERN AND ITS MISSION DISTRICT

The mission, Radison, Saskatchewan, was an Irish settlement. One old patriarch named Guinea had experienced the hardships of the so-called Irish famine during the 45's - 50's of the past century. He could not talk about it without tears forming in his eyes. I loved to listen to his stories about the people of the "ould sod", County Cork, etc. and how the British tried to kill off the Irish... We spent evenings together, sometimes reading a book written by Shemus McKanus who described the Irish famine as created by England's buying up all the grain and potato crops, and once in control of all the food, refusing to sell any to the starving Irish people whom they loaded in cattle transports and shipped to Australia, Canada, and other British colonies ...

I learned most of my English in this Irish settlement and with it their beautiful Irish songs and some also of their Irish slang.

Endless were their stories that revealed their aversion for anything British. Centuries of oppression and persecution could not engender but a feeling bordering on hatred.

One day I was walking the streets of Saskatoon accompanied by a young Irishman. We passed by the Flanagan hotel at the entrance of which there was a crippled war veteran who had lost both legs in the fight for the British Empire. He was strapped to a plank and by means of four casters underneath, and a steel hand sticking out from under his seat moved from one place to another. An open hat on his lap was his appeal

for an alms. People passed by and dropped an occasional dime or quarter into his hat. I dropped in my coin, but my Irish companion apparently ignored the poor fellow and passed by. Suddenly he stopped, returned to the man, dropped in a dollar bill. I could not help asking for an explanation.

"I had to do something for the poor man," he said.

"After all he is the first Englishman trimmed up to my liking."

I cannot easily forget Radison for other reasons. When I said my first Mass in their little church, a good Irish lady waited for me at the door and asked the somewhat embarrassing question: "Father, how did you manage to be ordained at your age? A cousin of mine was 23 and needed dispensation from Rome. Are you more than twenty?" Ever since that time I wished to be old and dignified, but the gray hair and deep furrows of fifty soon changed all such vain ambitions.

Another incident that happened in Radison I have often mentioned in later years when talking about mixed marriages. One of the first things I had to do in Radison was to instruct a first Communion class of children. It was sensational experience for the children who had not much religious instruction before. For three weeks they came daily for a few hours. When the great day arrived I counted them. On Sunday morning when the son of a German Lutheran and a Catholic mother, all dressed for Mass, was ready to leave home the Lutheran father stopped the boy at the door.

"No, he said, "you are too young to make such a decision. You are going to think it over until you are 18. Then you may choose whatever religion you want."

No tears of the boy nor pleadings of the mother could change the mind of the heartless man.

Five years later the boy, by then a young man, got into conflict with the law and landed in the penitentiary.

This mixed marriage case reminded me of Mr. Farrow, principal of the Rosthern high school who came to the rectory one evening shortly before midnight with his three week old baby in his arms and wanted it baptized at once because his Protestant wife had planned to have it baptized in her church the next morning.

## GOING TO LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

When Fr. Brabender returned from his trip to take his mission of Allan over again, I was to proceed immediately to the Junior Seminary of St. John at Edmonton. Again a telegram arrived at Saskatoon from Fr. Provincial to change my assignment, this time to cancel definitely that obedience as professor in the seminary.

Fr. Van Tighem was dying and Fr. Rosenthal had been appointed pastor of St. Patrick's at Lethbridge in southern Alberta. I was to be his assistant. The three years in that parish were some of the most active years of my priestly life.

There were two schools, a grammar school and a Sisters' Academy, a hospital, and a congregation of about 250 families, the majority of which belonged to the Greek-Catholic rites. The latter were Slovaks working in the coal mines of Lethbridge.

Special mention should be made of the daily devotions during the month of May which were very well attended in the evening. There was always a sermon and Benediction and the devotions were ended on the first of June with a parish picnic for old and young.

There was the work of organizing a mixed choir, besides a choral society. The parishioners, for the first time, heard the works of Michael Haller, Franz Witt, and Victor Goller accompanied by wind instruments that produced a perfect imitation of a pipe organ.

An enthusiastic dramatic society staged the play "Fabiold"

for which Fr. Stuhlmann and I painted 18 different drop curtains and stage interiors. The drama became such a success that the Daughters of the Empire asked for a repetition of it on the stage of the Lethbridge Theater.

On the 1000th anniversary of the Edict of Milan we sang a Mass that was rendered on that occasion in the Cathedral of Milan, the Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loretto by Victor Goller.

As Fr. Provincial suggested that for the sake of peace I join the "Chevaliers de Colomb" I was further burdened with the activities of the Knights of Columbus which I enjoyed immensely for the good that we achieved indirectly through that society. An interesting chapter could be written about this organization which at that time had become an object of controversy among the French and Irish of Canada.

Another fact well worth recording was that in 1913 we planned to build a new St. Patrick's church. Elaborate plans were made by architect Palmer and local contractors began the work. They erected the basement church when lack of funds and the impending war delayed the continuation of it indefinitely.

The meeting of Supreme Court Justice Beck who came for a circuit session to Lethbridge gave us an opportunity to learn more at first hand about the nature and machinations of the Masonic Order.

The year 1913 was the year the diocese of Calgary was erected and the Most Rev. John Thomas McNally was installed as its first Bishop. He was the first Irish bishop in western Canada and his coming forboded controversy with the French elements of the West. The day his arrival was expected he

sent a telegram to Calgary deprecating any festivities, demonstrations or solemn receptions of any kind. As a result, Fr. Dalton, the Oblate pastor of the prospective Cathedral sent an auto with a delegation of laymen to C.P.R. Station to meet him. Fr. Dalton was immediately relieved of his post at the Cathedral.

When the Bishop, a month or two later, came to Lethbridge to lay the cornerstone of the new St. Patrick's church, we spared no effort to make his entry into Lethbridge a most solemn event. A cavalcade of automobiles with all the clergy of the city and its surroundings parishes followed by a Chinese lantern procession of the people met him at the C.P.R. station. Led to the large Odd Fellow Hall, he was greeted by a number of dignitaries, - mayor of the city, members of the legislature and of the Dominion Parliament. Speeches of welcome were read in English, Slavonian, and French. Choice numbers of classical music were visibly enjoyed by His Lordship. The clergy and the parishioners of St. Patrick's Lethbridge were his "most devoted and loyal flock". He always enjoyed a visit to Lethbridge.

Connected with the Oblate house at Lethbridge was a long string of out-missions, which were taken care of by Frs. Bidalut, Conrad Meyer, William Stuhlmann, and Gelsdorf.

When in 1914, Fr. Rosenthal went to see his folks in Germany I was left alone in charge of the parish. We did not mind working overtime, but one day Fr. Grandin, our Provincial who had appreciated my prompt coming away from the German Oblate Fathers in Saskatchewan, came to see me one day and suggested I take a vacation and month's rest. He advised going

to Banff Springs Hotel in the nearby Rocky Mountains, or go to the states to see your relatives in Chicago.

The few days in that famous summer resort were days never to be forgotten. For \$4.00 a day you received first class service, a large bedroom, three full meals and a musical concert at the daily dinner hour. I said "full meals" designately. A guest next to my table enjoyed the "dejeuner a la fourchette" immensely. When the chief waiter came to inquire how he liked the breakfast steak, the guest remarked it was delicious and it really whets his appetite.

"By the way, would you like another one, any thing to satisfy our guests," and hurrying back to the kitchen he soon returned with a steak twice the size of the first one.

In a conversation with the chief waiter I learned it was their planned policy to feed the guests all they wanted the first day, double or treble if they wish. It proves to be the more economical the rest of the week if you begin filling them as soon as they arrive.

One morning there was a rush to the Bulletin Board in the lobby. Princess Patricia and her father, the Duke of Connaught had planned to spend their summer vacation at this marvelous place. The bulletin of that day changed all their plans. It reported the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. The world was stunned at the terrible news. The royal visitors left the next day for England. The war clouds darkened by the hour.

Nobody wanted war, and the government of Europe simulated moves for peace while in reality the diplomats of both the "entente" and the Triple Alliance moved to strategic positions for the impending war, which everybody knew was coming.

My brother who had come for a visit after his college graduation in Germany succeeded in getting across the U.S. border to continue his studies at the University of Spokane.

As no vacation was possible for me in Banff I went to see my relatives in Chicago. In the meantime the Dominion of Canada had been involved in the war on the side of Great Britain. All the priests with foreign names were watched as possible enemies of the British Empire.

Fr. Stuhlman who was not a naturalized citizen of Canada was heard speaking German with a German-Russian who could speak no English and was promptly sent to the concentration camp in Lethbridge. While in Chicago with my relatives I mailed him a post card written in Latin but with Greek letters. That was considered a secret code and caused quite a commotion at the University of Edmonton where the postcard was sent to be deciphered.

When I returned from the vacation in the United States, the postcards were held before my eyes to read it for Captain Pennefather of the mounted police who had their garrison in Lethbridge. I told them the content of a postcard may be read by anybody, you are free to read it. He admitted that at the University the professor claimed it was not Greek, and the professor of Latin that it was not Latin, so it remained a top secret, possibly containing the code by which all German priests were supposed to be in direct communication with Hindenburg and Falkenhain.

The day after my return from the U.S., Mounted Police surrounded the house; two officers came to the rectory for a search. They ordered Fr. Bidault and myself on a sofa where

we were faced by a policeman with a revolver pointed at us. With his permission we were allowed to take our breviaries, explaining that some of the lessons in that book must be studied every day of the year. Reluctantly the permission was given. We preferred to say the prayers aloud and once in a while said a few words in Latin to each other that were not in the breviary lesson. After an hour's waiting, Captain Pennefather accompanied by another officer came downstairs carrying an armful of letters and newspaper clippings and told us we were to be detained in the rectory, not allowed to go out at all. Living two blocks away from the church where we had to say our daily Mass we had to go at least that far. I added that the next week I was to have a mission to conduct at Kerrobert, Saskatchewan and nobody can forbid that to me. Also I was a Canadian citizen and hoped as such to get a hearing in court if I violate any law.

They did not interfere, but when I came back from Kerrobert and saw the mounted police surrounding the house at night, I had had enough of life in Canada.

When I learned that the Knights of Columbus had sent a petition to the bishop asking for native Irish priests, my mind was made up. We planned to leave before they would find a pretext to send us into the detention or concentration camp.

I notified Pennefather that I was going north to report to our Fr. Provincial. That pleased the mounted police. It had become the declared policy of Great Britain to exile all missionaries with German names from the colonial empire. If we went north among the Indians and Eskimos, we certainly would be harmless. So they were pleased to hear of my decision.

Two detectives followed on our train to make sure we went to Edmonton. Arriving there early in the morning, I said Mass at 6:00 and an hour later I boarded the train for Winnipeg. At Winnipeg I met a friend who bought me a ticket so I did not need to leave the platform to buy a ticket - for the Twin Cities.

The World War that seemed to prevent all our plans of expanding and improving our Oblate Mission work, proved to be a blessing in disguise. Fourteen of these Oblates of Canada met on American soils and were determined to continue our work wherever God and our Superior wanted us. We had faith enough to think that God might want us to work as Oblates in the U.S. -but about our Superiors'intention we were not quite so certain.

When I arrived in Cornell, Wisconsin a few weeks later I received a letter from Fr. Grandin ordering me to come back to Canada at once. Upon my reply that this was impossible as I surely would land in the concentration camp, by return mail he told me that I should ignore his first letter as it had been written under duress and had been dictated by General Ott of Toronto.

## EXODUS FROM CANADA

The exodus from Canada now became general for all those outside the St. Joseph Colony. Authorities did not dare touch the pastors backed up by thousands of German-Russians. They were considered isolated among their farmers and harmless politically, but others with German names were not permitted to function without close supervision.

As the war hysteria ran high, life for many of these German priests became unbearable. They escaped to the United States, the country that was not yet in the war. The German Oblate Fathers were no strangers in the States. As missionaries were scarce who could conduct mission in German, English, and Polish they frequently received calls from across the border.

Fr. John Schulte, O.M.I. had a mission in Gretna, Montana to look after. Fr. Stuhlmann, O.M.I. visited regularly Milk River across the Alberta-Montana line. Fr. Minwegen and Fr. Hilland had conducted their first mission in Cleveland, Ohio in 1909. Fr. Bour and Fr. Groetschel had done retreat work in the Dakotas. Fr. Groetschel, O.M.I. had been pastor of Dickinson, North Dakota three years.

When in 1915, the parish of St. Casimir in St. Paul became vacant and on account of strife and factions, no secular offered to take over, Archbishop Ireland asked Fr. Cahill, O.M.I., Provincial of Manitoba, to send him a father who could talk Polish. Fr. Steuer, O.M.I. was sent to St. Paul. He

learned Polish in a short time, changed his name from Steuer to Stojar and inaugurated a very fruitful parish administration that lasted over 35 years.

With the war clouds and the shadow of the concentration camp hanging over us, our usefulness in Western Canada had come to an end. One after another disappeared across the U.S. border.

But where to go? Our superiors in Canada could not do anything for us. They gave us the advice to join one of the Oblate Provinces in the U.S. The Fathers were reluctant to go far South. Fr. Grandin requested the Eastern Province to take us in but as we seemed aliens, and enemies, nobody wanted to accept us. At a loss of what to do with us, some hints were given from above to look for a bishop. But the cohesive spirit that had been inured into our life since the community years in the Juniorate and the Scholasticate kept us together as Oblates, determined to do Oblate work where the Lord would give us an opportunity.

At that hour we all appreciated the work of old Father Laufer, a most remarkable Oblate Missionary whom we knew since he had conducted retreats in the Juniorate at St. Charles, in Holland. At the turn of the century he had been sent to West Canada to organize the new settlement near Saskatoon. He started the colony which he had named after himself, but not having enough patience to stay put, he left the continuation of the project to younger hands, Fr. Krist, Schweers, Brabender, Bieler, etc. Being the senior member, he did not wait for an official appointment but simply took over and rendered inestimable services to all of us. Though he was

not enthusiastic for organized community life, he greatly helped us refugees stick together, a task that must not be underrated when we consider that each one of us had, in the course of so many disappointments, hardships and sore trials, developed individual characteristics which would make close community life rather difficult. To escape from the stigma of being an alien enemy, he traced his ancestry to the French Alsace-Lorraine, pronounced his name "Lofer", and called himself the "little French Missionary". True to his name, Laufer, which means "runner", he assumed the role of the forerunner preparing the way for us into the U.S. Provided with a stack of annual passes on every railroad of the U.S., he went from one bishop to another to obtain immediate work as soon as another one of his fellow Oblates arrived.

By the time the U.S. entered the World War on the side of the Allies each Oblate was doing pastoral work in the U.S. While Fr. Laufer as a Frenchman enjoyed immunity from any molestation on the part of public authorities, the rest of us had to be fingerprinted and report to local postoffices to give an account of ourselves, our whereabouts, our activities. Though some Fathers, such as Fr. Theophil Wandzig, and Fr. Aloys Rosenthal in Wisconsin were summoned to court by false accusation, none of the Fathers were found guilty of unpatriotic deeds.

At this place we may list the names of the Fathers that came from Canada and from Ceylon.

From Canada:

1. Rev. Joseph Laufer, who came to the U.S. to do his mediation for all of us and finally settled in Arkansas, Wisconsin.

sin where he built St. Joseph Church and where nearby he bought 80 acres of land, beautifully located, which he called Round Hill, which was to be the location of his Mission House. It was here we had frequently our "conveniat" and our annual retreats. This location and the rectory with its five lots were the first property the refugee Oblates owned in the U.S.

2. Rev. Peter Bour came to be pastor of Fletcher and later of Albertville.

3. Fr. Andreas Steuer was appointed pastor of St. Casimir of St. Paul in 1915.

4. Fr. Peter Linwegen who came first to Arkansaw, Wisconsin, then went to Cornell and Jim Falls to build churches in each place, a rectory in Jim Falls and acquired ten acres of land at the end of mainstreet for a new Church in Cornell, Wisconsin. He had started a new church in Arnold, Wisconsin when the new Vice Province was established and he was called to Belleville to be the first Rector of the Junior Seminary to be founded there.

5. Fr. Aloys Rosenthal came to St. Ann's Parish, Stanley, Wisconsin, was transferred to Cooksvalley, (near Bloomer, Wisconsin where he built a very fine rectory. When the Vice Province was established he was Bursar of the district and sent to Belleville to clear and prepare the grounds for the new minor seminary.

5. Fr. William Stuhlmann as soon as he got out of the concentration camp at Lethbridge came to Cornell. He took care of the parish at Arkansaw, then Ettrick, Black River Falls, and in 1924 assigned as a missionary to the first

mission house of the Vice Province of St. Henry's. While he was there, he was visited in Salem, South Dakota, where he substituted for Msgr. Weber, by Fr. Beyes, now our new Superior in Canada, for in the meantime Fr. Grandin had transferred the care for the U.S. refugee fathers to the Provincial of Manitoba, Fr. Cahill and his successor, Fr. Beyes. He came to see Fr. Stuhlmann with a personal message from the Superior General, Archbishop Dentenwill, appointing Fr. Stuhlmann the first Provincial of our new province. For the very reason that his dispensation was pending in Rome at that time Fr. Stuhlmann declined the flattering offer.

7. Fr. Gelsdorf came from Lethbridge to Cornell, went to Fort Wayne, Indiana; Fletcher, St. Elizabeth's, Minneapolis.

8. Fr. John Schulte, for several years was the visiting missionary from Winnipeg to Gretna, Montana; Sterling, Illinois; St. Henry's, Belleville; Albertville, Minnesota.

9. Fr. Marcus P. Kaspar came to Wanda, Minnesota; Altoona, Wisconsin, Jim Falls, Wisconsin.

10. Fr. Edward Hess became pastor at Rogers, Minnesota, later pastor at Arkansaw, Wisconsin.

11. Fr. Richard Lang who came from the Yukon to Texas, to St. Henry's, Belleville, Illinois; to Cornell, Jim Falls, Wisconsin; Polo, South Dakota.

12. Fr. Joseph Schuster worked at Owen, Abbotsford, Wisconsin; Onaka, Sisseton, South Dakota; Albertville, Minnesota.

13. Fr. Theodore Joerissen from Saskatchewan to Onaka, South Dakota; to Osceola, Wisconsin where he built a new church (Farmington).

15. Fr. Ibold who came from Western Canada, harassed by

the Mounted Police lost his mind and died in a Quebec Insane Asylum.

Fr. Joseph Pothmann tells the story of the Fathers who had left Ceylon and some of whom later came to join the Vice Province of St. Henry. The fathers from the Ceylonese missions had been held in a concentration camp in Australia. Through the kind efforts of Archbishop Geretti, at the time Apostolic Delegate to Australia, the captive Oblate Fathers were allowed to depart for the United States. They arrived in San Francisco on October 24th 1916. After a few days in the City, Fr. McKenna, O.M.I. came from Seattle with instructions for the new arrivals. Fr. Ernest Vogel was assigned to the Eastern Province of the U.S.A. together with Fr. Heimbucher. The Frs. Alphonse Simeon, August Siebert, Charles Haas, Henry Engelhardt and Kistner were sent to Texas. Fr. McKenna when asked where Frs. Schmitz, Kohler, Kieger, Rhode, and Joseph Pothmann would go had no answer. "I do not know," he said.

As soon as he received the news, by way of the press, of the Oblate Fathers of Ceylon having arrived in San Francisco, Fr. Bour sent them a telegram to come to Albertville, Minnesota. Assignments were waiting for them. Fr. Julius Kohler went to a parish in the Fargo Diocese, later he returned to Ceylon. Fr. Kieger returned to his former mission in South Africa. Fr. Felix Rhode became assistant to Fr. Bour at Albertville. Fr. Joseph Pothmann went to Annandale as pastor of that place. Shortly afterwards Frs. Engelhardt and Siebert returned from the Texas province and with them came Fr. Herman Pothmann and Fr. Joseph Pohlen. Fr. Pohlen worked in a number of places: Altoona, Onaka, White Bear Lake, Sisseton

where he founded the Tekawitha Orphanage, etc. Fr. Joseph Pothmann hoped against hope some day to return to his former missions in Ceylon.

The Fathers had long given up such plans and worked might and main to establish a province of their own in the American Middle West. We frequently met, besides our annual retreats to discuss the prospect of realizing our cherished plan. On such a meeting was held March 25th, 1909 at St. Casimir's Rectory, St. Paul, Minnesota. The following is a copy of the petition drawn up at that meeting to be sent to our Superiors in Canada and in Rome. A copy of this letter was mailed to Father Grandin and Fr. Beyes, but on account of the strict censorship of alien mail to foreign countries, the letter was not mailed to the Superior General. Fr. Laufer who had not signed the letter because he had taken exception to some of the wording wrote an apologetic letter to the Superior General who at the time did not know what it was all about.

Something similar happened in Western Canada where the Fathers of German descent wanted to expand their activities as Oblate Missionaries in a like manner. They sent a petition to Rome asking for an organization of their own. Fr. Hilland, Pastor of St. Joseph Church, Winnipeg apologized for the boldness of their request with the result that their petition was tabled. Only a lengthy letter of 70 pages to Fr. Wallenborn and Fr. Simon Scharach helped to set things straight.

TO CORNELL

Upon Father Laufer's advice I went to see Bishop Schwabach of LaCrosse. He had heard of the Oblate Fathers being ready to do pioneer work anywhere.

"Yes," he told me, "I have some 'dead corners' in my Diocese," - as he described them. "One is Alma, located on the Mississippi River, north of here. There are fifty families, mostly fallen away. It will be hard work to bring them back."

I was ready to go to Alma at once.

"But wait," he said. "There is a place named Cornell, in the Chippewa Valley. A Scotchman named Tom McDonald writes that there are about a dozen families up there who want to make their Easter duty. A priest has not been there for several years. The poor people have no vehicles to go the 20 miles to Chippewa Falls to church. The Holy Ghost Fathers who used to go up occasionally have no priests to spare and have not visited the place for several years. Go there and see what you can do. I have never been in the place myself," he added. "Conduct a mission and report to me."

I went up there; but instead of a few weeks, I stayed ten years. Tom McDonald was notified by the Bishop that a priest would arrive the eve of All Saints. Thomas McDonald, who was working as a millwright and pipefitter at the Cornell Wood Products Co., asked Mr. Peter Hunz to meet me at the depot. I was to come on the O. & N.W. which ran a train from Eau

Claire to Hannibal once a day. It was a mixed and a very slow train so that it took all forenoon to make the 35 miles from Eau Claire to Cornell. The train stopped at every little station, with each stop lasting from half an hour to an hour or two. The people dubbed it the "Blueberry Special" since it allowed time enough to pick a bushel of blueberries during switching maneuvers at the small stations.

I was met toward evening by an old farmer. He was wrapped in a fur coat, a heavy fur-lined cap hiding most of his face. I was wondering what sort of a fellow he was and what kind of reception he would give me. When he raised his handle-bar mustache and opened his mouth to ask me with a friendly grin whether I was the new priest the Bishop had sent, I knew he was a likable old man and silently followed him when he invited me to come along. We went to his farm home about a mile out of town and there I said mass the next morning on the small, portable altar I had brought along. noon to make the 35 miles from After meeting Tom McDonald's family, Mr. Hunz and I looked for a suitable home that could serve as a rectory. Cornell had its housing problem. Finished houses were at a premium at that time. Besides the few privately owned homes, the rest of the houses were either Company houses or belonged to the Fox Lumber Yard. We secured a modest home what wasn't quite finished at the time. The outside walls consisted of two by fours covered with rough boards and tar-paper sheets. The inside was finished with wallboard instead of plaster. The building was a shell that offered little protection against cold or wind in the winter or heat in the summer. A kitchen table, two chairs, a quick heating stove of sheet iron, and a

wooden cot for a bed were the only furniture I bought - naturally on credit.

I was installed in this primitive rectory about a week when Fr. Laufer, our senior member, came to see me. He was going to stay over night so I had to buy another bed; this time a steel cot for which he said he could not pay, for the simple reason that he was just as poor as I was.

I shall not easily forget that first visit of Fr. Laufer. He had visited Cornell a few months before my arrival and on learning that a certain local merchant named George Saam, Sr., who had died, had descended from a Catholic grandfather but was practicing no religion himself, had given the poor man the benefit of the doubt and buried him with a Catholic funeral service and Requiem Mass as no Protestant minister was on hand to claim him.

Fr. Laufer, as a raconteur with an endless list of stories, entertained me till after midnight before he retired. He must have been sleeping an hour or two when I heard a bomb-like knock at his bedroom door. I jumped out of bed thinking the old man had fallen off his cot. When asked what had happened, he said there were rats crawling over his bed and he fired a boot at them. When it happened a second time during the night I thought Fr. Laufer might be riding a night mare and didn't know what he was doing. Next morning I investigated and found five big rats on the premises that had entered through the open sewer pipe which had not been provided with a trap or a drainage screen cover. They had told me, I remembered, that the house was not quite finished.

Now that I had a place to live in, I needed a place to

have Sunday Mass. Mr. Noyes, the owner of the Lyric Theater, was good enough to permit us to have Sunday services in his theater. For a month nobody seemed to mind. The congregation continued to grow from one Sunday to another. Soon we had about thirty families attending Mass on Sundays. It was a revelation and a shock to Protestants. Their minister did not last, usually, more than six months. This Catholic priest was invading their Protestant community; something must be done about it. More and more complaints came to Mr. Noyes. These Catholic Sunday services must be stopped. Though we carefully cleaned the hall after Mass, there was too much of Romish incense. It smelled too much of Catholics. The people would boycott the show if he permitted the Catholics to have services in his theater, etc. So we had to move, - this time to the second floor of Mr. Odlaug's Drugstore. The owner, Mr. Odlaug, was very kind in not charging us anything for the use of the hall on the second floor. Our small congregation still grew from one Sunday to another. Soon the hall was filled to capacity. Then the City of Cornell stepped in and declared it was too risky to have such an enormous crowd on the second floor without strong steel pillars to prop it up. Further services for such large crowds were prohibited. We had to move again; this time to the hall over the Cohen's store, a hall that had been rented to the Oddfellows and Freemasons. There, amid the Masonic symbols on the walls, we had our Sunday Mass until in 1916 we could offer our first Mass in the chapel we had built.

Cornell, in 1915, was not much of a religious town. There was a Presbyterian Church, a Methodist, and a Lutheran

congregation. The Presbyterian minister was a Rev. Leahey, a left-handed Irishman who had left the Church of his forefathers. He eked out a precarious living, but managed to remain in charge of his small parish mainly through the largesse of C. O. Frisbie, who was the manager of the Cornell Wood Products Company and a member of his parish.

Not every minister was as fortunate however. C.O. Frisbie had his own idea about religions and churches. "I believe only in two churches, the Protestant, or Presbyterian Church and the Catholic Church. I do not see why we should have a dozen different ones in this town or in this country." Acting on this principle, he donated to the Catholic church \$50.00 a month, probably a little more to his own Presbyterian church and a little less to the other protestant congregations.

Protestant ministers who occasionally visited the place or dared to make Cornell their residence usually did not last very long. People were poor, the paper mill being the only source of income for most. It was known as a one-man town. The employees at the mill worked in two shifts, - eleven and thirteen hours a day-, at \$1.75 and \$2.25 respectively. Hence there was not much left for church contributions. The people of the community could not understand how that Catholic priest managed to remain more than a year and apparently doing well residing in the town. The fifty dollars the mill contributed to his church had been given not as a gift to the pastor, but to help him build a little church. Mr. Frisbie had left no doubt about that, so the people kept wondering how Father Linwegen could make a living with apparently no support.

In those days, an appeal to the newly formed congregation for money was simply out of the question. The usual stories about Catholics being obliged to pay large sums in confession for an absolution of their sins was circulated in the district and of course, readily believed by our non-Catholic friends.

One of my best men was approached by a leading non-Catholic and asked the question: "Isn't it true that you Catholics have to pay an immense sum when you go to confession?"

Old Jim Kelly, who had an Irish sense of humor, promptly replied: "Sure, man, it is true. Last Saturday I went to confession, and I had to give a mortgage on me farm, and next Saturday when I go again he may be wanting a second mortgage on all that I have and own."

A week later Jim Kelly came to see me and apologized.

"The story about me paying with a mortgage went through the entire county. I never in my life dreamed that a man could be fool enough to believe such a thing. I am sorry, Father."

The least mention of money, contributions, pew rent or Church dues would have set the tongues wagging again. So I had to look for other sources of income. Whenever the bills in grocery stores or meat market ran too high, I accepted an invitation from parishes in the Diocese to conduct a mission, a Forty Hours, or other mission work; received a stipend of \$50 to \$100 and could live another two or three months.

Grateful mention must be made here of Ed Porter, an Englishman who was at that time Postmaster of Cornell. When I came to the Post Office to rent a box, he looked at me intent-

ly and said, "Is it you, Reverend, who is going to start a new parish here? You will have a hard time of it," and with that he pushed a five dollar bill through the little window, saying: "You will need it." I never forgot the kindness of that Episcopalian gentleman, and when years later he died, I offered up a Holy Mass for him. When his generous deed became known, his noble example prompted Catholics to increase their free-will offerings. My priest salary amounted to \$80.00 the first year.

I had carefully saved the monthly contributions of the Mill Company and was delighted when the Company donated us also a lot on which to build the church. But it happened to be a low situated lot on which the water of the adjacent two blocks drained and had created a swampy soil on which it was impossible to build a solid foundation. We had to drive in large piles on which to support an even floor. When the rough boards of the floor were laid, construction came to a dead stop for the simple reason there were no more funds. I appealed to the Church Extension Society for help but was told they were not in the field to finish churches but to give them the first start; they offered no help.

Then the Bishop sent me \$500.00 to finish the job. I was happy about this generous donation and thanked the Bishop for his kindness but received a letter at the same time from the Chancery Office that it was not a donation but a loan from the Orphanage Fund at four per cent interest. That was the only time I began to worry about finances, but in a few years we were able to return this loan.

The first step toward the organization of a parish had

been taken. We had a Church building, however modest it was, a place where our growing congregation could meet for their Sunday services.

The next step was the instruction of our children. On Saturdays we had a 9:00 A.M. Mass to which all the children were invited. In summertime, three weeks of daily instructions were given, and at the end of these three weeks there was First Holy Communion. Three weeks were also had for the Jim Falls and for the Holcombe missions.

An incident which happened during our vacation school at Holcombe is worth recording. Of a class of about 25 children, none, except two, knew anything about their religion; neither prayers, nor even the Sign of the Cross. They thought it funny when one after another, in his awkward, clumsy way, attempted to make the sign of the Cross. The two girls, one 8 and the other 10, knew the fundamental truths of their catechism very well. Their mother had taught them they said. Naturally I was anxious to meet their good mother personally. I found her the next day in her parlor, an open catechism on her lap, and the two children sitting on the carpet before her.

"Yes," she said, "I am teaching my children this catechism every day. The priest gave it to me on my wedding day. There are many words in it I cannot understand. You know, Father, I am a Methodist, but I want to keep my promise to bring up my children Catholic.

"When my children went to school I realized they needed some religion and moral lessons. I remembered the catechism the priest had given me and the more I read it the more I know that it is the book which will help to make and keep my chil-

ren good Christians."

And every lesson she taught her own children bore fruit in her own heart. A few years later the mother found her way to the true faith and became a great leader in her community of Holcombe.

Simultaneously with the teaching of the catechism went the formation of a choir for the church. Ione White proved to be a great help in organizing a church choir, and soon we could sing, besides the Gregorian Mass, a three part Mass for mixed choir.

To interest the young people and attach them more to the church and their Catholic companions, I organized an amateur dramatic club which furnished many a happy hour of local entertainment. Many years later old people reminisced about the happy times they had rehearsing and producing the plays, mostly comedies, we gave for the benefit of the church.

One of the memorable events of building up our growing congregation was the Mission of 1916. As we did not have the funds to call for an Oblate Father from the East, I conducted the Mission myself. We advertised all over the towns and surrounding country. By the middle of the week the workmen of the Mill who had attended faithfully were loud in proclaiming the success of the Mission, the first of its kind in Cornell.

Mr. C.O. Frisbie, the generous manager of the Cornell Wood Products Co., who had been instrumental in donating the fifty dollars a month to the church fund, called me during the Mission and he had made up his mind to help the good cause along. To understand Mr. Frisbie's idea, you should have to meet him personally. He was a very fine speaker, had a rich and nice

sounding vocabulary, could entertain you with half an hour extempore speech without saying anything and reap thunderous applause whenever he gave a speech before an audience which consisted mostly of his mill employees.

When he called me to his office, he had an original idea of his own, an idea which was such a surprise to me that it almost floored me and for a moment left me speechless.

"I understand," he said, "the Mission is a huge success. The whole mill is talking about it. I hear the solemn close will be next Sunday evening. How would it be if I gave the closing speech of the Mission?"

To turn him down directly or even to refuse to listen to his request would have mortally offended him, yet he was the man who in his goodness had obtained the invaluable gift of fifty dollars a month for our church. Gathering my wits together, I blurted out: "Now, Mr. Frisbie, this is a wonderful idea, trying to help us out and wishing to help us in every possible way. Now let us see whether it is possible.

Do you know something about the Catholic liturgy, Mr. Frisbie?"

"What's that?"

"The liturgy is the outward form of our Catholic worship or religious services, which are regulated in every detail by the rules and regulations of the Church. You would have to learn them by heart. Then at the end of the closing sermon, the Baptismal vows are renewed, which again you would have to learn by heart. You do not know them by any chance, do you?"

"Then you would have to give the Papal blessing in the name of the Holy Father. You would have to proceed to the

altar, make a genuflection, kiss the altar and then extend your hand in blessing over the whole congregation and recite a certain text. By the way, did you ever in your life make a genuflection?"

"What do you mean by genuflection?"

"With the right knee you kneel down to touch the floor, then rise again, kiss the altar, etc."

"You will excuse me, Father," he interrupted. "This is getting too complicated for me on such short notice. I am afraid I could never master all those details. Please excuse me for having made the suggestion."

Reluctantly I agreed to drop the matter.

You might find the following description that someone once gave of Mr. Frisbie interesting.

"C.O. Frisbie, the manager of the Cornell Wood Products Co.'s Plant, called its president, was a remarkable man. He was self-made, and he was conscious of it. Over six feet, square-shouldered, with the head of a Founding Father, his was a commanding figure, an ornament to any noble man's gallery of ancestors. His facial expression cheerful, his bearing dignified, his eyes radiant with benevolence, his handshake revealing paternalism and condescendence, a personality that would have played the role of an ideal feudal Lord a few centuries ago. His lips were ready to move in an impromptu speech any time occasion offered to enlarge on his favored topic, which meant to extol the wonder city of Cornell. On one such occasion a laborer quipped: 'A Wonder City! I wonder how I got here and I wonder how I'll get out of here.'"

True, C.O. Frisbie and the C.W.P. Co. paper mill had made Cornell a one-man town, and as a one-man town it did pretty well. The Mill, as it was usually called, was practically the only employer, and its wages the only source of income. Except for certain days of emergencies, it never shut down, not even during the crucial, calamitous depression years of 1930 to 1933.

## PROMOTING OUR PROJECT

I was scarcely a week in Cornell, Wisconsin when I received a letter from my provincial in Canada asking me to return to Canada at once. I replied immediately that at this time a return to Canada was impossible. It would mean being sent to the concentration camp for the duration of the war, while here in Wisconsin we could do real Oblate work among the poor people that had no priest.

Father Grandin answered at once that I should ignore his first letter as it was written under duress in the presence of General Ott of Toronto who had commanded him to order us back to Canada. "Stay where you are, and may God bless you," were his concluding words. Shortly afterwards he and Father Bell, Assistant General, who had not been able to return to Rome on account of the naval blockade, came to see me at Cornell. Being convinced that we did Oblate work among the poorest of the poor, they both agreed that we remain in our present positions until the end of the war.

When asked for advice and some help, Father Grandin gave me the proverbial answer that I had heard so often. "Mon petit Pere, debrouillez vous." "Make the best of a bad situation."

As the Fathers, scattered all over the middlewest, could not get in touch with our Superior in Rome, and as we wanted to live in well-regulated relations within the Congregation, Father Grandin applied to the Eastern Province of the U.S. to

admit all the German Oblates into their community. But the war hysteria ran high in those days, and no religious community wanted to be burgened with members who, at that time, were looked upon as alien enemies. For this reason his request was not granted. Then the rumor, supposed to have come from some headquarters, made the rounds that the Fathers might do well to look for a Bishop to incardinate them.

We did not receive any help or encouragement, but were left to our own resources and initiative, which compelled us to continue working for a province of our own. In retrospect, we now know that it was providential that things happened as they did.

During the war, 1915-1919, we were loosely organized into a district. Though never formally installed, Father Laufer was the senior member and generally regarded the District Superior. It might be fitting here to insert a biographical sketch of this remarkable Oblate Missionary as given by Father A. Siebert in the Golden Jubilee Booklet of Onaka, S.D.:

Rev. Joseph Laufer, C.I.I. was born in 1862 in Neudorf-Strassburg, Alsace. He made his studies in Sion, France, where he was also ordained to the priesthood in 1889. As a young Oblate he was engaged in teaching, preparing candidates for the Holy Priesthood. His ability caused him to become a Missionary and retreat master. Soon he was in great demand as he mastered both French and German. Brother Anthony, whose process of beatification has been initiated in Rome, declares: "Father Laufer helped me greatly in my vocation."

Fr. Laufer and his ministry became the beneficiary of the

humble and grateful Brother's prayers and sacrifices. In 1905, Fr. Laufer came to America to minister to the spiritual needs of the pioneers who were at that time flocking into Western Canada. To him and to his companion, Rev. Theodore Schweers, goes the honor of being the founders of St. Joseph's Colony in West Central Saskatchewan.

By nature, Father Laufer was energetic and very intelligent. He was liked very much by the younger folk, but enjoyed also the confidence of the old. He was an excellent preacher and could captivate his hearers. He had all the priestly virtues that we have a right to expect in a Missionary, but as all humanity is subject to frailty, he also being human, did not make any exception."

Father Laufer avoided a good deal of embarrassment by calling himself the "Little French Missionary." He pronounced his name "Loafer" and was taken for a Frenchman. He had never been overenthusiastic for a province of our own. He was in favor, rather, of free-lance mission work without being hemmed in by community life. During the war he had acquired 80 acres of land with some buildings on them which were beautifully located on the banks of the Chippewa River and was known as Round Hill. It was here, he said, we shall have our Mission house. From this place he started out on his tours through the length and width of the United States. Provided with railroad passes for every line, he travelled free from coast to coast. He did not want to be pinned down to any spot more than a month if he could help it. Chances were, he would turn up at any parish between New York and Los Angeles any Saturday afternoon and persuade the pastor to have him open a Mission

in the parish the next day.

Periodically he returned to Round Hill for a few days rest. It was at this place that all the Fathers met for their annual retreat. It was here that the chances for a province were discussed and its prospects kept alive. The Fathers who had come from Canada were determined not to return to western Canada. When Father Suffa, O.S.A. had died during the flu epidemic of 1919, and Armistice Day had concluded the war, an invitation was sent to some of the Fathers to return to Saskatchewan to take over the administration of the large parish of St. Mary at Regina. As it was left to their choice, they preferred to remain in the United States. To be sure that none of the missionaries who returned might land in the concentration camp, I inquired at the office of the Foreign Minister in Ottawa and received the immediate reply that, at this time, the return of the missionaries of German descent was not advised. That definitely settled their problem.

The Fathers coming from Ceylon, Frs. Pothmann, Schmitz, Siebert, and Kohler, hoped against hope that they would be recalled to their former field of mission work. According to Fr. Pothmann's historical notes they had arrived in the United States, landing in San Francisco, October 24, 1916. Through the intervention of Cardinal Ceretti, at that time Apostolic Delegate to Australia, thirteen Oblate Missionaries had been released from captivity. Father McKenna of the Eastern Province had come from Seattle with instructions from Rome assigning the Fathers to different places in the United States: Fr. Ernest Vogel and Fr. Anton Heimbucher to the Eastern Province; Fathers Simon, Siebert, Haas, Engelhardt,

Kistner to the Texas Province.

"And where shall Fathers Schmitz, Kohler, Rhode, and Fr. Joseph Pothmann go?" we asked.

Fr. McKenna answered, "I do not know."

We wanted to know how soon we could return to our original assignment. We got the same answer: "I do not know."

No sooner did Father Bour, O.M.I., stationed at Albertville, Minnesota, learn of their arrival when he sent his invitation: "Come to Albertville."

As a result, Fr. Schmitz went to Richfield, Fr. Kohler to the Fargo Diocese, Fr. Joseph Pothmann to Annandale, and Fr. Rhode to Albertville with Father Bour. They now joined the Fathers who had come from Canada and made common cause in working for the establishment of an Oblate Province of their own in the American Middle West. From time to time we met to discuss and promote our common project. At our meeting at St. Casimir's Rectory a petition was drawn up and signed by all present.

## FREEMASONS

Our Cornell congregation increased from one Sunday to another. Personal contact with the new members that moved in I considered very important. I made it a habit to meet newcomers personally after Mass on Sundays, laying off the vestments in a hurry so as to meet the people before they left the church. On one such occasion I met a well-groomed gentleman whom I had not seen before. I noticed a certain fraternity pin on his lapel and welcomed him to Cornell as a Knight of Columbus, pointing to his insignia, saying: "Well, I am glad to welcome one of our Catholic Freemasons to Cornell."

"No, Father," he said, "you are mistaken. I am not a Knight of Columbus. Look closer."

On doing so I recognized the membership pin of a Knight of Pythias.

"Excuse me," I said, "I took you to be a Catholic. Of course, everybody is welcome at Holy Cross Church."

"Mistaken again, Father," he said. "I am a Catholic, and as you see a Knight of Pythias."

"How can you be? Don't you know that Leo XIII in his letter condemning secret societies mentioned the Knights of Pythias as strictly forbidden for Catholics."

The gentleman did not answer the question, rather he questioned me: "Where are you born, Father?"

"In Germany."

"That's what I thought. Old country notions! That letter of Leo XIII does not apply to the U.S.A.. I am a Catholic of good standing. In my parish in south St. Paul, there are at least twenty Catholic men who are Freemasons and they are very good Catholics. They go to the sacraments regularly and nobody objects to their being Masons."

It was new to me. Next day I went to see our dean, Fr. Kaluza. Reporting what I had learned the day before, I asked whether it were possible that there are practicing Catholics in this country who were Freemasons.

Fr. Kaluza grinned. "Yes," he said, "it is possible in the diocese of St. Paul, Minnesota. When Leo XIII published his encyclical on Secret Societies, Archbishop Ireland forbade the priests of his archdiocese to read the letter from the pulpit or to mention it to their faithful in the church. He was of the opinion that the Holy Father was ill-informed of American Masonry and therefore the Archbishop permitted Catholics to join this secret society and I would not be surprised to learn that he himself was a Freemason."

In later years, since I was to live in the archdiocese of St. Paul for 18 years, I would have occasion to verify the fact he had actually prohibited the promulgation of Leo XIII's encyclical from the pulpit.

The subject had interested me since a casual discovery I had made many years ago when in Fishcreek, Saskatchewan, Canada. One Saturday, our English teacher, a certain Mr. Marx who taught in our school a very fine gentleman who had helped me a great deal in learning English, handed me a small package with the request to give it to the manager of the Imperial

Bank of Rosthern. I placed it in my open buggy and drove to Rosthern. Arriving there, I intended to turn the little package over to the manager of the bank, but found that it had been thoroughly soaked during the rainstorm on my way. I could not present it in that condition to anybody, so I took the wrappings off, intending to offer it at the bank in a clean and neat condition. To my surprise, it was a book on Masonry. My curiosity knew no bounds. I sat up all night to study it and learned what they meant by the great Architect, their supreme being, which was in their language equivalent to Allah, Buddha, Jupiter and any of the pagan divinities of antiquity. They adored life, and life came from the union of the male and the female....that was part of their worship.

The first 28 degrees of Masonry, the so-called Blue Lodge is kept in ignorance of the real secrets of Masonry. They are not supposed to know the ultimate objectives of Masonry. Only a select group of 32 Masons is chosen to be trusted with the real meaning of what the society intends. None of these secrets are committed to writing; they are given by word of mouth. Not all those who are given the secrets catch the real meaning of what they hear. The few that do will hand them down to the next generation of Freemasons.

While in St. Patrick's, Lethbridge, Alberta, I had occasion to learn a little more about Masonry. I refer to an incident in the history of the Masonic Order in the city of Edmonton, the capital city of the province of Alberta. The Oblate Fathers had built St. Joachim's Church in that city, but it seemed to grow to such an extent that soon two more parishes had to be established there. The Grey Nuns erected a

large Misericordia Hospital better equipped than any civic institution of the kind. Then the Oblate Fathers built a seminary across the river in Strathcona. All this grated on the nerves of the Masonic brotherhood.

"Romanism is growing by leaps and bounds. It ought to be stopped. Protestants and Masonry are losing all influence with their population increasing by immigration and by their large family growth. We must do something about it."

At a secret session, a committee was appointed to stem the tide of this ugly Roman Church's insidious, political power, which stretches out its tendrils everywhere and is the sworn enemy of our masonic ideal. The Catholic Church wants supremacy. It must be shorn of its demonic political influence. It must be destroyed in our fair city of Edmonton.

A short time before, a circular letter had been sent to all the lodges of America and came from the Grand Orient in France offering a strategem to fight the church. It had been worked out and guaranteed to work.

The plan consisted of three remarkable points.

1. We must give liberty to the women. They must be given all the rights of citizenship, suffrage, and action in politics. Take them out of the drudgery of family life. Let them take an interest in worldly affairs where we can reach them.

2. We must control the education of youth. Every child must attend public schools. Parochial schools must be destroyed, made illegal and prohibited.

3. Befriend the Catholic priest. Take him out of the

sacristy and the church. Win him over for worldly sport. Take him along hunting and fishing, as a partner on the golf links, etc. Make him a man of the world...take him out of the narrow clerical surrounding...etc.

Concerted action along that scheme had brought great changes in many countries and helped to save the world from the slavery of Rome and the tyranny of the Church.

The committee appointed would work along these lines. The chairman appointed of that committee was a certain Mr. Beck, judge of the Supreme Court of the Province of Alberta. Mr. Beck took his job seriously. He did not go by hearsay. He went, like the attorney he was, by historic and legal documents. He must find the weaknesses, legal and moral, of this Romish system and bring it to a fall. He made his investigation of Romanism as thoroughly as he could. He went to libraries where he consulted all the legal sources he could get a hold of. After six months of study and close examination of his findings he was ready to report to the lodge.

"I used no second-hand information," he said, "I went to original sources and this is what I have found. If there is any Christianity in the world left, it is found in the Roman Catholic Church. I found it to be the true Church of Jesus Christ. I hereby resign from my masonic affiliation, for I shall join the Catholic Church as soon as I possibly can."

On his circuit court session to various centers of the Province, he came also to Lethbridge. There I enjoyed a conversation with him, in particular about masonry. He organized Catholic Action and became a prominent leader in the defense of the church he had been appointed to destroy.

I have gained the conviction that masonic worship is phallic worship, which ultimately amounts to adoration of self, -the sin of Lucifer who wanted to be like God. What confirmed me in this belief that phallic worship is their chief religious tenet were two incidents that happened in Minneapolis.

When in 1915 I arrived in the Twin City, and not knowing anybody personally, I was obliged to stay overnight in a first class hotel of Minneapolis. Clad in a Prince Albert coat and a stiff Canadian senator's hat, rather pompous in the U.S.A., I was offered companionship for the night. They had taken me for a Canadian Mason, episcopalian minister. I politely declined.

A very few years later the Masonic brotherhood had a social evening at that same hotel at which they remained to exchange wives for the night.

The incident mentioned by Rev. Fr. Rowen, that a certain downtown district had shipped 500 inmates to a Shriners' convention confirmed me in the belief that masonic worship centers around phallic worship after all.

Members of the first 28 degrees, that is the so-called Blue Lodge, cannot understand why the Catholic church condemns Freemasons and why a Catholic cannot be a Mason. They are engaged in so many philanthropic enterprises; they have built hospitals; they help the orphans, the crippled children, and are benefactors of the poor and ailing humanity.

While in Minneapolis to buy goods for our annual picnic and church fair, I made my purchases at the Buttler Wholesale House. A clerk was assigned to me and after closing our

transaction and having paid for it, the clerk accompanied me to the entrance lobby. He expressed his joy in having a Catholic priest which he said was the first time in his life.

"We got along," he said, "though you are a Catholic priest and I am a thirty-second degree mason. We got along splendidly. By the way, as this is the first chance I have to talk to a Catholic priest, would you mind if I asked a question?"

"Not at all," I replied, "What is it?"

"Why is the Catholic Church so much opposed to Masonry, and why can't a Catholic be a Mason?"

"Now that is easy to answer. A Catholic cannot be a Lutheran, nor a Baptist or a member of any other religion. Your Masonic religion is contrary to ours. You do not even believe in a personal God." That statement seemed to hurt him.

"We do believe in God. I can prove it to you from our text and masonic authors."

"To be specific, if you know your masonic book and their dogmas, DO YOU BELIEVE IN A PERSONAL GOD, A SUPREME BEING WHO CREATED US, TO WHOM WE MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF LIFE ON JUDGMENT DAY?"

"No," he answered, "not that kind of God."

"Exactly, you are deists. You believe in the idea or general notion of a divinity, but not a personal God. As a matter of fact, your masonic fraternity is atheistic or agnostic."

He had to admit it.

"Now you know why a Catholic cannot become a Freemason."

He had never looked at it that way.

During those frenzied days I was asked the question several times: "Will our Masonic brothers all go to hell?" My

answer was invariably: "By no means. It might be the case of my friend Christopherson, our garage owner in Cornell, who for business reasons had joined the KKK and had even taken part in the ceremonies of burning the fiery cross in front of my house. The fine tubing which connects the gas tank and the carburetor in a Ford runabout had been used to tie the cotton around the cross and that wire as coming from his garage had betrayed him. I told him so. Now he was afraid, he might be boycotted by the Catholics of the community if they found out his KKK affiliation. He was ready to make up for his mistake. He had received a new Ford and was cruising up main street when he espied me on the way to the post office. He stopped at the curb and invited me to get a ride in a brand new car. Then he cruised up and down main street, evidently to show that he was still on the good side of the Catholic priest. He was going to tell me a great secret. 'Now this may shock you. It is a secret. Three days ago I joined the 32nd degree masons and my wife joined the affiliated Eastern Star.'

'I knew the next day it happened. You men cannot keep a secret, just as little as women.'

'Now that you know, let me ask you a question. You do not need answer it if you do not want to. Do you think that my wife's and my belonging to the Freemasons gives us a chance to save our souls and go to heaven when we die?'

'I am not so sure. You know one of the best alibis at the gate of heaven is total ignorance which is not your fault. Both you and your wife are as dumbfoundedly ignorant about anything religious that St. Peter will excuse you and let you

in right away on the plea of total ignorance which was not your fault because you never had a chance to know better.'

His bitter-sweet smile indicated his reaction to the sweet-bitter truth of my answer; but he had asked for it."

## NARROW ESCAPE NO. I

I was a thorn in the flesh of the Protestant community. They were determined to get rid of me. My worst crime was that I dared to organize a Catholic parish in an entirely Protestant community. At the time of my arrival, I had been finger-printed like the rest of the Fathers and was obliged to report once a month to the Postmaster for identification. At that time they wanted to avoid an open religious persecution, but they might get me on some other issue. I was still a foreigner. Thus my weakness was that I still was technically an alien enemy. I might be a German spy.

One fine Saturday afternoon, a nice looking young man came to see me. He introduced himself as Mr. Fuchs and told me he had been a seminarian at St. Francis Seminary near Milwaukee, but when he found he had no vocation he had left. Yes, he did talk the lingo of a seminarian, but when he overdid it in criticizing his professors, found fault with the education he had received there and complained that the subjects taught him in the seminary were of no practical value at all for a man in the world, I became suspicious, and when he switched to talking about the unjust war politics of the allies, I was sure he had come to entrap me in some statement. I went to the kitchen and told the housekeeper to leave the kitchen door ajar as she could hear and witness to every word that would be said.

After an hour's more or less pleasant conversation the

young man gave me \$5.00 for a Mass stipend. When I was looking for the change I did not have, he politely said, "Father, keep the change." Which, to his visible disappointment, I agreed to do quite cheerfully. A week later I received a letter from Bishop Schwebach telling me that I was on the point of being arrested for having made pro-German speeches, for being in collusion with and giving comfort to the enemy, etc. If I wanted to avoid the worst, and a big scandal in the community, I should see Father A.B.C. Dunn of Eau Claire, Wisconsin without delay. Fr. Dunn began scolding me for having made such indiscreet pro-German sermons and announcements in the church. I denied all his charges and read to him the announcements which I had in writing before me. In these announcements I had congratulated the parishioners for having been so very patriotic in buying war savings stamps and liberty bonds. According to banker's information, they had done better than any group in the community. "Now that you have so well supported your country, how would it be if you did the same for your church? After all, if you do that much in the interests of the State, which is in charge of your temporal welfare, you should do as much for the Church, even more, because she is in charge of your spiritual welfare. "

Of course that was rank heresy for some hyper-patriots. Fuchs, the agent who had come to see me the day before, diligently distorted my statements and reported that I had told the people not to buy liberty bonds, but to give all the money to the church. What irked them most was my offer to accept liberty bonds donated to the Church at face value which would be much more than you would get for them if you traded at the

grocer's or had them cashed at the bank. I assured Fr. Dunn that, and no more had been the crime for which I was to be arrested. "All I ask of you," I said, "if you have any influence with the courts, please obtain for me the right to defend myself. And next Sunday I shall repeat the same announcement for which I have been incriminated and challenge anybody to prove that in these announcements there was a single word said that could be called unpatricitic."

My challenge was never accepted by the agent who willfully had distorted my words. A year after Armistice I happened to meet Ed Payson of Chippewa Falls, an official F.B.I. agent in charge of several counties in central Wisconsin.

I asked him why he had sent this Mr. Fuchs to make trouble for me. He did not know anything about the affair. Mr. Fuchs had never been an F.B.I. man but had been hired as a watchman by some official of the Cornell Wood Products Co. Looking over the list of pro-German persons he claimed he did not even have my name, but he had plenty of others. All the priests with German names were marked men, he said. I was really curious to see the list of suspected pro-German persons, priests and ministers.

Ranking first among the clergymen with German names was the parish priest of Rozelville, then my dear friend; Father Untraut of Sacred Heart Church of Eau Claire ranked second. Both men were marked as very pro-German and dangerous and needed watching. Bishop Schwebach was marked as pro-German, but harmless; Fathers Dorrenbach and Toeller, beyond suspicion, etc. down the list to Pape of the cathedral, LaCrosse, slightly pro-German, but not serious. Yes, times were critical in those days. Some priests had been sent to the concentration camp for

being conscientious objectors, etc.

## THE K. K. K.

During the elections in 1920 and 1924, Ku Klux Klanism had been revived. Originally in the South, it now spread to many localities in the North. They openly campaigned in favor of one hundred per cent Americanism and were determined to defeat, and if possible, to root out all elements that conflicted with their American ideals. As such were considered Negroes, Jews, and Catholics.

Places far away from the main highways and the large centers, they chose small isolated villages and towns for their terrorizing activities. Cornell was considered an ideal locality for their nefarious schemes. There were no Negroes, only one Jewish family, but a growing Catholic congregation which ought to be stamped out. It did not fit into the American picture.

Slowly and secretly they began their conspiracy. The organizers had come from the South, a certain Neff and a Methodist preacher named White among them. It was easy enough to find Protestants who agreed with them that this Romish menace has a danger to America, that this tide of Romanisms must be stemmed. Through prejudiced non-Catholics they got acquainted with men in key positions in the community. Leading men of the community must be enlightened about the noble objectives of this patriotic society which was trying to save the country from an imminent invasion of the Roman hordes led by the Pope to destroy the liberties of this country.

In a few months they had their family meetings, their secret conclaves in which they met with the leaders of the community. Soon they had the foremen of the Mill, the editor of the Chippewa Courier published by the C.W.P. Co., and the superintendent on their side. Most of the town officials were Mill people. The teachers at the grade and the local high school followed suit and became rabid members. Like termites they worked in the dark at first. When they had won over all the persons of influence in key positions, and the latter assured the leaders that by this time the great majority of the population had become prospective members, they came out into the open.

They announced a public meeting on the public square on Main Street. They deftly spread the rumor that the Catholics armed to the teeth, would come to 'bust' that meeting. Naturally the K.K.K. followers came well prepared to meet the onslaught. Their first objective was to provoke the Catholic to fire the first shot. That would have meant a blood bath in Cornell, a bloody war and mass slaughter in Cornell. in the eyes of the law justified as self-defense.

They did everything possible to provoke the first act of violence on the part of Catholics. They distributed the alleged K. of C. oath, telling people that as soon as the Pope in Rome would give the signal every Roman Catholic was in conscience bound to strangle, stab and kill all their Protestant neighbors, men, women, and children without exception.

How gullible and ignorant the enemies of the Church can be was brought home to me by an incident that happened at that time. Hearing that a certain fallen-away Catholic had

joined the K.K.K., I went to his home to find out. His wife met me at the door.

"What do you want here?" she asked without any attempt at politeness. On second thought she invited me in.

"What do you want?" she insisted.

I told her I wanted to see Mr. B., her husband.

"He is sleeping because he works nightshift and cannot be disturbed. By the way, what do you want of him?"

I replied: "As he is a Catholic, I want to know whether the rumor is true that he joined the K.K.Klan."

"You need not ask him. I can answer that for him. He did, and what about it? And since you are here, will you please answer for this?"

Doing so with an insolent, challenging gesture, she thrust a postcard into my face. It was the K. of C. oath in print, a blood-curdling little document informing the world that the Knights of Columbus have signed an oath with their blood, that as soon as the Pope gives the signal they will rush upon their Protestant neighbors and kill, strangle or stab to death everyone they can get a hold of. With a triumphant accent she read the text of it.

Suddenly the door to the next room opened and her daughter of about ten rushed into the room, and with a terrified look at me, fell around the neck of her mother with the cry, "Don't talk to that man. He is going to kill you." She evidently was in deadly fear I would at that moment be about murdering her dear mother. The piercing cry of alarm suddenly brought three women from another room down the hall who had been visiting Grandma who was sick abed. It was the

moment of dramatic appeal to their ignorance and stupidity.

"Ladies, do you realize what you did to this innocent child? You told her about this horrid K. of C. oath, a fraudulent document which is a dirty lie. You are stupid enough to believe such fraud? Look at the title above this infamous so-called oath. Do you see the word "alleged" over it? We who have attended the parochial school know what it means. You either do not know it, or maliciously ignore it. The word 'alleged' means it is a fake. The K. Kluxers hoped you could be fooled readily and not understand its meaning. Leave out the 'alleged', and you will be arrested for libel and slander at once. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to explain matters to you. The Ku Klux Klan evidently thought you were dumb enough not to understand the word and could be fooled easily. Please don't be fooled again. May the Lord bless you. Good bye."

The K.K.K. followers also shoved postcards under the doorsteps carrying a picture of the THREE THINGS THAT DO NOT MARRY: a dog, a hog and a bull with a ring in his nose and a priest's biretta on his head, and literature marking the Pope in Rome as the Anti-Christ. The priest at Cornell was marked in a public speech as the black-robed devil who gets drunk every morning, and the Catholics call it "Holy Mass!" The old stories of Maria Monk, Pastor Chiniqy, and the speeches of Pat Malone, the ex-priest who went from one place to another in the State of Wisconsin to give his infamous tirades against the Church were circulated.

In the presence of such insults and vicious attacks on everything a Catholic considers sacred, I warned our Catholic people to remain aloof from their meetings, to ignore them,

and fight them by telling them the truth. Pamphlets that exposed such characters as Pastor Chiniqy, Maria Monk, the author of "30 Years in Hell", and refutation of Pat Malone's ravings were distributed from house to house without saying a word of engaging in any argument. Catholics simply would not be provoked into a violent retaliation.

The K. Kluxers themselves did not dare to resort to any overt action or acts of violence. Governor Blaine of Wisconsin had declared in one of his campaign speeches that he would rather be defeated than solicit one single vote of a K.K. Klanner, and then had added: "The first act of violence of that contemptuous outfit will be punished according to the limit of the law." That courageous declaration on the part of the Governor kept the Kluxers on their guard, yet it was a reason more to have the Catholics commit the first act of violence. Just one flimsy pretext and open civil war would have broken out among the population that had been worked into hysteriacal excitement and hatred of an imaginary enemy. The least provocation could have been enough. The more peaceful and calm the attitude of Catholics was in those days, the more they were hated for it. For our Catholics it was an extraordinary test of self-control and endurance.

The more peaceful the passive resistance Catholic proved to be, the bolder became from day to day the provocations of their enemies. One day the climax of our endurance was reached. Something more than passive resistance had to be done. One of my men, a mill employee, Sever Solie, came to see me and reported that the insults he received down at the Mill, not only during the recess time, but even during working hours,

had become unbearable for any man with red blood in his veins. "They tell us we are dupes and slaves of the "dago-pope", call the Blessed Virgin by a blasphemous name I don't care to repeat. They call the Pope a son of a b. and the anti-Christ, etc. Today I felt like seizing the sledgehammer and knocking out the brains of the fellow who insulted me and my religion with his vile talk, but I remembered your warning, 'No violence,' and I had to take it, but I do not know how long I shall be able to take it. Something ought to be done to stop their dirty mugs."

Other things had happened at that time which made me think that the climax of what can be borne had been reached and something in a positive way must be tried besides submission and endurance. At the Cornell High School and in the grade school, practically all the teachers had become members of the Klan. A daughter of the Parent family, freshman in the high school, came home crying one afternoon and told her parents she was not going back to that high school anymore. In the presence of the class, the principal had explained why nuns have such wide garments. "If they have been abused by the priests they can easily conceal their disgrace and shame." All eyes of the class were fixed on her, the only student who was Catholic, and laughed... Her little sister, first grade pupil, was taken into a woodshed, stripped of her clothes and when crying, was told that is what a priest had to do with every girl once a month, etc. Something indeed had to be done. I decided to go to Chicago and report the matter to Mr. Osborne, the President of the Cornell Wood Products Co., whose officials and employees at the Mill had

been agitators for the K.K.Klan. I was by no means a welcome visitor at Mr. Osborne's office. The receptionist told me that Mr. Osborne was in conference with his associates. He would not be able to see me. I insisted I must see him. I was willing to wait until the end of the conference. After an hour's waiting, seeing that I would not leave the antechamber which was the only exit for Mr. Osborne to leave his office, I was called in to lay my business before him. I was reminded to be short as he did not have much time.

Before I came to mention my real purpose of my visit, I asked Mr. Osborne very bluntly whether he was a Freemason. "If you are," I said, "I shall leave at once without any further ado, because it would be useless to mention the subject."

"No," he said, "I am not. I hate the secrecy of Masonry. I do not believe in secret societies at all."

Then I told him of the insidious work of the K.K.K. and added that they had planned an initiation of 5000 new members on July 4th and that his men at the Mill are the ringleaders of the local K.K. Klan.

"I shall investigate and be up there in person on July 4th to look into this matter."

"If you arrived in Cornell at that time, they would lie low and be ashamed to take part in anything of the kind, if they knew you were a witness of their doings."

"You may be right," he said, "I shall send two detectives up there to investigate and give me a detailed report."

The 4th of July was celebrated in great style by an initiation of a few hundred, not a thousand, new members. After a parade through the streets of Cornell, they went to a clearing deep in the wooded country-side across the river.

They had parked their cars on the highway, not able to drive to the solitary spot in the dense woods. It was near midnight when they returned. In the meantime I had taken the numbers of their parked cars along the highway and the next morning an official at the courthouse in Chippewa Falls gave me the names of the corresponding license numbers. All the business men of Cornell among my so-called best friends had joined the hooded brotherhood. Of course when I went to see them, they all denied membership as they are obliged to do when interrogated. The banker whose number and name I had received, when asked, denied emphatically that he had been there. I expressed my gratification to hear it and added: "You know, we Catholics are not obliged in conscience to deal with anybody who is an open enemy of our religion."

When I went across the street to ask the barber whether he had been at the initiation, he likewise denied any membership. While I was talking to the guilty and lying barber, Mr. Violet, the banker, made a beeline to another store to tell the owner that Catholics have decided to boycott anybody who is a member of the K.K. Klan.

Developments from that moment came fast and furious. Two days after the initiation, the editor of the Chippewa Valley Courier, who had printed a lot of the K.K. Klan literature and agitation material was dismissed from his post without explanation. "We do not need your services any more." With the same remark all the foremen and the employees that were members were laid off. The night superintendent who had played a leading role was relieved of his position. The businessmen began to feel that they were boycotted. Conster-

nation began to fall on the community.

The organizers from the South, under cover of night, disappeared from the scene, leaving no address of their whereabouts, leaving, however, unpaid loans they had obtained from enthusiastic members, ranging from \$25.00 to \$200.00. In vain did the disappointed victims protest. It was an eye-opener that came late, yet was curing them effectively from all Kluxism forever. Some of the townspeople began to see the folly of the whole business and felt sorry they had ever been duped.

The career of the ex-priest, Pat Malone, suddenly came to an inglorious end, owing to the vigilant eye of Rev. Fr. Schuster, O.M.I. Pat Malone had just reached the lowest depth of infamous insults against the Catholic Church at a pageant he had staged in Neillsville, Wisconsin. At that pageant he was leading a procession, carrying a huge cross, while flirting with a bevy of young women who were dressed as nuns while he wore the garb of a Catholic priest. On that occasion he proved from the pages of the Bible that the allies, Great Britain and the United States would lose the war. Fr. Schuster reported him to the authorities. He was arrested, accused of making unpatriotic speeches and giving comfort to the enemy. It was established in court that he had never been a priest, not even a seminarian, that he was not and never had been a Catholic, that his name was not Irish, nor Pat Malone, but that he was a German Lutheran named Schulz. He was sentenced to two years in penitentiary and thus was definitely out of circulation as a lecturer against the Catholic Church in the middle west.

Another point which caused great chagrin to Cornell, and the Cornell school district in particular, was the penalty which the K.K. Klan brought upon the community indirectly. On a certain Sunday evening the K.K. Klan, about fifty of them, in their masks and white nightshirts had burned a fiery cross opposite the home where Fr. Minwegen had made his temporary residence. On that occasion they had called him the black-robed devil, who gets drunk every morning, and they call that Holy Mass. The following day Fr. Minwegen went to Eau Claire to find out who owned the property at the end of Main Street. He was told the school district of Cornell had paid an option on the property and wanted to buy it for a high school playground. Before he left the real estate office, however, a clerk informed him that the option had expired the week before. Fr. Minwegen paid down fifty dollars and the ten acre plot became the property of the Catholic Church. Great was the surprise and the shock of Mr. Hanson, Town Treasurer, to take the 10 acres off the tax roll, as it was now church property. The Klan had suggested it. Where they had burned a fiery cross, at the end of Main Street, on the most beautiful spot of the town site, Holy Cross Catholic Church was to be erected in time.

While some were sorry they had ever had anything to do with the sordid Klan affair, others grew in hatred because they had been defeated. Then one of the Catholics indiscreetly disclosed the fact that Fr. Minwegen had been in Chicago and had caused Mr. Osborne to mete out punishment on the Ku Klux Klan members who held jobs at the Mill. The Masonic Lodge decided the community must revenge itself and get even

with that Catholic, foreign-born priest who has caused this disturbance in their peaceful community. Ways and means must be found to get him. A clever scheme was set in motion which foreboded great harm to the pastor of Holy Cross Church, Cornell.

## NARROW ESCAPE, NO. II

The K.K.K. episode was to have an aftermath which could have had the direst consequences for both the parish and the pastor of Holy Cross Church, Cornell. When excitement ran high and the Catholics rejoiced that their cause had been vindicated, one of the Church consultants indiscreetly mentioned to a non-Catholic friend that Fr. Minwegen had been in Chicago to inform Mr. Osborne about the K.K. Klan doings in Cornell.

In no time everybody knew that had been the reason why all the Mill personnel who had belonged to the Klan had been fired two days after the initiation on the Fourth of July. They could have murdered that Catholic priest. He is the real trouble-maker. Cornell must get rid of him. That was the decision made at a secret session of the Masonic Lodge of Cornell. One of the members was appointed to get in touch with civic and ecclesiastical authorities to get that man ousted from Cornell. The man assigned for this scheme had his agents in Chicago. A short time afterward he reported to the lodge that his negotiations were well under way and promised to succeed according to plans. A lodge member who could not keep a secret made it known that the brothers of the lodge had had favorable news from Chicago, that by a certain date that Catholic priest would be gone. A banquet to celebrate had already been planned for the occasion. Everything would be settled to their entire satisfaction, - secret

rejoicing in the camp of the enemy.

Fr. Minwegen had not the slightest notion what was brewing, but one day he received a letter from Father Pothmann, his district Superior, that Msgr. O'Brien, the head of the Catholic Church Extension in Chicago had asked him to transfer Rev. Peter Minwegen, at present pastor of Holy Cross Church, Cornell, to another place. This step had to be taken for the good of the community and peace and harmony among the people of Cornell. This change should be made at once. Both Fr. Pothmann and I were surprised at the news from Chicago. As I was Fr. Pothmann's counselor, I counselled him to keep hands off and await further developments.

About three weeks later, Fr. Pothmann sent me a telegram to meet him at Eau Claire. He had received another letter from Msgr. O'Brien telling him peremptorily that this Rev. Minwegen must be changed at once. It is an order of the Cardinal and orders are orders, he added. If within a few days this order has not been complied with, his Eminence, who will shortly go to Rome to make preparations for the Eucharistic Congress in Chicago, will take steps at Roman headquarters that his order will be obeyed.

I assured Fr. Pothmann that I was not ready to leave Cornell, but was ready to see the Monsignor in person and explain matters to him and if necessary, to Cardinal Mundelein. That was entirely satisfactory to my Superior. Before I left by train for Chicago, however, I consulted a secular priest, high in the Bishop's council, about my case. He gave it as his opinion that the Cardinal had unlimited influence in Rome, that his wishes will be commands in Rome, that I would have

no chance at all, and guilty or not I should resign myself to becoming a victim of circumstances.

Firmly believing in the justice of my cause, I was not willing to be a victim of any kind. I did not have time to return to Jim Falls to brush up. Wearing an old Prince Albert frock coat, threadbare all over and frayed at the sleeves, I took the next train to Chicago to meet Msgr. O'Brien at the Church Extension office on State Street.

He was surrounded by a dozen secretaries and typists, but rose immediately when reading my name on the card I had offered him. To my great surprise he gave me a most cordial reception. He seemed overjoyed to see me.

"You are just the man I wanted to see. I have good news for you."

Then he opened a large drawer filled to the brim with correspondence about that disreputable Rev. Minwegen in Cornell. Upon receiving orders from the Cardinal, he had first written to Fr. Constantineau, O.M.I. of San Antonio to have me transferred from Cornell. Fr. Constantineau advised him to get in touch with our Canadian provincial. The Canadian provincial referred the matter to the district Superior, Fr. Pothmann, but if necessary, let him know by telegram whether his presence was necessary in the case and he would come down at once to oblige his Eminence, the Cardinal. Fr. Beys, the Provincial of Manitoba, urged Fr. Pothmann to take care of the matter.

"And here is the best part of it all. A report from your own Bishop of LaCrosse, Bishop McGavick. He sent us the report about the situation in Cornell, the doings of the K.K.K.,

and the noble defense you put up against them. He advises us to keep hands off in your case as Father Minwegen is an Oblate who has done excellent work in my diocese and in Cornell in particular. He deserves unstinted credit for the fine work he did in the Cornell Community."

Thus quoting from Bishop McGavick's letter, he said with a twinkle in his Irish eyes, "You know Cardinals are not infallible in such matters."

"It would have been a sad day indeed if the President of the Catholic Church Extension and the Cardinal had entered a conspiracy with the Freemasons and the K.K. Klan to destroy the work, the reputation and the character of a priest. After refusing to give us help in the building of a little chapel in Cornell, you enter into an alliance with the enemies of the Church. To see this would have been a disgrace."

Msgr. O'Brien apologized. "We did not know the truth. I understand you plan to build a little Church in Arnold, Wisconsin. We shall help you."

Suiting the action to the word, he pulled out his check book and made out a check of \$1000.00 for the new Church in Arnold. Then noticing the old wornout suit I was wearing, he asked, "Would you mind accepting a new suit if it fitted? Some friend of mine has made me a present, a new Prince Albert suit complete, but they did not know that I had added a sort of promontory and the frock coat does not fit me at all."

With this, he led me to the next room where he opened a cardboard box that contained a brand new suit. "It is yours," he said. "Try it on." It fitted me as snugly as if tailor-made for me. I felt and looked like a new man.

"Now let us go," he said, "we have to see somebody who will be surprised and pleased to meet you and hear about these latest developments."

Arm in arm, Msgr. O'Brien took me across State Street to the "Fair" and its manager, a prominent Catholic gentleman and Knight of St. Gregory. Introducing me to him, he said: "This is Father Minwegen, O.M.I. He has won a great battle in fight with the K.K. Klan and the enemies of the Church. I wish I had half as much fight as Father did in Cornell. Father Minwegen is a fighting Irishman; we owe him an apology."

Now that the whole affair had taken a final and favorable turn, one might wonder how it had been possible for the Cardinal himself to become involved in this case that concerned a priest of the diocese of LaCrosse. The explanation was very simple.

The Cardinal had attended the solemn wedding ceremony of one of the daughters of the rich Heinz Lumber family in Chicago. When, after the breakfast, he said goodbye to the guests assembled and shook hands with them, he added: "I have enjoyed this morning and wish to thank everyone for the pleasant hours we have spent in this beautiful home of the Heinz family. And," he added, "if I can be of service to anyone of you or do him a favor, only say the word and if within my power, it shall be done."

On that occasion one of the guests, who had been prompted by a Masonic friend came forward and asked that the Cardinal remove a certain priest who had made himself a nuisance and a disturber of the peace in Cornell, Wisconsin. (They could not treat him anymore as an alien enemy, for in the meantime

Father Minwegen had obtained his American citizen papers, but they accused him now as a real trouble maker.) The Cardinal's secretary took notes and steps were taken immediately to have the guest's wish granted.

They had forgotten that, or did not know that Cornell was located in the diocese of LaCrosse and not under the jurisdiction of the Chicago archbishop.

## A STRANGE SICK CALL

It was a chilly day in September, 1919. The occasion: the strangest sick call in my life. To all appearances the woman before me was dead. A slight pressure of my thumb left a dent in the cold clammy skin of her arm. There was no filmy shadow on the mirror to indicate a breath, no pulse.

We had only the doctor's word for it that she was still alive. I call it the strangest sick call in my life because I had not been called to administer the last rites of the Church but to revive, if possible, to cure her. Rev. James McGurk, her pastor had urged me repeatedly to see her and when he noticed that I hesitated and looked for reasons to be excused, he had finally come in person to take me to her bedside.

"Here she is," he said, "Miss Mae Corrigan."

He could see that I was shocked at the sight.

"How did she get that way?" I asked.

He explained. "She has been teaching in Montana the regular school terms in the city, and during the summer months when other teachers enjoyed their vacation, she taught school in the hills where snowbound settlers could not keep the roads open in winter time. She did this year after year without interruption. You see the result: a nervous breakdown and a total collapse. For months she has been in a coma. As medical care was ineffective, she was sent to the state hospital at Winnebago for observation and treatment. But as

she did not respond to any medical treatment, she was returned to die at home."

After this introduction, I was more reluctant than ever to have anything to do with the case. He could read the skeptical expression on my face.

"You have helped so many others, why can't you help her?" he argued. "Everybody knows what you did for the people during the flu-epidemic last Fall."

It was true I had helped many sick people in 1918-19. When the Government had closed churches, schools, theaters, and public halls, I had gone from house to house telling people how to deal with the terrible plague, and when calls came day and night I had directions printed in small pamphlet form which I distributed by the thousands.

"Didn't you get into conflict with the medical association?"

"No, not at all; the physicians who were overburdened with hospital cases encouraged me to continue my work. In fact, one of them, who learned of the success of my treatments, asked me to take care of two of his pneumonia patients, a boy of four and a young man of seventeen. 'Go and tell them I sent you,' he said. In less than a week both patients were on their feet."

"I remember hearing of it," said Fr. McGurk. "Some people thought it was a miracle."

"Indeed, some people who knew of the cases were amazed. Being a Catholic priest, I was suspected of faith-healing. In reality I did not possess, nor claim to possess any magic or any miraculous power. All I had done was to pre-

scribe Sebastian Kneipp's hydrotherapy."

"Sebastian Kneipp?" Father McGurk inquired. "Who was he? Never heard of him. Was he a famous M.D.?"

"No, he was a Bavarian. As a young man he was apparently doomed to die an early death. Intending to study for the priesthood, yet struggling with poverty and failing health, suffering from frequent hemorrhages of the lungs, he consulted a physician about entering the major seminary.

"'Yours is a very bad case of tuberculosis,' the Bavarian doctor had told him, adding very bluntly, 'You are not a candidate for the seminary, but for the cemetery. Go home and forget about studying.'"

"Did he die young?"

"No, Providence placed into his hands a book written by Dr. Hahn, in which the author offered a somewhat crude form of watercure as a remedy for TB. Rather skeptically at first, he started taking towel baths out of his frozen washbasin. He felt refreshed. His hemorrhages diminished somewhat. Greatly encouraged, yet having no bath facilities in the seminary, he went down to the Danube river to take, several times a week, a dip in its icy waters. In less than a year he freed his system from every trace of TB. Nobody knew how he had cured himself. However, shortly afterwards he created a sensation in the seminary when he administered his watercure and thereby restored to perfect health two friends who had been rejected from Holy Orders because of advanced cases of T.B. When the entire community had been asleep he had found a way of applying his watercure in the laundry of the seminary."

"How did you become interested in his hydrotherapy?"

"For the simple reason that my life was saved twice by his treatments. First in a case of typhoid fever which had decimated the population of our little town in Germany. All of our family were ill. My brother died. My dad, the only one up and around, felt the weakening symptoms taking hold of him when a good neighbor handed him Kneipp's book, 'My Watercure'. He followed its directions and in a week we were all safely on the way to recovery."

"Did you say your life was saved twice?"

"The second time in a stubborn case of pleurisy, I knew exactly what to do. but was told by the rector of the seminary that nobody is a doctor in his own case. When after six weeks of lingering illness my strength had ebbed away to near-zero, and the superior suggested I receive the last rites and prepare for death, I considered my case an emergency, took matters into my own hands, and with the help of a fellow-student, applied the medicated hot packs of Kneipp which led to a speedy recovery."

"No wonder you became interested in Kneipp's hydrotherapy."

"Naturally I made hydrotherapy the study of a life time. During college years I was always appointed Infirmarian of the community and as such had a fine chance to practice it on the fellow students, and that with invariable success."

"I suppose after your ordination you had plenty of opportunities to use it."

"Not exactly. Being ordained for the American missions I had not the slightest intention of ever practicing hydrotherapy, but in isolated parts of the West, in cases where

medical help had failed or was not available, it would have been a sin to refuse help whenever a life was at stake, and Kneipp's hydrotherapy never left me in the lurch in an emergency. "

"Well then, if you have such confidence in the Kneipp treatments, why do you hesitate to do something here in our case?"

"This case is entirely different from anything I have ever seen before."

"What do you mean?"

"In all emergency cases of the past I could refer to similar cases in Kneipp's book; for instance the first case I ran into, that of a little boy who had 106 degrees of fever and was choking from the tenacious mucous of the croup. When neither scraping, spraying nor emetics loosened the phlegm, a little trick of Kneipp's hydrotherapy brought relief and recovery in less than half an hour."

"People told me that last Fall you cured a boy who suffered from a complication of appendicitis and pneumonia. How wasn't that case much more serious than ours?"

"The case was indeed a bad one. On account of the high fever, the doctors refused to operate. When all hope seemed lost, Kneipp's hydrotherapy solved the complicated problem, for Kneipp clearly indicates what should be done in such a case. Ignoring the mooted question whether the fever is the cause of the disease, its concomitant phenomenon or its final effect, Kneipp would try at once to stop it. 'If your house is on fire, don't wait until the fire has destroyed all the combustible material in sight. Don't wait for a crisis on

the ninth day, put it out at once.' Success proved that he was right. Eight hours of varied applications of cold water brought complete recovery for the boy. In this case and in all cases of the so-called eruptive diseases like the measles, small pox, scarlet fever and the shingles, Kneipp has a definite line of procedure. What makes his cures so remarkable is the absence of any injurious after-effects so common in cases of scarlet fever and small pox."

"Do you consider the case before us really more serious than any of these cases you just mentioned?"

"In a way, yes. What makes the case so difficult is the fact that there is no fever, no hemorrhage, no visible eruptive matter, no pains of which the patient could tell us, no symptoms to go by but this lethargy which looks like the last sleep of death."

At this moment the mother of the young woman interrupted our conversation: "Please, Father, tell us what to do to cure her. I used to be a practical nurse. I am willing to do everything to save her life."

"I can promise no cure," I replied. "Of this, however, I am certain; the treatments I shall suggest will, if not cure her, greatly improve her condition."

Following a general idea of Kneipp that contraction and expansion of life cells will stimulate circulation of the blood which will carry food to the weakened organisms and to the entire nervous system, I prescribed a series of short cold applications, towel-baths, half-baths, none to exceed two minutes, and once a day a dip of the whole body, up to the neck, in cold water, this to last only about five seconds.

"And how long will it take to cure her?" the mother asked anxiously.

"That I cannot tell," I answered, remembering well what Kneipp used to say in such cases: "I have no patience with people who have neglected their health for years, then come to be cured overnight with a douche or two of cold water."

I reminded the good lady that her daughter had been ailing for a long time and that nature can shake off its present weakness only gradually, which might make recovery a slow process. "Don't be discouraged, continue the treatments, even if it should take months to see much of a result. And don't be afraid, the cold water will do her no harm."

With this faint ray of hope in mind the mother started the task of nursing her daughter back to life. Eight weeks passed without any noticeable improvement, except for some color returning to her cheeks.

"Life is coming back," she rejoiced. The ninth week it happened. She called me long distance: "Mae can hear me," she said. "I asked her to move her little finger if she could hear me, and she did."

I had to come witness the performance; but however loud the mother yelled into Mae's ear, Mae would not wiggle her finger for me.

"Mother," I said, "your imagination must have fooled you."

"Yet I was so sure she had moved her finger yesterday."

A week later another phone call: "Come down quick," she said excitedly. "This time I am not mistaken."

"What happened?"

"When I lifted her up for the cold dip in the bathtub, she grabbed my arm and squeezed it quite firmly for a moment. Now she will move her finger any time you wish."

She could indeed give a signal with her finger as often as her mother called for it. At the first sign of returning life, her food rations, by tube through the nose, had been doubled, then trebled. From one day to another she gained strength. In rapid succession her faculties revived. Less than a week later she moved her hand, then her arm. Finally she opened her eyes to see and her lips to speak.

When she whispered something into her mother's ear, which her mother answered with a loud incredulous, "No!" Mae had told her that while she was lying there like a corpse, she had heard everything we said and had wondered why nobody answered the questions which in her imagination she had addressed to us. It seemed incredible that while her motor nerves had been paralyzed, her sensory nerves had been active and wide awake all the time.

Now that she could eat solid food, her strength picked up fast. Continuing part of her hydrotherapeutic schedule, by Christmas time she had answered all her mail and was able to resume her household tasks.

Mae Corrigan lives today. Now 73 years old, she was gladly given permission to use her name to honor the memory of the man whose ideas had been instrumental in restoring her to perfect health.

It is quite a thrill to see a person that was apparently dead coming back to life and what is exceedingly gratifying is the knowledge that you had an active part in recalling

someone, as it were, from the threshold of eternity. My own personal merit, however, in this case, and in all the amazing cures I had occasion to witness, is of very little account. They must be attributed to the great humanitarian, Sebastian Kneipp, in whose honor the West German Government issued a postage stamp with his picture and the inscription, "HELPER DER MENSCHHEIT", - HELPER OF MANKIND.

For such he really was. His books have reached suffering humanity all over the world. Of his first one, entitled "My Watercure", 610,000 copies have been sold. Each of his five books was translated into 25 foreign languages and appeared in many editions.

The life of Sebastian Kneipp is colorful, fascinating. In his day he was admired by many men of the medical profession and, when he died in 1897 at the age of 76, he was mourned by millions of people whom he had taught a better and healthier way of life.

The greatness of the man is attested by the humble acknowledgement of his limitations. He did not offer his hydrotherapy and his medicine chest as a panacea for all the ills of mankind. He was no scientist. He might be called an empiricist who learned and acquired his practical knowledge in cases of emergency.

I have often wondered what invaluable legacy he could have left to posterity if he had at his command the facilities of modern research and the help of biochemistry to put his system on a strictly scientific basis and evolve and define the exact principle that accounted for his phenomenal success in the field of therapeutics.

THE STORY OF HIS FALLS AND ITS  
SACRED HEART CHURCH

By Fr. Minwegen, O.I.I.

When Bishop Schwebach asked me "to do some pioneer work" in his diocese, for he said, "I have quite a few dark corners in it" among other places mentioned I chose Cornell, Wis. In Cornell and surrounding I found about a dozen families who were Catholic, but I was told that down the river six miles there was a French settlement who wanted services too. The day after I said my first Mass at the Hunz' Family near Cornell, Mr. Jingras of this French settlement, who had been notified of the arrival of a priest came to get me. He took me to Charlie Richard's place where I could say Mass in a small chapel. They told me, many years ago Father Chrysostome, O.F.M., used to visit the Lumber Camps and once a year came to this place also to give the people a chance to make their Easter Duty. As the woods were inaccessible in summertime for the lumber jacks, who only in winter could haul their logs over the snow and ice roads, Fr. Chrysostome traveled only in wintertime, for he was chiefly after the lumber jacks, but he must be dead now they said; old timers remembered when he came the last time. Many of the people had not received the sacraments since that time, though a Holy Ghost Father had visited Cornell occasionally a few years ago. I said Mass at that chapel, but what a chapel! It looked like an old woodshed, but there was a small turret on top of it, it was set up on heavy posts and the floor two or three feet above the ground. The barnyard animals, pigs, chickens and cattle played lustily under and around the chapel during Mass. They told me that a few months ago a little French Missionary

had visited the place and said lass for them, but they did not like him at all, for he had made some sarcastic remarks about the strange concert under the chapel floor of grunting pigs and crowing rooster, etc. It was Fr. Laufer, I found out later. On that occasion I became acquainted with many French names, like Richard's Letendre, Cayo (most likely for Caillaux) the two Lord Families, Antine Dupras, Joe Flante, Luke Bell, etc. I learned that many years ago they had planned to build a church on the westbank of the River, opposite Cobban, but the plan was abandoned because of lack of funds and lack of priests, to take the lead.

Now some people about five miles down the river they said, "wanted to have a chapel at Jim Falls, but there are only a few Catholics at Jim Falls and they can never build a church."

The only Catholic name they knew was Jeff Mompas, the blacksmith of Jim Falls. It was late in the Fall of 1915 and I was bound to find out about Jeff Mompas the only Catholic family. Among others I asked Mr. Lord, Is he the only catholic in Jim Falls? How many Catholic families are living in Jim Falls? I inquired. They mentioned Jeff Mompas and his Son-in-law, Frank Douglas. They were not quite sure whether the Schwab Family was of the faith. The storekeeper Barney Dressel was a fallen-away Catholic, they said. Next day I went to Jim Falls to investigate. Jeff Mompas was a blacksmith. I found the blacksmith shop near Salzgeber's general store, the blacksmith himself shoeing a horse when I arrived. He did not even look up, when I greeted him. "Is this Jeff Mompas's blacksmith shop?" I asked. "yes Sir," came back the curt answer.

Introducing myself, I said, Mr. Mompas, can you tell me whether

there are any other Catholics in this locality besides your family. Continuing chipping away at the horse's hoof and without looking up, he snorted: I am not Mompas and I am not a Catholic either. I rent the shop.

"Can you tell me where I may find Mr. Mompas.?"

He lives out in the country."

A stranger, who looked like the owner of the horse, offered directions. Mr. Mompas lives about two miles south of here. The more friendly stranger volunteered further explanations.

"on the way to Mompas you will pass by the last house of Jim Falls to the right, that is the home of Mr. Schwab whose family is a Catholic.

I called at Schwab's where I met a very nice old couple, who had immigrated from Bohemia. When I talked English, the old man began in German, when I switched over to German, he answered in Bohemian. Somehow I found out, that the whole family was Catholic and they were glad to see a priest. The Mompas preferred to talk French, or rather a Canadian Patois and were overjoyed that they could talk with a priest in their own language. They could give me a lot more information about conditions and people. There were more Catholics in the country. The relatives of Barney Dressel, August and Joe Dressel were good Catholics. The Kraus and Kelley families and some of their neighbors were also Catholics. A few days later I went to see Jim Kelley's family. They were in the possession of a Mass-kit which enabled me to say Mass in their own home.

In Jim Falls itself perhaps Mass had never been said since it existed. The Kelley's and two other Irish families had kept up contact with the church by attending Mass in Chippewa Falls,

but they certainly welcomed the idea of having regular Church services some day in the close-by Jim Falls. They warned me however that in their district, which went by the name of Anson, Catholics were not popular and we would meet with a lot of hostility on the part of the K.K.Kluxers who were numerous in their neighborhood. The Catholics living there, though admittedly Catholics, were ignorant of their faith and, being without any instruction, could never defend their faith and naturally unable to practice it. The Kelley's mentioned one of the Catholic women, somewhat of a leader in Anson township, who was a good Catholic but held as sideline the office of a president of the Methodist Ladies Aid. It almost broke her heart when later she had to give it up. (in those days we did not make ecumenical adjustments and concessions.)

We now had to find a place to have our Sunday Mass. For several Sundays we had Mass at Pete Flante's pool Hall. Later at Dressel's Hall. Barney Dressel, strongly hempecked by his fanatical Methodist wife, had courage enough to let us have his dance hall for the Sunday Mass. Of course he could not attend. His family would not let him. His sons, like his wife were opposed to the Catholic Religion. So for several months we had Mass in Dressel's Hall, which carried in huge letters the inscription OPIRA HALL. One of the Dressel daughters, the youngest about 20 at the time, a cripple by polio in early youth, was very kind however, helped to improvise an altar, letting us have the piano, a table and a few bedsheets for cover, etc. We used to have quite a time to clean up the floors, of whiskey bottles, peanuts, etc. after each Saturday night dance. May the Lord reward the good girl thoughnot even baptised, she attended Mass. By this time I had discovered about seventy families who were

supposed to be of our faith. The Catholics on the west bank of the river who had been doing business with the merchants of Jim Falls had no idea that all these people with whom they had been trading, were Catholic. Naturally they were happy to find that Jim Falls so close by, would be the center of a new parish. It was time to think of building a church.

We had a few meetings. At one of such meetings, Frank Douglas had it all planned for us. He had talked to a real estate company which was ready to donate us a few lots alongside the Methodist church. He also had a contractor make a plan, something like a huge barn which was to be the new church. He was ready to ask for bids.

I had to remind the assembly that in a Catholic parish we do not do business and manage things as they do in a Protestant community. The Priest presides over all meetings and doing the real business, for he alone has the responsibility. We may elect trustees to consult and help the pastor, but the latter has to take the initiative in all things, and in important matters he depends upon the decision of the Bishop.

I went to see Bishop Schwebach of La Crosse, told him that the parish may well be over one hundred families in a few years, and that we should not put up a frame building, but a substantial brick or stone building. "That is alright," the Bishop said, "But where will you get the money to do that? Have you got any money at all?" "No, Bishop," I said, "but could we not take up a loan?" "We would need about \$6,000 to start with. If you, the Bishop, signed a note we might get a loan from the Chippewa banks.

"No," he said, "that is too risky. You will get the diocese into debt, then your superiors will take you away and we shall have

only debts and no new church either. Can you guarantee that you will remain at Jim Falls for at least five years." When that pledge was given the Bishop was willing to sign a note for \$6,000.

In the meantime, I had made an application to the Catholic Church Extension for an initial donation. The Church Extension had refused to help us starting a church in Cornell, because we had started already building the floor of the church; when for lack of funds we had to stop building. On my application the Msgr. in charge at Chicago refused to contribute anything toward finishing our job by telling us, "We are not in the field to finish jobs, but starting or initiating the first step toward constructing a mission chapel.

I wanted to avoid such embarrassing reply in our Jim Falls case. So I made our application before we even had made any definite plans. Upon the recommendation of the Bishop, we received a favorable answer. But it was conditional: First, the new church was supposed to be dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Second, that it would be a mission church that would last. To explain the latter condition, Fr. Ledvina, said in a letter, dated October 12, 1916 and written by the donor, Mrs. P. Blake, in which the latter expressed his fears that he might be disappointed like another priest, who had donated money for a church and when he returned a few years later to look at the church, all that was left, he could have taken away in a wheelbarrow. I wanted to make sure that the Jim Falls Church could not be taken away in a wheelbarrow.

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After I received the first \$250 via the chancery office in La Crosse I had very careful plans made after a sketch of mine and specifications and blue prints, clear in every detail of

the church I wanted.

When we called for bids the lowest bid was \$18,000.00. That was most discouraging, but we did not despair.

I knew contractors always figure on a large margin profit, so I decided to be contractor myself.

The first money we received for our building fund was the check of \$250.00 of the Church Extension. Dockendorf and Parkeinson of La Crosse, recommended by the Bishop made the plans and specifications for us.

Contractors usually don't do much work of their own, they hire a good foreman who on his part hires the labor. We could do that too. Looking for an expert foreman I found Mr. Monarski of Lau Claire, who had never built churches but who had a vast experience as foreman doing bigger jobs than ours.

He accepted the job at \$5.00 a day. He went with me to the brick yards, to the tile factory at Chicago, to the sash-and-door factory and wherever we went we got wholesale prices.

Then Mr. Lonarski hired the workmen. He knew many of them personally. The hod-carrier he hired was his own son, a young seminarian at the time, now Msgr. Paul Lonarski of St. John's Church, Prairie Du Chien. They were willing to work at \$3.00 a day. In the course of the construction we had to raise them to \$3.50 a day and they were well satisfied. By the time the work was finished, October, 1917, I sent two pictures to the Church Extension Office in Chicago and by return mail received this answer from the General Secretary, saying among other things: "IF WE HAD KNOWN THE SIZE AND STYLE OF BUILDING TO BE BUILT WE WOULD NEVER HAVE ENCOURAGED FATHER BLAKE TO SEND HIS FAMILY, ETC, ETC."

It almost sounded as if we had gotten the donation of the Church Extension under false pretences. The truth of the matter was without their donation we could have never made a real start. At the time of my application to the Church Extension I counted less than 25 families, the number grew later from Sunday to Sunday; but talking about raising money for a new church or mentioning Church dues would have ruined all our plans for a new parish.

Catholics were not instructed in the faith, as a matter did not appreciate church services sufficiently to make sacrifices for it. Non-Catholics, many of whom were fanatical Protestants, most of them at that time K.K.Kluxers, had warned their Catholic neighbors, "Wait and see, how that Catholic priest will get a hold of your money, you'd better look out, etc,etc.

Jim Kelley, the jovial Irishman, at whose home I had said Mass, was approached one day by Mr. Baltz of Anson, the head of the K.K.K. asking, whether it was not true, that, when Catholics go to confession, they had to pay a steer sum each time.

Joking Jim Kelley replied: "Sure it is true, last Saturday I went to confession and I had to give the priest a first mortgage on my farm." A week later Mr. Kelley came to see me and said, "Father, I am sorry my joke certainly miscarried this time; the poor devil of a K. Kluxer actually believed that I had given you a mortgage on my farm, when I went to confession last Saturday. It went through the whole country. I am sorry. The K. Kluxers had spread the news, that this priest, before he is through with you, will have run you into bankruptcy, etc. When I called at a certain home, the woman who opened the door for me, no sooner noticed the Roman collar, than she said. "We

know what you fellows are after, our money," and slammed the door in my face. I was told later she was a Bohemian and belonged to the Freethinkers' Society, who in protest against the new priest had given a banquet on Good Friday, at which banquet they had served roast whole baby-pigs and made speeches against the Church, Christ and God, proclaiming their atheism. Though this extreme hostility was limited to the Drywood settlement, it served as caution not to mention money the first year I had started working in Jim Falls. Without the contribution of the Church Extension I would not have had enough money to pay for the plans. Dockendorf and Parkeinson the architects, were satisfied with \$300. i.e. 5% on the estimate of the total costs \$6,000. of the Church. For this they furnished very carefully worked out plans and specifications, for my Foreman, Mr. Lonarski to follow. Thanks to our Foreman and the occasional inspections by the architects the building, as I have said, was finished in the late Fall of 1917.

Whether the people liked or not, now arrived the inescapable duty to pay for the church; together with my good friend, Jim Kelley we planned a surprise party for the Parishioners. The harvest had been fair, the Creamery paid good checks that autumn and everybody was proud of the steadily growing parish and their Sacred Heart Church. They might be in the mood to come across with some donations. Shortly after the didication, one Sunday morning after Mass I asked the people to remain in Church. I told them about our obligations and how happy everybody was since they had formed this new Catholic Community with our Sacred Heart Church as the center. Now it was time to thank the Lord for it and and show your gratitude in real deeds.

Let us begin by paying for our Church. The effect of this announcement was stunning. It was a real surprise for everybody except Jim Kelley and myself. They looked sheepishly at one another. Some grinned, others looked like trapped animals, trying to escape, but the ushers kept the doors closed. Let us begin paying right now. Try to figure it out. The total cost of the church, including altars, stain-glass windows and pews amounted to \$9,000. How much will everyone give? Let's hear from you. How much would you give Mr. Kelley? Jim Kelley arose and offered as a start this year to give \$300. and he sat down and wrote out a check on the Lumberman's Bank of Chippewa Falls. Great excitement followed. Some excused themselves, "I have no checkbook with me, of course that was no excuse, for I assured them I had one right there with me, checkbooks of every bank in the county, distributing them as they called for them. "But I have no money in the bank," several voices replied, others had no cash. Now that can be arranged very easily, I said, give me a promisory note. Our local banker said, he would honor every promisory note signed by a man attending Sacred Heart Church. There was no escape. They all took the holdup good naturedly and as a result they paid after that Mass \$4,500. of the debt they owed for their church. Everyone was happy, some in spite of themselves, smiling, when they left the church that morning.

Comparing Jim Falls with Cornell, at that time Sacred Heart Parish being a rural center seemed to have more of a chance to grow, while Cornell was only a small hilltown. Seeing the growing number of children, I conducted a three weeks summer school in each place, Holcomb, Cornell and Jim Falls, also do-

ing outside work, preaching missions, Forty Hours, etc. I had made a little money to buy my first auto, a Ford runabout, I had become independent of train service, as they called it- THE BLUEBERRY SPECIAL. Mr. Christopher, the garage owner of Cornell let me have the car for \$325. I could fly between Cornell and Jim Falls now two or three times a day if necessary. You can imagine the condition of the river roads at that time, when I tell you that there was not a single mile between Jim Falls and Cornell where I did not get stuck in the deep mud or ruts, and had to be pulled out by a team of horses or several times by yoke of oxen.

As the work increased in the parish of Jim Falls I decided to take up my residence in Jim Falls while however not neglecting Holy Cross Parish of Cornell, or the Mission at Holcombe.

I had acquired five lots one block away from the church; but the parish could not be expected to build me a Rectory. So with the permission of Superiors I got a personal loan as an Oblate Father and built the present Rectory. Dick Hinke an experienced carpenter proved to be an invaluable help when I tackled the job of building the rectory myself. It cost us at that time \$4,500. In 1919 I moved from Cornell to Jim Falls.

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All this in haste....there are so many incidents that are worth recording, but I am not able to write about them now. A few weeks ago I was hospitalized, considered seriously ill, was given Extreme Unction, but it proved to be an Anointment for the Sick, I recovered and have now resumed my pastoral duties, however burdened with so many other tasks I have to restrict my activities..etc. etc.....

St. Paul, Minn., March the 25th.1919.

Most Reverend & beloved Superior general:-

We, the undersigned Oblate Fathers, having met to-day at a conference at St. Paul to discuss our future status in Minnesota and Wisconsin, have arrived at the unanimous conclusion that we ought as soon as possible be constituted either as a district, vicariate or province of our own and that as a preliminary step toward the realisation of this plan we expect to remain in our present positions until by mutual agreement of all the fathers our problem is settled. The reasons for expressing such a wish are manifold and urgent.

Many complaints of the most serious nature which might easily be substantiated by facts, make it impossible for many of the fathers to continue to work under the old order of things.

Racial differences and the entirely different conception of religious life and work in our congregation evidently make the change imperative.

In expressing these wishes we are solely guided by a motive to become properly organized to work efficiently for the glory of God, His church and our congregation and therefore ask you to give this matter your kind attention and generous assistance.

We further humbly suggest one of us may be permitted to represent our claims at the General Chapter, which we understand is to be held in the near future.

(reprint of letter beginning negotiations on formation of province)

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John Pohlen. O.M.I. Irving Senn  
 Herr. Johannmann. Marquette Wis.  
 Wm. Stahlmann O.M.I. D. Arkansas Wis.  
 A. Hoja M.O.S.  
 St. Paul Minn.  
 Henry Engelhardt O.M.I. Ettrick, Wis.  
 Aug. Siebert. O.M.I. Huron Wis.  
 William Selsdorf O.M.I. Wisconsin

P. Peter Bour O.M.I., Albertville, Minn.  
 Peter Mironowicz O.M.I. Cornell Wis.  
 Felice Rhode O.M.I.  
 M. Rosenthal, O.M.I. Cooks Valley, Wis.  
 G. Schuster. O.M.I. Albertsford, Wis.  
 John E. Jessom Rogers, Minn.  
 John B. Schulte Ringers, Minn.  
 M.J. Kasper O.M.I. Wanda, Minn.

P.S. A copy of this letter was sent to Rev. Fathers Bays and Grandin.

(List of signers of the petition for a new province:)

John Pohlen, O.M.I.

Rising Sun

Herman Pothmann

Marshfield, Wisconsin

Wm. Stuhlmann, O.M.I., D.D.

Arkansaw, Wisconsin

A. Stojar, O.M.I.

St. Paul, Minnesota

Henry Engelhardt, O.M.I.

Ettrick, Wisconsin

Aug. Siebert, O.M.I.

Durand, Wisconsin

William Gelsdorf, O.M.I.

Wisconsin

P. Peter Bour, O.M.I.

Albertville, Minnesota

Peter Minwegen, O.M.I.

Cornell, Wisconsin

Felix Rhode, O.M.I.

A.H. Rosenthal, O.M.I.

Cooksvally, Wisconsin

J. Schuster, O.M.I.

Abbotsford, Wisconsin

John E. Hess, O.M.I.

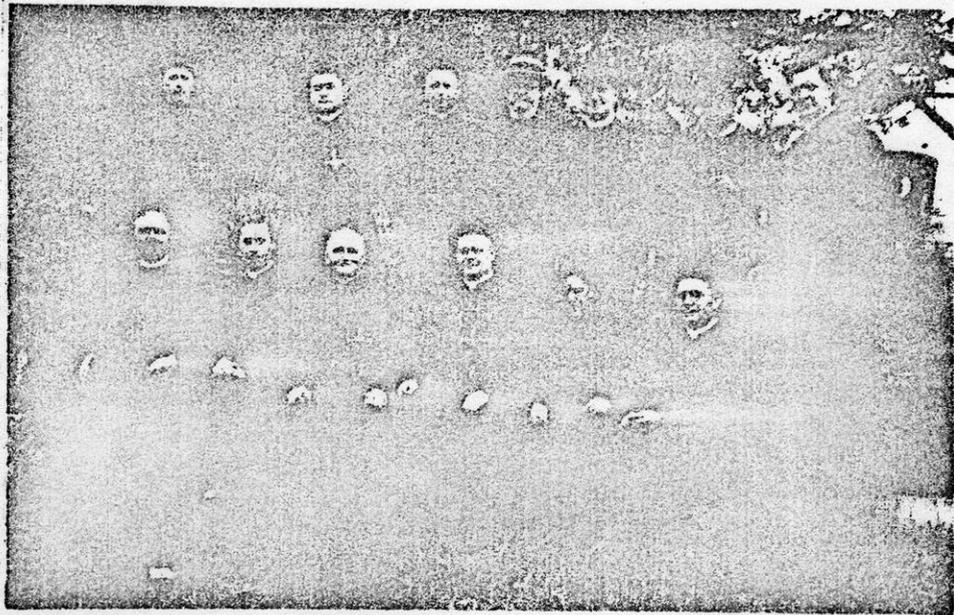
Rogers, Minnesota

John B. Schulte, O.M.I.

Rogers, Minnesota

M.Y. Kaspar, O.M.I.

Wanda, Minnesota



.Last Retreat at Round Hill, near Durand, Wis. 1923,  
conducted by Father F.X. Rapp, O.M.I. at the closing of  
which we renewed our petition for a new Province in the  
Middle West.

Front row: Frs Krein, Minwegen, Rapp, Pothmann,

Laufer, Rosenthal, Rear.

Upper Row, Left to Right :Lang, Stojar, Englehardt, Stuhlmann,  
Bour, Joerissen, Siebent.