

## VANCOUVER BARRACKS AND THE MISSION OF ST. JAMES.

The Roman Catholic church claims title to the greater part of the reservation of Vancouver barracks. This claim rests upon the alleged existence of a mission which it calls the Mission of St. James. To establish its title the church brought a suit in equity which was recently decided against them in the federal district court in the state of Washington, and, doubtless, the supreme court will be called upon to confirm or reverse the decision. The designation of this action is: "The Roman Catholic Bishop of Nesqually, vs. John Gibbon, T. M. Anderson and Richard Yeatman." The defendants named were the department and post commanders and post quartermaster, representing the government. Nesqually is the name of the papal bishopric in Washington.

To understand this case, it is necessary to recall certain historical facts, not on the story book principle of beginning at the beginning, but because the equities of the cause depend on points of international law, treaty stipulations and certain well authenticated, but often forgotten, facts in the history of the northwest.

From the first we must keep clearly in mind that our right of sovereignty over this northwest coast is founded on our claim of discovery and settlement, as well as on the Louisiana and Florida purchases; on the fact that in 1792 the Yankee skipper, Gray, first sailed into the river he named after his bark, the *Columbia*; on the explorations of Lewis and Clark in 1805-6, and on the establishment of the trading post of Astoria in 1811 by the original John Jacob Astor, a native of Waldorf, Germany, and then a merchant of New York. During the war of 1812 Astor's company was supplanted by the Northwest company, a Canadian fur company competing with the Hudson's Bay company which was chartered in 1669 by letters patent issued by Charles II of England, to Prince Rupert and divers gentlemen and adventurers trading in Hudson's bay. This company absorbed the Northwest company in 1821, and a trading post was established at Vancouver, which became the general headquarters in 1825, under Dr. John McLoughlin, chief factor of the Hudson's Bay company in the northwest. It was the policy of this great corporation to discourage white immigration and make friends of the Indians; to discourage agriculture and to encourage trapping. The factors and servants of the company formed alliances with the wild, western Pocahontases without benefit of clergy; but back in the early thirties a Church of England chaplain by the name of Beaver came to Fort Vancouver. He at once told the great McLoughlin that the brevet marriages must be discontinued and that the servants of the company valued a skin of beaver more than a human soul. Thereupon the chief factor smote this untimely prophet; but the man of prayer got his shotgun and would have killed his opponent had he not been forcibly prevented. McLoughlin was ordered back to London for trial. On his trial he convinced the board of managers (if they needed convincing) that a beaver skin *in esse* was of greater value than an Indian soul *in posse*, so Beaver was recalled and McLoughlin replaced in command. On his return he joined the Roman Catholic church and invited a certain bishop of Jullopolis, on the Red river of the North, to send him Catholic priests as chaplains vice the too candid and belligerent Beaver. This apparently unimportant incident was followed by consequences of great moment, and one of the remote results was the law suit to which we now draw attention.

In answer to the request of Dr. McLoughlin, the arch bishop of Quebec sent two priests, Blanchet and Demers by name, to report to the chief factor of the Hudson's Bay company. In 1838 they arrived at Fort Vancouver and were at once assigned quarters inside of the stockade of the fort. Right here the dispute as to facts begins; the church claims that these priests were missionaries, sent out as such. The military have always claimed that they were only parish priests and servants of the company and not missionaries carrying on an independent mission. It is in evidence for them that the arch bishop of Quebec ordered them to attend to the spiritual wants of the servants of the Hudson's Bay company and to establish a mission on the Cowlitz, a river emptying into the Columbia forty miles below the fort. It is a fact that these priests and others who followed them did establish Indian missions on the Cowlitz, at French prairie on the Wil-

lamette, at Nesqually on the sound, and many minor migratory missions among the Indian tribes. They were brave, zealous, devout and self-denying men who worked hard and did much good. On the other hand there is ample testimony to prove that the priests were paid £100 a year by the company for their services, that they ate at the company's table, slept in their houses, officiated among their dependants and that finally the company in 1846 built them a little chapel just outside of the main fort. One incident alone proves the devotion of these chaplains to the company and their hostility to American colonization. In 1840 Sir George Simson so far departed from his general policy as to send about a hundred farmers from Canada to the Willamette valley; this was done to anticipate, and if possible, to prevent, immigration from the states. "When the news reached the trading post at Walla Walla that this band of colonists were approaching, there was an impromptu joyful demonstration, and one young priest threw his barretta in the air and shouted 'Thank God, Oregon is saved to our dear young queen!'"—"History of Oregon, Commonwealth Series;" also "Gray's History of Oregon." It was this demonstration witnessed by Dr. Whitman that sent him on his long winter ride from Wailaitpu to the Potomac.

To get an historical bearing we must turn back to an earlier date. After the close of our last war with Great Britain, we claimed the entire Pacific coast from the north line of California to fifty-four degrees and forty minutes north latitude, and Great Britain claimed the same. This English claim was based on the discoveries of Sir Francis Drake, Cook and Vancouver and the explorations of Mackenzie and Fraser. The British knew the value of the territory in dispute; we did not. The great inland empire between the main range of the Rockies and the Cascades was supposed to be utterly worthless, and the great timber belt between the Cascade range and the sea

was deemed of little value; so it is asserted that Mr. Webster, then secretary of state, was willing to barter this great domain for a fishery concession; but long before this, as the two governments could not agree upon a boundary, they agreed to hold in joint possession. This arrangement was made in 1818 and continued in nominal operation until the treaty of 1846 was made. As early as 1835 American Protestant missionaries and settlers had begun to come into the country south of the Columbia; but north of the river the entire territory was stoutly held by the Hudson's Bay people. The Catholic missionaries were either French priests from Canada or Jesuit fathers from Belgium. Father DeSmet is the best known of this last named class. When Mr. Polk became president he was at first inclined to support our

claim to the entire Pacific coast. Whitman's daring ride from Walla Walla to Washington in the dead of winter, a ride more dangerous and followed by more important results than Barnaby's ride to Khiva, had impressed the imagination of all, and his earnest statements had convinced many that our western coast had a great value. The senators from Missouri, Mr. Benton and Dr. Linn, espoused his cause. Senator Allen, of Ohio, became so ardent an advocate of war with Great Britain that he was known as "Fifty-four-forty or fight," which became the democratic campaign cry of 1846. But the annexation of Texas determined Mr. Polk's administration to compromise on the line of forty-nine degrees. If it had not been for this important concession the Pacific ocean would now be an American lake.

In May, 1849, Maj. Hathaway arrived here with two companies of artillery. Upon the coming of our troops the chief post of the Hudson's Bay company was located here upon the Columbia, six miles above the mouth of the Willamette and ninety miles from the sea. It was an extensive establishment, the residence of the chief factor, Sir James Douglas, and a depot for many minor posts. In fact the company then claimed to occupy and control a reservation of twenty-five miles by ten on the Columbia, and exercised a kind of vague authority over all the country north of the river. In 1838 the license of the Hudson's Bay company had been extended by the British government for twenty-one years; this would make its privileges terminate in 1859. So, when the military came, the chief factor claimed a right for the company to remain and carry on its business under a provision in the treaty of 1846 by which our government agreed to respect the possessory rights of the company until the termination of its license. What were



CATHOLIC MISSION OF ST. JAMES, VANCOUVER, WASH.