

# VANCOUVER ISLAND AND ITS MISSIONS.

1874-1900.

REMINISCENCES OF THE REV. A. J. BRABANT.

*Illustrated with Photographs taken by the Author.*

## THE FIELD OF LABOR.

ON the west coast of Vancouver Island, between the entrance of the Strait of San Juan de Fuca and Cape Cook, there live eighteen different tribes of Indians, forming, as it were, only one nation, as they all speak the same language. Their manners, mode of living, in one word, all their habits are so much alike, that to know one tribe is to know them all. This coast, at the time of our taking possession of it, was exclusively inhabited by Indians.

Four trading posts had, however, been established and were each in charge of one white man. But besides these four men there are absolutely no white settlers to be found on this extensive coast of nearly two hundred miles.

I need hardly say that communication was very rare, for beyond a couple of small schooners, that made an occasional call on the coast for the purpose of supplying the stores with goods and provisions, and at the same time making a trading call at different tribes, no vessels frequented this part of the world. I

have been as much as six months without seeing the face of a white man, and consequently speaking a civilized language.

When the news of the death of Pius IX. reached me, Leo XIII. was already two months on the Papal throne. As a matter of fact, it was close on five months since I had received a newspaper, a letter, or a word of news of the civilized world.

All the Indians of this mission live on the sea coast, and intercourse between the different tribes is impossible, except by means of canoes. No two tribes can visit each other, except on foot or horseback, as their several residences are separated by inlets and arms of the ocean. As a rule the number of chances for visiting are limited, especially during the fall and winter season, for no canoe could live in the incessant, heavy weather and indescribable gales which rage on this open coast. When travelling I have been many a time compelled to camp and wait for days before being able to continue my journey, owing to the dangerous seas and heavy surf which