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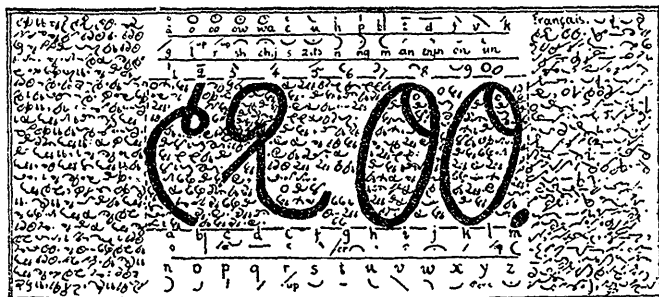
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Vol. VII., No. 6.

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June, 1898.

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Missionary Work Among the Indians.

As has been said in last issue, the first thing to do in undertaking missionary work among the Indians is to please them—to win their esteem and affection. The Indians must fully understand you and see that you are animated with feelings most devoted to their interests. You must also understand them, understand the Indian ways and manners, and for that purpose you must be acquainted with their language. In these districts it is very easy to communicate with the Indians through the means of the "Chinook Jargon," which is learned in a very short time. But with that alone you cannot become thoroughly conversant with the Indians; you must also learn the Indian language, otherwise you will never be able to know the Indians properly and to understand them entirely. They will hide from you everything they have an interest in, and they can speak between themselves, behind your back and even in your face of things which would be very important for you to know, and yet you do not understand the first word of it. Unless you know the language you are like a man in a strange land who needs to have everything interpreted to him, and who does not know the first thing that is going on about him. The benefit and enjoyment derived from a knowledge of the language of the tribe among which you are is too evident to require more comment.

Even while you preach to the Indians through the medium of an interpreter, it is necessary to have a certain knowledge of the language, otherwise you cannot know how much the Indians understand of what you have to tell

them. You do not know whether your interpreter translates your words properly or not. Very often the interpreter himself does not see the meaning of what you say. How can he convey it to the others? Yet he has to speak, and rather than show that he does not understand you or that he is mistaken, he will go on telling the Indians often the opposite of what you want them to hear. Most interpreters translate the Chinook word for word, which makes a very queer meaning, if any at all, in the Indian language. Besides, they speak a kind of Indian Chinook which is as different from the genuine Indian language as it is from French or English. They are so intent on translating your words mechanically that they do not pay the least attention to the meaning, and they will be the last ones to give an accurate account of what they have heard you say and interpret it to the Indians.

We could relate a great number of amusing anecdotes to illustrate this subject. One wants to make the Indians understand that our Lord lived many years in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. Now, the Chinook word for year is *snow*, which word has two meanings in the Jargon. The interpreter takes one meaning for the other and tells the Indians that *there was plenty of snow at Nazareth!!!*

One says: "I am very much obliged to Captain John for some valuable services and I am going to give him a *chapelet*," which means *prayer beads*. The interpreter mistakes the word *chapelet* for *sapplet*, which sounds somewhat alike to unaccustomed ears, and tells the Indians that the priest is going to give Captain John a *sack of flour*.

About thirty years ago a clergyman wanted to give the Indians an idea of the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Our Lord sat on an ass; but what is that? The Indian never saw such an animal; the nearest thing to it they knew of was the horse, so he said our Lord sat upon something that resembled a horse, yet was not a horse. The interpreter said to the Indians: *He sat on something like a horse, but not a horse; it must have been a mare then.* Then the apostles took off their garments and spread them on the road for the passage of our Lord. But the Indians knew of no other garments than a blanket or passiss, which for them took the place of shirt, pants, vest, coat and overcoat, so the interpreter found nothing better than to say that they *stripped themselves naked and spread their blankets on the road.* Next, about those who took branches from the trees, it might be said that there is no special word for "branches" in Chinook. The interpreter was told they took something like trees, but it was not trees. The nearest thing to a tree that could come to his mind being a fence-rail, he made it out that they *shoved rails under the feet of the animal on which our Lord was mounted.* Those who listened to that description must have had a curious idea of a triumphal march in the olden times. Let it be granted that it is not always as unlucky as in the above instances, yet it is true to say that it is very burdensome to the Indians to listen continually to a person speaking through an interpreter, besides which they lose the greater part of what is said and mostly fail to see the connection. What a burden also for the missionary to have to dilute first his ideas to put them

into Chinook, and then wait for the interpreter to clothe that Chinook in Indian, and give it to the Indians right or wrong, according to chance. He has to spend about forty minutes for explaining to them in that way what he could say in ten or fifteen minutes could he speak to the Indians directly in their language.

A good plan would be to spend a few minutes with the interpreter before the sermon or instruction to make sure that he understands beforehand what he is going to interpret.

On Ascension Thursday, May 19th, about 4 in the afternoon, the news arrived by wire at Kamloops of the election of the Very Reverend Father Cassien Augier as Superior General of the Order of the O.M.I., which had taken place at Paris, France, the morning of the same day.

-:-:-

Deceased at Paris, May 17th, 1898, the Reverend Father Alfred Francois Voirin, Second Assistant General of the O.M.I. He was aged 62 years, and had been an O.M.I. for 38 years.

-:-:-

At the beginning of May last the Very Reverend Father Aloysius Schoch, O.M.I., Prefect Apostolic of the Transvaal, South Africa, died at sea of an attack of fever a few days before arriving at Suez, on his way to the Chapter of the O.M.I. He was 45 years of age and had been a member of the O.M.I. for 23 years.

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We also record the death of Father L. V. Petit, O.M.I., deceased at Plattsburg, U.S.A., April 23rd, at the age of 45 years, after having been a member of the O.M.I. for 20 years.

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