

cient writer, he may say:—'what I know by confession, I know less than what I do not know at all.'

Such is the reasoning that will always govern a Catholic clergyman in the circumstances alluded to, let the human law be what it may. No enactments, no prisons, no suffering will compell him to disclose what God, the great Master in heaven, commands him to keep secret.—But so far as the spirit, if not the letter, of our legislation in this country bears upon the question, it must certainly dispense a Catholic clergyman from the obligation of revealing the secrets of the confessional, by the very fact of its disclaiming all interference with the free exercise of religion. In this view of the subject, when the Rev. Anthony Kohlmann was cited before a court in New-York, in 1812, as a witness of what he had learned in the confessional. De Witt Clinton, the presiding judge, very properly decided the case in favor of the witness.

In the case recently tried in Baltimore, the bench delivered a similar opinion, founded upon the particular legislation of Maryland. The Rev. Mr. Hickey having been called as a witness and placed under oath, answered as follows:—

'I am a priest, belonging to the Catholic church, and a citizen of Maryland. I know nothing of these papers in any other way than in my capacity as a priest; I am unwilling to state anything that is communicated to me in that capacity. I know nothing relative to the matter as a citizen.'

Mr Richardson, the attorney general, then stated that he had nothing else to ask him, and as his justification for not doing so, referred the court to the case of *Broad v Pitt* 3d Carrington, and *Payne* 518, in which the point was decided, and one of the judges expressed the opinion of the court by saying, 'I for one, will never compell a clergyman to disclose communications made by a prisoner, but if he chose to disclose them, I shall receive them in evidence.' Mr. Richardson referred further to the decision of the same point in New-York, under *De Witt Clinton*, *J. O. Hoffman* and others.

The court thereupon remarked, that further, under the bill of rights, they could not think of pressing an inquiry in such a case.

The Atty general then stated that the case was closed on the part of the state.—*U. S. C. Magazine*.

OREGON MISSIONS.

ST. LOUIS UNIVERSITY, Oct. 19, 1847.

To the Editors of the News Letter.

Dear Sir:—Annexed I send you a few extracts from letters lately received from our Missions in Oregon, which you are at liberty to publish in the News Letter.

1st. From Fr. Michael Accolti, Superior of the

Mission of Willamette, near Oregon City, (translated from the French.

'Your reverence is sufficiently acquainted with the state of our Missions, and with the fruits which they have already produced. The blessings of Heaven have rewarded the labors of your children. Already more than five thousand sheep have been added to the fold of Christ. Many more will be added to it in a short time, if the charity and zeal of our Superiors will supply us with laborers. It is true that at a distance from us, some persons fond of criticizing, may suppose that there is some exaggeration in our statements; but I assure your reverence, that when seen near and without prejudice, the reality far surpasses any account that is given of them. In a single excursion into New Caledonia, Fr. Nobilli has baptized about 600 Indians, built four churches, and planted several crosses. The applications and earnest petitions of those poor Indians to obtain priests to reside among them are calculated to excite the sympathy and the pity of those who feel inclined to afford them spiritual aid, but who are now unable to do so for want of subjects and means. Their natural dispositions are very favorable, and had we but three zealous Missionaries in these northern regions, the knowledge of the name and religion of Jesus Christ might be spread to the frozen borders of Behring's Straits. I shall say nothing of our more ancient missions,—of the Flat-heads, the Pointed hearts, the Kalispels, where we have regular residences and stations; nor of several other tribes that are regularly visited by our Fathers. Almost all the members of these tribes have been baptized, and great is the number of Catechumens who are now under a course of instruction to prepare them for the happiness of receiving baptism. Piety would seem to be a natural endowment of these Indians, but it is really not so; for it is the grace of God that has effected all,—that chained their hearts. Formerly several of these tribes were plunged into a deep abyss of debauchery and crime. I speak conscientiously, my dear Father, I exaggerate not. I express the unanimous opinions of all strangers, even of Protestants, whom the evidence of facts compels to bear witness to the truth. O my dear Father, how great is the harvest, already ripening in the field of Christ in these extensive regions.—According to the statements of the gentlemen of Hudson's Bay Company, there are nearly 50,000 unconverted Indians between the North and North-west of the Rocky Mountains.—All those Indians long after the arrival of a Priest, almost as anxiously as the Jews of old longed after him of the Messiah.'

2nd. From Fr. Peter De Von, Superior of the Mission of the Sacred Heart, among the pointed hearts in upper Oregon, (formerly Master of Novices at St. Stanislas near Florissant, Mo.)

'I received your very kind letter of the 6th