

## CHAPTER XII

### THE KICKAPOO MISSION

#### § I THE INDIAN MISSION

“It was the Indian mission above everything else that brought us to Missouri and it is the principal point in the Concordat”<sup>1</sup> The words are those of Father Van Quickenborne and express the idea that was uppermost in his mind during the fourteen years of his strenuous activity on the frontier. With a singleness of purpose that never wavered he sought to inaugurate resident missionary enterprise among the Indians as the real objective of the Jesuits of the trans-Mississippi West. In a document presently to be cited, which bears the caption “Reasons for giving a preference to the Indian Mission before any other,” he detailed the weighty considerations that made it imperative for the Society of Jesus to put its hand to this apostolic work. It was primarily for the conversion of the Indians that the Society had been established in Missouri, it was with a view to realizing this noble purpose that pecuniary aid had been solicited and obtained from benefactors in Europe, and the tacit obligation thus incurred, to say nothing of the duty explicitly assumed in the Concordat, could be discharged only by setting up a mission in behalf of one or more of the native American tribes. Even the new college in St. Louis commended itself to the eager Van Quickenborne chiefly as a preparatory step to what was to him the more important enterprise of a missionary center among the Indians. “All these things come by reason of the Indian mission,” he wrote in November, 1828, to the Maryland superior, Dzierozynski, with reference to certain contributions received from abroad. “Don’t let your Reverence fear therefore to make an establishment in the Indian country or close to it. But why a college in St. Louis? Because that college is necessary for the Indian establishment.” Why a college in St. Louis was necessary for the Indian establishment we learn from the same communication of the Missouri superior. There the missionaries could meet the government Indian agents as also the deputations from the various tribes and in general promote missionary interests by standing in close touch with the tide of busy life that was beginning to

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<sup>1</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, January 3, 1832 (AA)

flow between the Missouri metropolis and the farther reaches of the West <sup>2</sup>

At Florissant, as early as 1826, Van Quickenborne's zeal was stirred by the prospect of a missionary post among the Sauk

I had the honor of writing to your Reverence [Anthony Kohlmann] last Summer Since that time it has pleased Divine Providence and our Rev Superiors to send our very beloved Father De Theux and dear Bro O'Connor, both of them very well suited for our place

I write this to yr rev fatigued from an excursion I made to Baptiste, an Indian man, whom I found truly well disposed This happens from time to time Our Indian youth at our Seminary continue to behave remarkably well Our attention at present is much taken up with an establishment on the Mississippi and nigh to the river Les Moines [Desmoines] amongst the Saucks, a very numerous nation, say 12,000 souls About 30 families amongst them, half-breed and nearly all of them baptized, have obtained from Congress for themselves and posterity forever, a most beautiful tract of land, of about 20 miles square nigh to the great Sauck village On that land they are now settling I am well acquainted with the principal chief of them, who wishes very much, and so do they all, that some of us should come among them This man is already a Catholic and has great influence among the whole Sauck nation We are also invited to make an establishment with the Kansas and also with the Shawnees Things are changed and quite different from what they were when our fathers went out to them first To our great misfortune there will be no more shedding of our blood The American government begins effectively to prevent the Indians from waging bloody wars, one nation against another nation, and from hunting upon land not their own This in some degrees confines them to a smaller tract of land than what they used to wander over formerly By little and little they will see themselves compelled to follow husbandry or to cease to be a nation <sup>3</sup>

In 1831 Father Van Quickenborne retired from the office of superior of the western mission without having realized his cherished plan of a Jesuit residence among the Indians But his release from the burden of authority now brought with it an opportunity to realize his life-long ambition to be employed as a simple missionary among the red men, and this, so he informed the General, was the liveliest satisfaction he felt in relinquishing his position of command He immediately proposed to the new superior that he be allowed to go to the Osage and in his own person fulfill the promise he had made to them in 1830, inconsiderately perhaps, that a resident missionary priest would soon be stationed in their midst. But Father De Theux, not seeing his way

<sup>2</sup> Van Quickenborne to Dzierzozynski, November, 1828 (B)

<sup>3</sup> Van Quickenborne to Kohlmann, January 21, 1826 (AA)

to make the venture, directed Van Quickenborne to inform the Osage that pecuniary means were lacking, at least momentarily, to make the promised mission a reality. To the General, Van Quickenborne communicated at once the disappointment he felt over this decision.

What I here set down I earnestly wish should not be understood as though I would force the consent of my Superior, for that would be to spoil the whole affair. But I write as follows only that I may afterwards be at ease no matter what the decision be in my regard. For a number of Indians (some 70 among the Osage) have I begotten in Christ Jesus. I trust that your Very Reverend Paternity has received the relation of my last visit to the Osage Chiefs, leaders, councilors, warriors and common people assembled in council. I set before them the plan as approved. They received it with a demonstration of approval, as is their manner. But they were skeptical of its execution. I gave them every assurance that it would be carried out. I think it much to the glory of God that my communications with this tribe be not broken off. I have the liveliest hope that an abundant harvest is to be gathered into the Lord's granaries from among these natives. Some here wish that the missionary be first provided for, that he have comfortable lodging and living and be made secure against the barbarous temper of the Indians. But surely such persons are not minded to go among the Indians. Some, again, wish that none be sent except other Xaviers, but even the Society has had but one Xavier and yet she has exposed many another (of her members) to similar dangers and with happy results, though not in so extraordinary a measure. Others, in fine, laugh at any concern at all over the conversion of the Indians, saying their conversion is impossible. But what would they have said of the Apostles at the time the latter began their preaching? It is plain that so sorry a creature as myself is quite unworthy to be granted leave to be employed in so glorious an enterprise. But since in the exceeding mercy of God my mind has been fixed upon this sort of endeavor almost from boyhood and since in God's wonderful Providence I had gone so far as to be on the point of taking up the work in real earnest, (fearing much on account of my sins and recognizing the lack within me of that intimate union of the soul with God which is so necessary), nevertheless, putting my trust in the infinite goodness of God and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the assistance of the Guardian Angels, I still venture to hope that your Very Reverend Paternity will assign me, I do not say, to the conversion of the Indians, but to the labors which must perforce be undergone in the beginning as a preparation of the way.

Under De Theux, Van Quickenborne's immediate successor in the office of superior, the Indian mission was indeed finally started on its way, but the credit for the result was largely due to the persistency with which the latter continued to interest himself in the project and to urge upon the Father General the necessity of carrying it into effect.

The Visitor sent to Missouri in 1831, Father Peter Kenney, reported that ardor for the Indian missions had died out among the western Jesuits. He even expressed the rather curious surmise that Van Quickenborne had been prevailed upon by the younger Jesuits around him to open a college in St. Louis in order that work among the Indians might thereby be made impracticable. The fact is that the new college had been persistently urged upon the Jesuits by the two Bishops, Du Bourg and Rosati, and was inevitable as the first big opportunity for Jesuit enterprise that lay to hand. At the same time it is intelligible that the failure of the Indian school had its reaction in a decline of missionary spirit among the younger members of the mission. But Father Kenney, while noting the phenomenon, is careful to make an emphatic exception in favor of Van Quickenborne. "As far as I can judge, he is afire with the most ardent zeal to shoulder this burden"<sup>4</sup>

But it was not without a measure of pressure put upon him by the Father General that De Theux was brought at last to take the work seriously in hand. "In almost all his letters," the latter made known to a correspondent in December, 1834, "his Paternity insists on my beginning the Indian Mission, but by what means or by what persons seems to me a problem not easily to be solved except by Him who can do all things and has already done great things for this, the least of the missions of the Society"<sup>5</sup>. Lack of men and material means was therefore delaying the inception of the Indian Mission. But another reason even more decisive, so Van Quickenborne assured the General, was to be held accountable for the delay, and this was Father De Theux's supposed lack of sympathy for Indian missionary work as such.<sup>6</sup> The superior, as he frankly admitted to Father Roothaan, felt no desire himself to enlist in the service of the red men. At the same time, however, as he also declared, he had for eight years been offering himself for this very ministry, feeling that it was probably in the designs of Providence that he be so employed.<sup>7</sup> Father De Theux, so it was alleged, entertained the opinion that little could be accomplished among the Indians except by some exceptional and miracle-working apostle of the type of Xavier, a view which Van Quickenborne sought to refute by pointing out that the Jesuits have had but a single Xavier.<sup>8</sup> Whatever were De Theux's actual sentiments regarding missionary enterprise among the Indians, there would seem to be little doubt that in the matter of health and temperament he was himself quite unfitted,

<sup>4</sup> Kenney ad Roothaan, April 25, 1832 (AA)

<sup>5</sup> De Theux to McSherry, December 5, 1834 (B)

<sup>6</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, June 28, 1835 (AA)

<sup>7</sup> De Theux ad Roothaan, January 28, 1832 (AA)

<sup>8</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, January 3, 1832 (AA)

excellent religious though he was, to work to good purpose in this very trying ministry

Not only in the early thirties but in later years also this view as to the meagre results attending the efforts of missionaries to win the aborigines over to Christianity met with occasional support. Father De Smet was in later years to protest against the view as without foundation in fact and especially as out of harmony with the apostolic and missionary spirit which has always been traditional in the Society of Jesus. To the General, Father Roothaan, it also seemed imperative that the western Jesuits should foster confidence in the good results to be achieved by devoting themselves to the Indians and he deprecated any such pessimistic expressions of opinion as would tend to discourage enterprise in this field. Yet excellent and well-meaning men were to be found who were asking themselves at the moment whether much should be attempted for the Indians when so much had to be left undone for the whites. Of interest in this connection is an incident related by Father John Smedts, one of the pioneer Jesuit party of 1823.<sup>9</sup> As pastor at St. Charles, Missouri, he was host on one occasion to the two distinguished bishops, Rosati of St. Louis and Bruté of Vincennes, the latter, so Smedts comments, "a very learned and exceedingly pious man," an estimate that was equally true of the other. Father Smedts having made reference to a desire he entertained for the Indian missions, Bishop Bruté observed "The souls of the whites are as pleasing to God as those of the Indians." Then Bishop Rosati, addressing himself to Smedts alone, spoke as follows:

My dear Father, consider the immense good that has been done in this country for the last thirty years, it is now time that we make efforts to fortify our holy religion. I know well enough that we all came to this country to work for the conversion of the Indians. I came myself with that very intention. But must we leave a certain for an uncertain good? Very many Catholics are left abandoned by priests and yet they earnestly desire to have them. We are first obliged to take care of them, being of the household of the faith (*domestici fidei*), before going off to labor among strangers. So many Catholics come from all parts of our diocese to ask for priests, saying "if you don't send us priests, our children will become Protestants, having no churches of their own, they will go on Sundays to the Protestant churches."

As a significant comment on these words of the first Bishop of St. Louis, it may be noted that a few years subsequent to the time they were spoken, he himself pleaded with the Jesuit General to send reinforcements from Europe for the opening up of the first Catholic Indian

<sup>9</sup> Smedts ad Roothaan, January 3, 1832 (AA)

mission in the Rocky Mountains. Evidently he was not of the mind that in the effort to save the whites the Indians were to suffer complete neglect.

The circumstances that led up to the actual beginning of the Indian mission must now be detailed. It was stipulated in the Concordat that in 1825, which was two years from the date of that instrument, the work was to be taken in hand at Council Bluffs on the Missouri. Two years passed, however, without anything being attempted. In 1832 Father Kenney had to report to the General that the prospects for starting the Indian Mission were less encouraging than they had been in 1825.<sup>10</sup> The Missouri consultors were indeed agreed that the Jesuits were in justice bound to open a missionary post somewhere among the Indians, but, with the single exception of Van Quickenborne, they judged that the moment had not come for actually embarking on the enterprise. The former superior was insistent, especially in consultations at which the Visitor was present, that the work be inaugurated without delay, contending as he did that personnel and means enough were at hand to carry it on. At a meeting held in St. Louis on January 9, 1832, it was the opinion of all the consultors, Van Quickenborne among them, that De Theux's project of a new Jesuit station in the Salt River district of northeastern Missouri should be definitely abandoned as the measure would delay still further the beginning of the Indian mission. This view was shared by Father Kenney, who wrote in his Memorial: "Though the Visitor in the actual circumstances of our houses in the Missouri does not at present wish to give any direction on the subject of the Indian mission, which the fathers had chiefly in view on their first arrival in the country, yet he cannot approve of any new mission or measure being adopted or obligation contracted that would preclude the hope that it so justly and laudably entertained of achieving that great object. This declaration must be a rule of conduct with Superiors until V[ery] Rev. F. General's special commands are received on the subject."

Immediately after the consultation of January 9, 1832, Van Quickenborne forwarded to the General a detailed statement of the reasons why the Indian mission should be immediately begun. What appears to be a contemporary English version or summary, apparently Van Quickenborne's own, of this statement bears the caption, "Reasons for giving a preference to the Indian Mission before any other." It was presumably communicated by him either to the Maryland superior or the Visitor.

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<sup>10</sup> Kenney ad Roothaan, February 22, 1832 (AA)

- 1 The Indian mission was the chief object of the establishment of the Society in Missouri
- 2 Without the aid received from the Indian mission, the scholastics would not have the opportunity of going through their studies
- 3 The Society by the General's acceptance of the Concordat has obliged itself to send missionaries to reside in the Indian country and has received the farm at Florissant on that condition and [*sic*] Bishop Du Bourg's recommendations to the several Associations in Europe
- 4 With the knowledge and (I dare say) with the approbation of Father General it has been announced to the Associations in France, Belgium, and Austria through the letters sent to them by Fathers Rosaven and Kohlman that the Society had commenced the Indian mission and perhaps \$4185 or at least \$3050 had been received for this purpose
- 5 By the advice of the Superior, Mr Van Quickenborne announced to the Government of the United States that the Indian Seminary was kept by the Society of Jesus and received \$3300 or \$3500
- 6 Contributors to these sums of money look eagerly for an account of our success The Indians ardently wish for the execution of the plan proposed, praised by our Government, approved by our President and to which he is willing to lend his support Mr Van Quickenborne solemnly promised the Indians that he would execute it when he had means
- 7 The present time is more propitious as the Indian tribes scattered over the several states are removing by order of Government to our neighborhood (i e to frontier of Missouri)
- 8 By the advice of Father De Theux, (who told Bishop Rosati in 1827 that we would not and could not do anything for the Indians besides what we were doing then and that it would be so for ten years), the Bishop thought himself obliged to commence on the Missouri a mission for the Indians This he abandoned when he understood from Mr Van Quickenborne that we would begin one in the neighborhood and that there would be some inconvenience in having them so close together
- 9 Others meet with admirable success Cf Reverend gentlemen of Ohio
- 10 Nothing is more desired by Ours in Europe, nothing more likely to attract subjects and pecuniary assistance than to learn of the apostolic labors of Ours with the Indians
- 11 The General has given his approbation, 21 Nov 1829 <sup>10a</sup>

That the Father Visitor did not himself urge the immediate inception of the Indian mission was a disappointment to Van Quickenborne, now impatient of all delay in the carrying out of his cherished design To Father Roothaan he expressed himself with feeling

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<sup>10a</sup> (B) "The Reverend Gentlemen of Ohio," probably the priests in charge of the Indian missions at Arbre Croche and St Joseph's in Michigan Territory, which was part of the diocese of Cincinnati

Rev. Father Kenney has provided well for the College. He has provided well for the Novitiate as also for our house in St. Charles and the station in Florissant. But what provision has he made for the Indian mission, for the first of our undertakings, the primary one in our intentions, one, too, for which we have received so much aid,—contracted so great an obligation? He has left everything to be done by your Very Rev. Paternity with a view, so I hope, to the whole being carried out with more permanence and on a larger scale. He promised me that he will act as advocate for the Indian mission with your Very Reverend Paternity and in the Congregation that will soon be held. Meantime I shall pray fervently to the Blessed Virgin Mary, she who is the mother of the afflicted and the outcast, to make you, Very Rev. Father, more and more of a mind to lend abundant aid to these poor creatures.

The Visitor, though he took no action himself regarding the Indian mission, referred the matter to Father Roothaan, at the same time sending him a copy of the Concordat, which document the General was to read for the first time, as the copy sent to the Jesuit curia in the time of Father Fortis had apparently been mislaid. In the mind of Father Roothaan the opening of the Indian mission at once took on the gravity of a matter of conscience. The farm at Florissant, so he was assured, had been given and sums of money from various quarters contributed with a view to facilitating that design. "I am not a little anxious over the matter," he writes to Father Kenney, "since the Society appears to be bound in justice to render that particular service to the Indians of those parts." He then requests the Visitor to make further inquiries in this delicate matter.<sup>11</sup> The following year, 1833, the Second Provincial Council of Baltimore petitioned the Holy See that the Indian missions of western America as also the Negro missions of Liberia be committed to the care of the Society of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> With this development the issue now became more acute. "Of those two missions," so the General informed De Theux, "the former, namely the one to the Indians, ought to belong *jure suo* to the Fathers of Missouri, and is really incumbent on them."<sup>13</sup> And somewhat later the General again wrote to the Missouri superior: "I have been invited by the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda to accept this undertaking. I don't see to whom to assign the evangelizing of the Indians if not to the members of your Mis-

<sup>11</sup> Roothaan ad Kenney, October 23, 1832 (AA)

<sup>12</sup> "Censuerunt Patres salutem Indorum (qui extra Provincias Foederatas et Territoria jam designata atque omnium quae hactenus eccliae sunt dioeceseon limites constituendi sunt ex civilis potestatis auctoritate) prospiciendum, eorum curam Societati Jesu demandando, quapropter Sanctam Sedem implorandam duxerunt ut haec ei Missio concedatur." *Concilia Provincialia Baltimore habita, 1829-1849* (Baltimore, 1851), p. 104.

<sup>13</sup> Roothaan ad De Theux, May 10, 1832 (AA)



sion”<sup>14</sup> The Missouri superior was to make choice of suitable workers among the Indians and report their names to the General. Significantly enough, the General stipulated that Father Van Quickenborne himself was not to be of the number, but was to be retained in the duties he had been discharging with excellent results since he ceased to be superior, the duties, namely, of “rural missionary” (*missionarius ruralis*) to the scattered Catholic white settlers of Missouri and Illinois

The truth is that “good Father Van Quickenborne,” as his Jesuit associates were fond of characterizing him, was a difficult person with whom to work. His zeal was boundless, with much about it of the heroic, his devotion to the cause of the Indians, unflagging, his personal piety, obvious to all, but along with his in certain respects surpassing equipment as a missionary went limitations of temperament that unfitted him in many ways to work successfully by the side of others. In the social virtues he was often deficient. Silent, secretive, depressed and often gloomy in countenance, with a tendency to melancholy, despising personal comforts and refusing them to others, difficult and exacting in business relations, not inviting confidence and seldom winning it, he stood in many ways isolated from his fellow workers, a somewhat lonely figure in the little Jesuit world in which he moved. Father Lefevre, subsequently the first Bishop of Detroit, who took over from Van Quickenborne the pioneer parishes in northeastern Missouri, was unable to obtain from his predecessor any information regarding them. “He seemed to know everything,” so Lefevre wrote, “under secrecy”<sup>15</sup> As superior, he showed himself not seldom exacting and unsympathetic towards his dependents. The accounts of him that reached the Father General laid frequent stress on the severity that seemed an outstanding trait in his personality. Father Kenney observed of both Van Quickenborne and De Theux that he had never known Jesuit superiors to be so severe in dealing with their subjects.<sup>16</sup> Father de Grivel, reviewing Van Quickenborne’s career in Maryland, characterized him as “hard on himself, hard on others.” When the Indian mission was about to be opened, there were protests to the Father General against his probable appointment to manage it, mention being made of his rigor, his inability to secure cooperation, and his tendency to become absorbed in the economic and merely material side of things to the neglect of the spiritual.<sup>17</sup> And yet, such was the penury of men in Missouri, such, too, the unique position maintained by Van Quicken-

<sup>14</sup> Roothaan ad De Theux, August 23, 1834 (AA)

<sup>15</sup> Lefevre to Rosati, January 23, 1833 (C)

<sup>16</sup> Kenney ad Roothaan, January 27, 1832 (AA)

<sup>17</sup> Grivel ad Roothaan, 1833 (?), Helias ad Roothaan, December 3, 1835 (AA)

borne all along as the ablest and foremost promoter of the Indian mission to be found among the Jesuits of the West, that the work when it finally came to be attempted was placed in his hands. Besides, the fact remained that for initiating a difficult enterprise, for getting together the funds and other material means necessary to launch it, for pioneering amid discouraging conditions, no member of the Missouri Mission was better qualified than Van Quickenborne. A contemporary official estimate of him notes that he was "excellent for initiating almost any kind of work, but not for seeing it through." Be this as it may, the venture into the missionary field now to be undertaken called, if it called for anything, for unselfish exertion and endurance, and of these virtues Van Quickenborne was always a conspicuous example. "My health," he assured the Father General, "though not robust, puts up to a degree with the strain of labor." No man could have preached more eloquently by his own example the gospel of work, and with few hands to labor and endless opportunities for achievement starting up on every side, work was the paramount need of the hour among the Jesuits of the frontier.

Meanwhile, Van Quickenborne's desire for the Indian mission waxed livelier as time went on. It runs through his correspondence with the General, breaking out on occasion in pathetic appeals, as in these lines

See, Father, how many there are who beg for the bread of eternal life and there is no one to reach it to them! They hear there are Jesuits in the neighborhood and yet none visit them. (Among the Indians "neighborhood" is taken to cover a range of two or three hundred miles.) I hope your Paternity will at length allow me to be employed entirely in this work. Pardon me, excellent Father, if I give expression to my sorrow. How great is my distress when I sit on the banks of the Missouri and see many a boat going upstream, laden with merchandise and crowded with passengers, who rejoice over the prospect of future gain as they make their way to those [Indian tribes] which are visited by not a single priest. But the apostles never raised a question about money. The fewer the human means, the more plentiful the grace of God. Do you, Reverend Father, only send, whether by yourself or by another, and the "Behold I send you" will furnish in due season money and other necessities.<sup>18</sup>

There were others besides Van Quickenborne ready to enlist in the projected Indian mission. Fathers Verreydt, Christian Hoecken, Busschots and De Theux had likewise volunteered their services while De Theux advised the General that a school among the Choctaw or

<sup>18</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, January 16, 1834 (AA). Father Roothaan sent Van Quickenborne a thousand dollars in 1829 for the Indian mission.

Osage, to be manned by Fathers Van Quickenborne and Christian Hoecken and Brother Miles and with the prospect before it of a government appropriation, could be opened in the course of 1836<sup>19</sup> "Surely, should such undertaking prosper, there can be no doubt that the Society would acquire considerable credit thereby and that all our members in the United States would take new courage and become better qualified to promote the conversion as well of non-Catholics as of unworthy children of the faith, of whom there is no lack among us"<sup>20</sup>

#### § 2 PREPARATIONS FOR THE KICKAPOO MISSION

A letter from Father Roothaan to De Theux, under date of January 5, 1835, deprecated any further procrastination in regard to the Indian mission

Your Reverence writes that a school has been offered by the Government with suitable support. If this school be located in the midst of the Indians and the site appear to be satisfactory, it might be accepted—but in any case I earnestly wish that a start be made of the expedition which is now expected of us not only by the Church in the United States, but also by the Apostolic See itself. As to the members to be sent upon it, they must necessarily possess great prudence, also very great charity and a sufficiency of learning. It is moreover to be desired that they be of a quiet frame of mind, otherwise, if they be of too lively an imagination, they will soon turn their attention to various grandiose schemes and so become oblivious of their real purpose, which is the conversion of the Indians. I shall gladly recommend this affair to the Lyons Association [of the Propagation of the Faith] as soon as I learn that the expedition has been set on foot, and I shall even take the matter up with the Sacred Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*<sup>21</sup>

This communication, so Father Van Quickenborne noted in a letter to the General, was decisive in determining Father De Theux to set about seriously to make the necessary preparations for the long deferred mission among the Indians. This should be established, so De Theux believed, preferably among the Choctaws, an offer of a school on behalf of this tribe having been made, or among one of the tribes evangelized by the older line of Jesuit missionaries, as the Kickapoo, Kaskaskia, Peoria or Potawatomi. Father Benedict Roux, the first resident Catholic priest on the site of the future Kansas City, returning from that post in the spring of 1835, acquainted Van Quickenborne with conditions along

<sup>19</sup> The Choctaw Indians had been recently removed from their homes in MISSISSIPPI to the Indian country

<sup>20</sup> De Theux ad Roothaan, January 28, 1835 (AA)

<sup>21</sup> Roothaan ad De Theux, January 5, 1835 (AA)

the Missouri frontier, stressing, it would seem, the prospect for evangelical work among the Kickapoo, whom he had personally visited<sup>22</sup> Before making definite choice of a site for the projected mission, some first-hand acquaintance with the field to be cultivated was seen to be necessary, hence, Van Quickenborne was commissioned by his superior to undertake a prospecting trip to the Missouri frontier and there ascertain by personal inspection which of the tribes appeared to offer the best prospects for a missionary center The Kickapoo were especially to be visited. This tribe, whose village was at the confluence of the Missouri River and Salt Creek, a few miles above Fort Leavenworth, were under the influence of a religious leader, Kennekuk or Kenekoek by name This "prophet," as he was called, having picked up various fragments of Catholic doctrine and practice, had woven them into a religion of his own, and by means of it, so it was reported by traders and government agents, had brought about some measure of moral improvement in the tribe<sup>23</sup> Van Quickenborne, having left St. Louis in June,

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<sup>22</sup> Father Stephen Theodore Badin, the first priest ordained in the United States, came in contact with a band of Kickapoo on the outskirts of Chicago in October, 1830 "I found there another band from the Kickapoo tribe, who live in an immense prairie in Illinois along the Vermilion River at a distance of about one hundred miles from Chicago Some time before these good people had sent their compliments to chief Pokegan, telling him at the same time that they envied him the happiness of having a pastor" *Ann Prop*, 6 154 Father Roux's visit to the Kickapoo in their village near Fort Leavenworth, November 18, 1833, was narrated by him in a letter to Bishop Rosati of St. Louis, dated a few days later *CHR*, April, 1918 Father Roux's letter of March 11, 1834, to Bishop Rosati contains the text of Kennekuk the Prophet's address to the missionary on the occasion of his first visit to the tribe "*Rapport des propres paroles du Kenekoek, ou Prophete, des Kokapooks donné en Poos [Potawatomi] par Thuthoe, rendu en langue Kikapook par Mechouet, et interpreté en francais par Laurent Pinsonneau a Mr B Roux prêtre, en presence de Penawe, Nochetcomo, Pechoassi, Pekouak et Paschal Pinsonneau, le 22 9 bre [Nov] 1833*" Roux visited the Kickapoo Prophet on January 1, 1834, and shortly after baptized an infant of the tribe at the Chouteau trading-house on the Kaw River "Mr Pinsoncau, who trades with the Kickapoo, has been here for some weeks, he tells me that these good Indians eagerly desire me to come and baptize their children" Roux à Rosati, March 11, 1834 (C) Roux returned from his mission among the French Creoles at the mouth of the Kansas, where he had been residing since November, 1833, to St. Louis in April, 1835, a few months before Van Quickenborne undertook his first missionary trip to the Kickapoo The favorable reports concerning the tribe which had reached the Jesuit missionary came to him probably at first-hand from Father Roux For a brief account of Father Roux's visits to the Kickapoo, cf Gurraghan, *Catholic Beginnings in Kansas City*, pp 49, 50, 53, 54

<sup>23</sup> Though named Keokuk in some early accounts, the Kickapoo Prophet is not to be confounded with the Sauk leader for whom the town of Keokuk in Iowa is named Details concerning the Kickapoo Prophet may be read in Van Quickenborne's letter in *Ann Prop*, 9 94, also in Chittenden and Richardson,

1835, was at the Kickapoo village on July 4. On his way west or, as he phrases it, "on his way to the Indians" (*in itinere ad Indos*), he sent off a letter to the Father General, again protesting against the opinion which had been expressed that "the Indians were not to be converted except by men who could work miracles"<sup>24</sup> He was particularly earnest in petitioning the General to place the new venture under the auspices of Our Lady "But I ask as a very particular favor that your Paternity place the Mission under the protection of the Mother of God and that the churches there to be erected be consecrated to God in her honor, as she is the Mother of Mercy I hope she will show by the outcome that she is the Mother of the Indians" For the incidents that attended Van Quickenborne's first visit to the Kickapoo village we have his own graphic account

To get to the Kickapoo it was necessary to cross the Kansas River I was not a little surprised to see that the Delaware Indians had established a ferry there in imitation of the whites We arrived at the Kickapoo village July 4, a Saturday, the day consecrated to the Blessed Virgin The next day I said Mass in the trader's house, where the prophet, who was anxious to see me, put in an early appearance<sup>25</sup> After the first exchange of courtesies, he at once brought up the subject of religion "What do you teach?" he asked me "We teach," I answered, "that every man must believe in God, hope in God, love God above all things and his neighbor as himself, those who do this will go to heaven, and those who do not will go to hell" "Many of my young people believe that there are two Gods How do you prove that there is only one and that he has proposed certain truths to us to be believed?" I said in the course of my reply "God spoke to the Prophets, and the Prophets proved by miracles that God had spoken to them" He at once interrupted me, saying "This is the very way I got to be believed when I began to preach I raised the dead to life There was a woman," he continued, "who, so every one thought, could not possibly recover her health, I breathed on her and from that moment she began to improve and is now in good health Another time I saw an infant just about to die, I took it in my arms and at the end of a few days it was cured" I said in reply that there is a great difference between a dead person and one who is believed to be at the point of death, that in the two cases alleged he had merely

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*De Smet*, 3 1085, and J T Irving, *Indian Sketches* (London, 1835), p 81 "The Prophet was a tall, bony Indian, with a keen, black eye and a face beaming with intelligence There is an energy of character about him which gives much weight to his words and has created for him an influence greater than that of any Indian in the town From the little that we saw, it was evident that the chief yielded to him and listened to his remarks with the deference of one who acknowledged his superiority" (Irving)

<sup>24</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, June 28, 1835 (AA)

<sup>25</sup> Laurent Pinsoneau, the Kickapoo trader, figures often as god-father in the baptismal records of the Jesuit missionaries on the Missouri border in the thirties

done what any one else might do, and that, since on his own admission those two persons were not dead, he had not as a matter of fact brought them back to life

My answer irritated him greatly and he remarked that no one had ever dared to contradict him in this fashion or give him such an answer. Seeing him in anger, I kept silent. Then my interpreter, a friend of the prophet, told him it was wrong of him to become angry when he could not answer the remarks made by the Blackrobe and that this only showed that he defended a bad cause. After some moments of silence he softened and admitted himself to be worsted. "I realize," he said, "that my religion is not a good one if my people wish to embrace yours, I will do as they." The following Sunday he repeated in assembly what he had often said before, that he should not be deceived in his hope and in the pledge he had given them that the Great Spirit would send some one to help him complete his work. God alone knows whether he spoke sincerely. On Monday I received a visit from several of the inferior chiefs, all expressed a desire to have a Catholic priest among them. I was unable on that occasion to see the head chief, who had gone on the hunt and returned only ten days later.

I paid him a visit immediately on his return and explained to him that I had made this journey because I heard it said that his nation wished to have a priest and I was eager to ascertain if such was really the case, that in his absence the other chiefs had sought me out to assure me of the truth of what I heard, but that before speaking of the affair to their grandfather (the President of the United States), I desired to know how he himself regarded it. "Have you a wife?" he asked me. I answered that he ought to know that Catholic priests do not marry and that I was a Blackrobe. At these words he manifested surprise mingled with respect and excused himself by saying that, as he had just arrived and had not as yet spoken to any of his people, no one had informed him of the fact that I was a Blackrobe. He then added that in a matter of such importance he wished to hear his council and would return his answer in St. Louis, whither he proposed to go. He did not go there, however, but sent me his answer by a trader. It was couched in these terms: "I desire, as do also the principal men of my nation, to have a Blackrobe come and reside among us with a view to instruct us."<sup>26</sup>

On his return to St. Louis from the West Father Van Quickenborne reported in favor of the proposed mission being opened among the Kickapoo. Directed by Father De Theux to submit a plan of operation,

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<sup>26</sup> *Ann Prop*, 9 99 Van Quickenborne baptized in "Kickapoo town" July 2, 1835 (the earliest recorded baptism for the locality), Lisette (Elizabeth), ten-month old daughter of Pierre Callieu, a Canadian, and Marguarite, a Potawatomi woman. The ceremonies were omitted "*ob superstitionem adstantium*," ("owing to the superstition of the by-standers") July 12 following he baptized, also in "Kickapoo town," a son of the Kickapoo Indians, Thakamie and Nikioniche. The ceremonies were omitted "*ob aegritudinem infantis*" ("owing to the child's sickness") *Kickapoo Baptismal Register* (F)

he now suggested that a father and coadjutor-brother be assigned to the mission proper, and that another father and coadjutor-brother be stationed on a section of land which was to be purchased and converted into a farm for the support of the mission. The land was to be selected just east of the Missouri state-line and the father residing on it was to serve the neighboring parish at the mouth of the Kansas where Father Roux had purchased a property of one hundred and twenty acres, which he was willing to turn over to Van Quickenborne. De Theux declared himself against the idea of a farm, but was ready to assign Van Quickenborne and Hoecken and a coadjutor-brother to the mission with a promise to provide three additional missionaries at the expiration of fifteen months from January 1, 1836. The proposal that the missionaries go into farming as a means of financing the Indian mission was characteristic of Van Quickenborne. In connection with the very project now to be launched, fear was entertained that his "known propensity to agriculture" might divert him from the ministerial activities proper to the mission. Both at White Marsh and Florissant he had given what was thought to be, in view of his other duties, a disproportionate measure of attention to the novitiate farm, often working it with his own hands, yet never, so it was alleged, achieving any success in its management. But overdue solicitude for the temporal side of religious undertakings is a temptation that may beset even the most apostolic of men and against such temptation Father Roothaan was at this time cautioning the zealous Van Quickenborne. "I recommend to your Reverence that you have as example the simplicity and modesty of our Saints and by no means the ostentation, the parade and the noise of Protestant missionaries. For religion is to be propagated now by no other means than those which planted it in the beginning."<sup>27</sup>

Decision having thus been reached to open a mission among the Kickapoo Father Van Quickenborne was sent to Washington to negotiate with the federal authorities for government aid on its behalf. From Georgetown College he wrote on September 17, 1835, to Secretary of War Lewis Cass

In answer to your favor of the 16th inst, I have the honor to state

1 That I am prepared to open a Mission with a school in the Indian country at the following places—1st On the land of the Kickapoo in the vicinity of the Cantonment Leavenworth

2 I have three Missionaries, including a teacher, to commence the Mission and School immediately in the Kickapoo Nation. I am induced to commence with this tribe by the circumstance of it having expressed to me, through their principal men and chiefs, including even the prophet Kennekuk,

<sup>27</sup> Roothaan ad Van Quickenborne, June 28, 1836 (AA)

a desire of having a Catholic establishment among them. The reason they alleged was that they had for many years lived in the neighborhood of French settlements, that they had, in some degree, become acquainted with their religion and that now they wished to be instructed in it. The prophet said that he had always hoped that a Black-gown, by which name he designated the Catholic priest, would be sent by the Great Spirit to help him in instructing his people and teaching them the truths he did not know.

Besides the three Missionaries mentioned above, the Catholic Missionary Society of Missouri, in whose name I act, has placed at my disposal for this year, commencing at this period, a sum of one thousand dollars. It is my intention to take into the school as many pupils as it will be in my power to collect and to add to the number of teachers, in proportion as the number of scholars will increase, as far as will be in my power, and I have the strongest assurance that aid will be given me by the same Society. For this establishment I should be grateful for every aid the Department can afford, either in the way of raising the necessary buildings or paying part of the salary of teachers or for the support of Missionaries.

Father Van Quickenborne's appeal to Cass in behalf of his Kickapoo Mission was answered by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Elbert Herring.

Your letter of the 17th inst. to the Secretary of War has been referred to me and I am instructed to answer the propositions it contains.

1. In regard to a school among the Kickapoo Indians, the Treaty of 1832 provided for an appropriation of Five Hundred Dollars annually for the term of ten years, for the support of the school. This sum is now applied in the manner thus directed and division of it to any other institution is considered inexpedient at present.

2. You ask an allowance from the appropriation for civilizing the Indians. The Secretary of War has directed that the sum of Five Hundred Dollars shall be paid to you or to an authorized agent of the Catholic Missionary Society of Missouri whenever information is received that a school has been established among the Indians. This information must be accompanied by a certificate of the agent of the tribes, that a building has been erected suitable for the purpose, that a teacher is ready to enter upon his duties and that there is reason to believe that it will be well attended by Indian children. I enclose an open letter for you to General Clark.<sup>28</sup>

On the same day that Van Quickenborne received the foregoing communication from the commissioner of Indian affairs he wrote to Bishop Rosati of St. Louis advising him of his success.

<sup>28</sup> Van Quickenborne to Cass, Georgetown, September 17, 1835 (H). Herring to Van Quickenborne, Washington, September 22, 1835 (A). In his letter of September 17, 1835, to Secretary Cass, Van Quickenborne also petitioned for government aid in behalf of a Potawatomi mission. Cf. *infra*, Chap. XIII, § 2.



It is an honor and an inexpressible pleasure to me as well to be able to announce to you that today I concluded my affair with the Government. We are going to begin an Indian mission and school among the Kickapoo. I have obtained as an outfit Five Hundred Dollars. When the school shall be in operation, circumstances will determine the amount of aid which the Government will furnish. My offer in behalf of the Pottowatomies has also been favorably received and we are fully authorized to begin work among them also when they shall have moved to their new lands in Missouri in the neighborhood of Council Bluffs. May your Lordship pardon me if I ask you to be so good as to communicate this news to the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in St. Louis and to commend me earnestly to their prayers as to those of the Sisters of Charity. I have made an important acquisition for the mission. Father McSherry gives me a Brother of robust health, who is at once carpenter, doctor, etc. Many of the Fathers here manifest a lively desire to go and work among the Indians.<sup>29</sup>

Meantime an incident had occurred at St. Louis which threatened for the moment to bring to nothing all of Van Quickenborne's carefully laid plans for a mission among the Kickapoo. In December, 1835, there arrived in that city an Iroquois Indian, Ignace Partui by name, who solicited on behalf of the Flatheads on the further side of the Rocky Mountains the services of a resident Catholic priest. Father De Theux, on meeting him, was so impressed with the prospects for evangelical work among the Flatheads that he wrote at once to Van Quickenborne, suggesting that he arrange, if possible, with the government to begin the missionary experiment among the Rocky Mountain tribes rather than among the Kickapoo. This change of plan did not commend itself to Van Quickenborne, who, being free to act as he thought best under the circumstances, decided to carry out his original design of a mission for the Kickapoo. He now set himself to solicit financial aid for the undertaking from the Catholic public of the eastern United States and Canada. Some fifteen hundred dollars were collected, Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore and Bishop Kenrick of Philadelphia being at particular pains to second his efforts. At Montreal the Sulpicians were generous in hospitality and material aid. While a guest in their seminary Van Quickenborne copied out almost the whole of an Algonkin grammar which he hoped would be of service to him among the Kickapoo, who were of Algonkin stock.<sup>30</sup> With characteristic ardor he was now ready to start at the first call from the expectant Kickapoo. "Should the Indians, however, want my presence," he wrote from New York to Father McSherry, the Maryland provincial, "I am

<sup>29</sup> Van Quickenborne to Rosati, Georgetown, September 22, 1835 (C). Father William McSherry was superior of the Maryland Province.

<sup>30</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, April 21, 1836 (AA).

determined to come immediately”<sup>31</sup> The hospitality shown him by the Maryland Jesuits elicited the cordial thanks of his superior, De Theux, who assured McSherry “I need not add that we will be happy to return you or any of yours the kindness shown our Indian Missionary, should any of yours take a trip to Missouri”<sup>32</sup> Some months later, April 12, 1836, De Theux again expressed his thanks to McSherry, this time for sending him Brothers Andrew Mazzella and Edmund Barry, who were to accompany Van Quickenborne to the Kickapoo village

Your favor of the 15 ult reached me on the 8th inst It afforded me a new proof of the kindness of Providence and the kind concurrence of Superiors in regard of this least Mission of the Society Whenever your Reverence sends Brother Mazzella and his companion, they will be very welcome and all your Brethren here will look upon them as a new reason for gratitude towards your Reverence and the Maryland Province<sup>33</sup>

Father Van Quickenborne returned to St Louis from the East in the May of 1836 Father Verhaegen, who in the meantime, March, 1836, had become superior of the Missouri Mission in succession to De Theux, wrote to McSherry on May 14

Your Reverence's affectionate favor of the 20th ult has been handed to me by our good Father Van Quickenborne The voyage to Missouri has been very prosperous, he and his two worthy companions arrived in good health and fine spirits They are now preparing for their arduous undertaking I do not know what success they shall meet with, but it requires no great penetration of mind to see the numerous obstacles which they will have to encounter May the Almighty bless their glorious efforts I cordially thank your Reverence for the kind assistance you have given Father Van Quickenborne and hope, Reverend and dear Father, that you will

<sup>31</sup> Van Quickenborne to McSherry, December 2, 1835 (B)

<sup>32</sup> De Theux to McSherry, Florissant, December 13, 1835 (B)

<sup>33</sup> De Theux to McSherry, Florissant, April 12, 1836 (B) Brother Mazzella had been destined by the General for the Mission of Mt Libanus and to equip himself for that field had for some months studied medicine and surgery He was, besides, a competent cook “What is most important of all, [he is] an excellent religious He is now conceded by me to America where he can be employed at first in the college kitchen, since the college [Georgetown] needs help of this kind, but it is my mind that he be later assigned to an Indian mission, just as soon as a mission of this kind shall have been opened up” Roothaan ad McSherry, June 18, 1833 (B) “I earnestly desire that Brother Mazzella be also included among the brothers [promised to Father Van Quickenborne] since he was sent to America for the precise purpose of being assigned sooner or later, in accordance with his own wishes, to a mission of this sort” Roothaan ad McSherry, December 10, 1835 (AA)

continue to favor as much as circumstances will allow a Mission upon the success of which the honor of our dear Society considerably depends<sup>34</sup>

As to Maryland's share in starting the Indian mission the testimony of Father Van Quickenborne himself deserves citation "His [McSherry's] kindness towards me will always be gratefully remembered Without Maryland we should have done nothing in Missouri, nothing for the Indians May the Lord reward you a thousandfold!"<sup>35</sup>

The Indian tribe among whom the western Jesuits were to make their first experiment in resident missionary work were not unknown to their predecessors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries The Kickapoo (the name appears to be a corruption from a longer term signifying "roamers") were of Algonkin stock, showing a close affinity in language, customs and ceremonial forms to the Sauk and Foxes Their first known habitat was south central Wisconsin, whence they shifted their position to the lower Wabash upon lands seized from the Illinois and Miami As early as 1669 Father Allouez came in contact with them at the Green Bay Mission of St Francis Xavier Upon his fellow-laborer, Father Marquette, they made a distinctly unfavorable impression Though professing loyalty to the French, in 1680 they killed the Recollect friar, Gabriel de la Ribourde, a member of La Salle's party, on the banks of the Illinois In 1728 the Jesuit missionary, Father Michel Guignas, falling into their hands, was condemned to the stake, but his life was spared and, being adopted into their tribe, he brought them by his influence to make peace with the French<sup>36</sup> In the conspiracy of Pontiac the Kickapoo were allied with the famous Ottawa chief and took active part in the general destruction of the Illinois tribes that followed upon his death In the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 they fought with the British They suffered heavily in these conflicts, especially the second, and by a series of treaties beginning with that of Greenville, August 3, 1795, after Wayne's decisive victory, and ending with that of Edwardsville, July 30, 1819, ceded all their lands in Illinois and Indiana The United States government, having agreed to pay them two thousand dollars a year for fifteen years, assigned them a large tract on the Osage River in Missouri From there they moved west of the Missouri River to what is now Atchison County in northeastern Kansas in the immediate vicinity of Fort Leavenworth In 1822 only four hundred of the twenty-two hundred members of the tribe were living in Illinois By

<sup>34</sup> Verhaegen to McSherry, St Louis, May 14, 1836 (B)

<sup>35</sup> Van Quickenborne to Vespre, May 15, 1836 (AA)

<sup>36</sup> *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, art "Kickapoo Indians," Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians* (Bureau of American Ethnology), I 684

the treaty of Castor Hill October 24, 1832, provision was made for schools by an annual appropriation of five hundred dollars for ten years This appropriation was applied to the Kickapoo school conducted since 1833 by the Rev Mr Berryman of the Methodist Episcopal Church <sup>37</sup>

On the whole these Algonkin rovers showed themselves unfriendly to the white man and civilization and the fruit of missionary labor among them was doomed to be small But Van Quickenborne was not without hopes of a happy issue of the venture as he stepped on board a Missouri River steamer at St Louis May 25, 1836 News of his departure was promptly communicated to the East by Father Verhaegen

Father Van Quickenborne left this place on the 25th ult with Brothers Mazella, Barry and Miles Father [Christian] Hoecken, who is still on the mission, is to join him in a few weeks Since his departure I have received no news from him His health had much improved and he was full of courage Everything appears favorable to his great and laborious undertaking The Indian agent [Laurent Pinsoneau] is a French Creole and much attached to him General Clark took him under his protection and Messrs Choutau and Co will procure him all the advantages and comforts which his new situation will require <sup>38</sup>

### § 3 THE MISSION OPENS

The incidents attending the opening of the Jesuit mission among the Kickapoo were detailed by Van Quickenborne in an account, in English, which he sent to the Maryland provincial

We arrived here on the 1st inst [June, 1836] precisely thirteen years after we arrived in Missouri the first time, when we came to commence the Indian Mission—better late than never The steamer on board of which we came up brought us to the very spot where we intended to build We met with a very cordial reception from the principal chief and his warriors and

<sup>37</sup> Castor Hill (Marais Castor, "Beaver Pond"), a tract of land now within the city-limits of St Louis, lying north of Natural Bridge Road between Union and Goodfellow Avenues *Missouri Historical Society Collections*, 3 409 Here, in October, 1832, General William Clark, with two other U S commissioners, negotiated treaties with the Kickapoo, Wea, Prankeshaw, Peoria and Kaskaskia Indians For spelling of Indian names, cf Chap XIII, note 1

<sup>38</sup> Verhaegen to McSherry, June 2, 1836 (B) Andrew Mazzella, b Procida, (Naples), Italy, November 30, 1802, entered the Society of Jesus in the Neapolitan Province, November 4, 1823, d St Mary's Potawatomi Mission, Kansas, May 9, 1867 Edmund Barry, b Ireland, February 24, 1803, entered the Society of Jesus in Maryland Province, August 6, 1832, d Bardstown, Ky, December 10, 1857 George Miles, b Bardstown, Ky, September 13, 1802, entered the Society of Jesus in Missouri, December 26, 1827, d St Charles, Mo, January 23, 1885

from the prophet himself. There are two towns among the Kickapoos about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or 2 miles apart, which are composed of the two bands into which the nation is divided. Pashishi, the chief, is quite proud of the circumstance of our coming at his particular invitation and for this reason wished me to build near his town, on the other hand the Prophet expressed a wish that we should do as much for his band as for the others. He said he had always told his people that a black-gown (priest) would come and help him, that he felt disposed to join us and to persuade his followers to do the same. By the agreement of the chief we intend to build between the two towns on a spot nearly equally distant from both. As I did not like the expression of the prophet (of our helping him), I made him acknowledge that he had not received authority from the Great Spirit to preach and that his religion was not a divine religion. He readily did it and added that a black-gown had given him a paper and had told him to advise and direct his people to the best of his knowledge. Afterwards he brought me the paper,—it contains nothing but part of a hymn. Time will show whether he is sincere, of which I have great reason to doubt. General Clark has not as yet communicated to the Agent the letter from the War Department of which I was the bearer. This circumstance is the cause that the Agent cannot give us the help he would otherwise. He has no evidence of my having made an arrangement with the War Department for a school in the Kickapoo nation. There can be, however, no doubt but he will soon receive an answer from General Clark on the subject, as he has written to him and so I have done also. Father Hoecken and Brother Miles have been added to the number of those who started from St. Louis.<sup>39</sup> Father Hoecken is getting sick. The others enjoy good health, except myself being as usual very weak. Our accommodations are rather better than I had anticipated. Mr. Painsonneau [Pinsonneau], the one who keeps a store for the nation, has had the kindness to let us occupy one of his old cabins. It is 16 feet square made of rough logs and daubed with clay. Here we have our chapel, dormitory, refectory, etc. We have to sleep on the floor. Brother Mazella is really a precious man, by his very exterior countenance he has been preaching all the time of our travelling. He cooks, he washes and mends our linen, bakes and does many little things besides. He is truly edifying. Brother Barry is a famous hand to work, but he is not used as yet to the Western country. Whilst on board of the steam boat, the water of the Missouri made him sick. Here the salt provisions do not agree with him, but I have the consolation to see that he bears all this with courage. After a while the Indians will bring in venison and even now and then we have a chance to get some. It would be a great consolation to me if all our work could be done exclusively by our Brothers. I do not know what we could have done here if we did not have the Brothers from Georgetown. I hope that your Reverence will receive an

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<sup>39</sup> Father Christian Hoecken, a Hollander, had been employed on the mission-circuit of the Missouri River towns for a few years immediately prior to his assignment in June, 1836, to the Kickapoo, among whom he began his career as an Indian missionary.

ample reward for your liberality towards us and that the increase of the number of good subjects will allow your Reverence to treat with Father General for sending us some more,—a teacher for the schoolboys will be very necessary. Father Hoecken and myself hope to be able to learn the language. We are making now something like a dictionary. This will help those that will come afterwards. Since my arrival here I have seen the Potawatomi Chief Caldwell<sup>40</sup>. He is a Catholic and wishes to have a Catholic establishment among his people. If we make this, as I have promised to the Department by order of our Superior, several Brothers more will be necessary.<sup>41</sup> Father General has recommended the Indian Mission to Father Verhaegen in a particular manner. Your reverence will not be surprised if I do not write about news. We live here, as it were, out of the world. Our good Master affords us a fair opportunity for leading an interior life, if we only be faithful to His grace. I earnestly beg of your Reverence to remember us in your holy sacrifices and prayers. It is one thing to come to the Indian mission and another to convert the Indians. Father Hoecken and the Brothers present their best respects to your Reverence and wish to be remembered to the Fathers and Brothers with whom they have lived,—and myself in particular to Rev. Father Rector and Father Vespre and to all inquiring benefactors.<sup>42</sup>

Van Quickenborne's ambition had at length been realized. A Jesuit residence had been opened in the Indian country, the first in the history of the new midwestern mission. The *Annual Letters* for 1836 preserve some interesting details of the arrival and first experiences of the missionaries in the Kickapoo village. On the eve of Corpus Christi (June 1) the Missouri River steamer that had carried them from St. Louis put in at the landing, only a stone's throw distant from the Kickapoo wigwams. No sooner did the Indians catch sight of the boat than they flocked down to the river bank to welcome the missionaries. Pashishi, the chief, came at once to pay his respects, expressing himself in terms that raised the hopes of the latter to a high pitch. The log cabin placed at the disposal of the Jesuits by the trader, Laurent Pinsoneau, was fitted up without delay as a chapel and in this improvised temple the Holy Sacrifice was offered up on the feast of Corpus Christi in the presence of the wondering Kickapoo. They

<sup>40</sup> William ("Billy") Caldwell, business chief of the Potawatomi, emigrated with the tribe from Chicago in September, 1835. Cf. Garraghan, *Catholic Church in Chicago*, p. 40. Caldwell's band of Potawatomi, before settling on the reservation near Council Bluffs assigned them by the government, occupied for a while part of the triangular strip of land in northwestern Missouri known later as the Platte Purchase. Here they were visited by Van Quickenborne. Cf. *infra*, Chap. XIII, § 2.

<sup>41</sup> The reference is to the projected mission among the Potawatomi of Council Bluffs.

<sup>42</sup> Van Quickenborne to McSherry, Kickapoo Mission, June 29, 1836 (B).

crowded into the cabin, eager with the savage's ingrained curiosity to know the meaning of the crucifix, the pictures, the priestly vestments

If ever the ultimate success of a missionary venture seemed assured by the difficulties that beset its beginning, it was the case now among the Kickapoo. Besides the alleged unfriendly attitude of the agent, Major Richard W. Cummins, which will presently call for comment, there was the sudden and critical illness of the superior of the mission, Father Van Quickenborne, who lay helpless for a month. Moreover, there were rumors of a Sioux invasion, which threw the Kickapoo village into a panic. The Sioux were reported to be on the warpath with their steps directed towards the lodges of the Sauk and Iowa on the east bank of the Missouri River about a day's journey from Fort Leavenworth. A Sauk warrior started the excitement by reporting to the Kickapoo chief that he had seen the enemy on the march. The next day another Sauk announced that the Sioux were close at hand and begged the Kickapoo to send relief immediately. The third day still other messengers hurried in from the Sauk with the identical news and the identical petition. The government troops at Fort Leavenworth were also appealed to for assistance. Seventy Kickapoo warriors at once took the field in support of their Sauk allies. The day after their departure the report was spread that the soldiers sent from the fort had been routed by the Sioux and the Sauk village burnt to the ground and that the victorious enemy was moving fast in the direction of the Kickapoo village and the fort. Excitement now ran high. The fathers, after consultation, decided that as soon as the Sioux appeared, a priest and one of the coadjutor-brothers should make the rounds of the wigwams and baptize the children. Father Hoecken and Brother Mazzella offered themselves for the task. But the war scare ended as suddenly as it began, diligent search having made it certain that there were no Sioux whatever in the neighborhood.<sup>43</sup>

The suspension of work on the mission buildings in pursuance of an order received from the agent gave the Jesuit community a chance to perform the exercises of the annual spiritual retreat of eight days. All, both fathers and brothers, discharged this duty in common. The exercises were held in the only place available, Pinsoneau's log cabin, the door of which could not be closed both on account of the sweltering heat and in deference to Indian etiquette. The Indians were now treated to a novel spectacle. They would enter the cabin, and squat on the ground directly before one of the missionaries as he was engaged in prayer, with gaze riveted upon him and without as much as a syllable falling from their lips, when the novelty of the sight had worn off,

<sup>43</sup> *Ann Prop*, 10 130

they would rise and leave. One day, while the retreat was in progress, a deputation from six tribes arrived in the Kickapoo village to negotiate a friendly alliance. The deputies were bent on seeing the black-robés' chapel and went there in a body, arriving during the time of prayer. They first stood at the door, eyeing curiously the praying figures within, but not venturing immediately to enter, for with all the members of the missionary party present there was scant room for other occupants. In the end, however, one after another of the braves stepped over the threshold, offered his right hand to the priests and brothers, and then withdrew, the whole ceremony taking place in the profoundest silence. During the eight days that the missionaries gave themselves up to prayer and recollection, no Indian ventured to interrupt or disturb them.<sup>44</sup>

A letter addressed by Father Van Quickenborne to Father McSherry tells of the difficulty that arose with the Indian agent, Major Cummins

Your Reverence will be somewhat astonished that we are as yet in the same log-cabin into which we went the first day of our arrival. Soon after I wrote to you last the Agent took into his head to advise or rather to order us to stop until he could get some further understanding. The letter I brought from the War Department requested Gen. Clark and Gen. Clark requested the Agent to give me all necessary aid towards establishing a school among the Kickapoo. He could not understand the phrase. However, General Clark, to whom he had referred the case for decision, has decided that this phrase is imperative and has advised the Agent punctually to comply with the order given. Since that the Agent has changed and has written to me that any assistance he can afford will be cheerfully rendered. We have been thus stopped for about two months. I had to send off the workmen I had engaged and break the contracts I had made and pay all the expenses. The Chief and principal men are favorable to us—we will not be able to go into our house this winter—it will be a log-house 48 ft long, 20 ft wide and 16 ft high—Brother Mazella is a treasure I have, since I am here, had another spell of sickness. Father Hoecken has been also sick, but again we are all in good health. The Kaskaskias, Peorias, Weas, Piankeshaws, whom I visited two weeks ago, wish to have a resident priest. I have baptized about forty Indian children and as many more would wish to be baptized, but being grown persons, they stand in need of instruction. I have lately received a letter from Father General—he is extremely well pleased that your Reverence let me have Brothers that will be so useful. On account of opposition made by the Agent I have no good opportunity to have an answer from our Rev. Father Superior concerning the Brother your Reverence promised last spring. Perhaps the good Brother is already on his way to the Kickapoo village. Father Hoecken makes great progress in the Indian language, the Indians are astonished at it. He is able to converse with them

<sup>44</sup> *Litterae Annuae*, 1836, p. 10 (A)



almost on any subject Upon the whole, the persecution we have suffered has been of service to us <sup>45</sup>

Conflicting accounts leave somewhat in doubt the real motive behind Major Cummins's order to Van Quickenborne to stop work on the school building A letter of the major to be quoted presently implies that the consent of the Indians to the new school had not been duly ascertained and put on record with the customary formalities Van Quickenborne's correspondence, on the other hand, seems to imply that some personal prejudice or ill-will on the part of the agent was the real motive of his opposition. The letter from Gen Clark acquainting the agent with the missionaries' authorization from the Indian Office to build a school among the Kickapoo was unaccountably delayed in transmission and this delay will explain why Cummins, in pursuance of instructions issued for the Indian agents generally at that period, did not allow building operations to begin at once But he seems to have withheld his consent even after Clark's communication came into his hands Under date of July 12, 1836, he wrote to Van Quickenborne

I have received a letter from the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, also received a copy by him of a letter from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on the subject of your establishing a school among the Kickapoo After a careful examination of both, I am of the opinion that the War Department as well as the Superintendent expect the consent of the Indians and fairly given in the usual way before you can establish among them I would therefore advise you not to proceed until a further understanding can be had I would be pleased to see you at my house and will show you the letters above alluded to <sup>46</sup>

The trouble was eventually smoothed out by General Clark, to whom Cummins had applied for fresh instructions The Major was directed to allow the missionaries to go ahead with their building and even to assist them in the affair as far as lay in his power After this nothing more is heard of opposition on the part of the agent It is not unlikely that the latter was without blame in the matter and that

<sup>45</sup> Van Quickenborne to McSherry, Kickapoo Mission, October 10, 1836 (B)

<sup>46</sup> (A) This letter of Major Cummins, though dated July 12, reached Father Van Quickenborne only on August 4 It is indorsed thus in lead-pencil in the latter's hand "Received from Mr Keene [?] 4th of August, who said he had received it from Major Cummins the day before" Van Quickenborne acknowledged the agent's note, August 18 "Your letter of the 12th ult came duly to hand on the 4th inst As I had the pleasure of seeing you since and as in our conversation you alluded to it, I have not deemed it necessary to answer immediately, the more so as you were expected here before the time my answer would reach you You advise not to proceed until further understanding can be had To this advice I have submitted I would be pleased to hear from you on the subject" (A)

Father Van Quickenborne misinterpreted his insistence that official formalities be duly complied with. As early as October 24, 1836, Van Quickenborne was able to forward to the secretary of war the following certificate

I do hereby certify that under the authority of a letter from the Office of Indian Affairs of September 2, 1835, the Catholic Missionary Society of Missouri has erected on the Kickapoo lands a building for a school, has a teacher prepared to enter upon his duties and that there is a prospect of the school being well attended by Indian pupils <sup>47</sup>

The situation at the mission a few months later, February, 1837, was described by Van Quickenborne in a letter to Bishop Rosati

Your favor of January 5th reached me on the 30th of the same month. The interest which your Lordship takes in the success of our establishment

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<sup>47</sup> On December 3 Commissioner of Indian Affairs Harris acknowledged the receipt of this certificate, adding "As soon as the agent's certificate required by the letter to you is received and which is indispensable, the final action in the subject will be communicated to you." A subsequent letter from Commissioner Harris dated March 23, 1837, announced that the promised Government subsidy was at hand "I have received your letter of the 13th ult enclosing the certificate of Major Cummins relative to the completion of the Kickapoo school-house and the employment of a teacher. I have now the pleasure to inform you that these papers are entirely satisfactory and that the sum of five hundred dollars, out of the fund for the civilization of Indians, has this day been remitted to Captain E. A. Hitchcock, military disbursing agent at St. Louis, with instructions to pay it over to you upon your draft." On June 7, 1837, Van Quickenborne wrote to Commissioner Harris "I have now the gratification to inform you that my draft upon Captain F. A. Hitchcock for the above amount (\$500) has been paid. I hope I shall have it in my power to give you a satisfactory account of the operation of the school at the proper time." (H) A description of the school-house erected by Van Quickenborne is contained in Cummins's certificate "At the request of the Rev. Mr. Van Quickenborne on behalf of the Catholic Missionary Society of Missouri, I have this day [January 5, 1837] examined a school-house erected by him among the Kickapoo of my agency, which is of the following description, viz School-house 16 ft long and 15 ft wide, wall of hewn logs, one story high, cabin roof, one twelve x eight (tight) glass window and one batten door, the house pointed with mortar made of lime and sand, the under floor of puncheon and the upper floor of plank. I certify on honor that the school-house as above described is ready for the reception of Indian children and that the Rev. C. Hoecken, teacher, is ready to commence the school and that there is reason to believe that if the Agent of the Catholic Church and the teacher will use the proper means, the school will be well attended by the Indian children.

P. S.—It may not be amiss to state that the Rev. Mr. Van Quickenborne has a dwelling on hand 49 ft by 18 ft the wall of which is two-story high and covered in with shingles, which, when finished, is sufficiently large to accommodate a great many persons,—also other buildings, which he does not wish reported until finished."

consoles and encourages us This establishment is situated in the neighborhood of Fort Leavenworth on the right bank of the Missouri about 150 leagues from St. Louis<sup>48</sup> A post office is to be found there and letters for us should be addressed, Fort Leavenworth, Missouri For lodging we have had, up to this writing, only a cabin 16 feet by 15 We hope to say Mass in our log house of 48 by 20 feet in a few weeks It is exceedingly difficult to secure workmen, especially such as find the place to their liking We have paid as high as \$1 50 a day A carpenter of the kind they call here a rough carpenter receives up to \$2 00 a day Our expenses already amount to more than \$2000 00 From our establishment we make excursions to the Kansas river among the Weas, Peorias, Kaskaskias and Poto-watomies It is a well known fact that the Indians in general are predisposed in favor of Catholic Blackrobes Father Hoecken speaks the Kickapoo language well, but it will be necessary to learn three or four more to be able to speak about religion to our neighbors, and then comes the difficulty of translating the Catechism into their language But, with the help of God and with patience we can go far Father Verhaegen can inform your Lordship better than I can as to the hopes we have of starting another establishment<sup>49</sup>

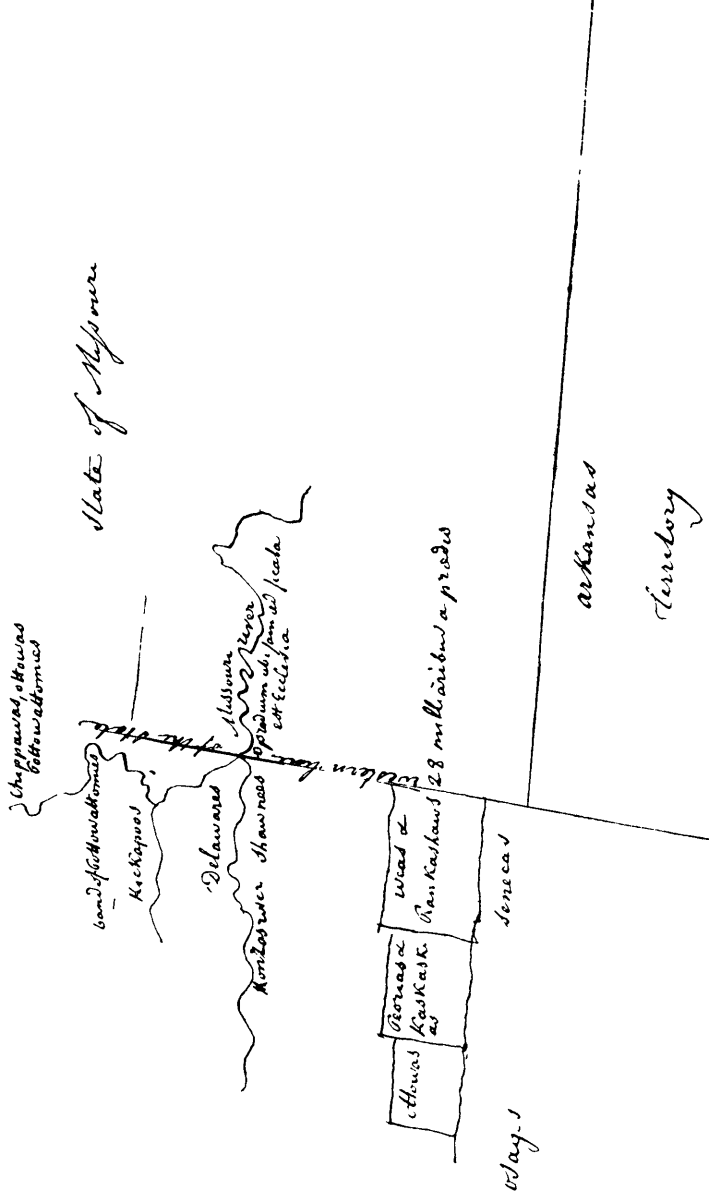
#### § 4 A SLENDER HARVEST

What success the missionaries met with in their work among the Kickapoo remains to be told It soon became evident that the conversion of the tribe was a highly difficult task At the end of 1836 the Catholic Church among the Kickapoo counted but two members and these were children Better success attended the missionaries on their occasional visits to the neighboring tribes Fifty miles from the Kickapoo village they baptized fourteen Indian children, performed one marriage ceremony and admitted nine, nearly all adults, among the catechumens<sup>50</sup>

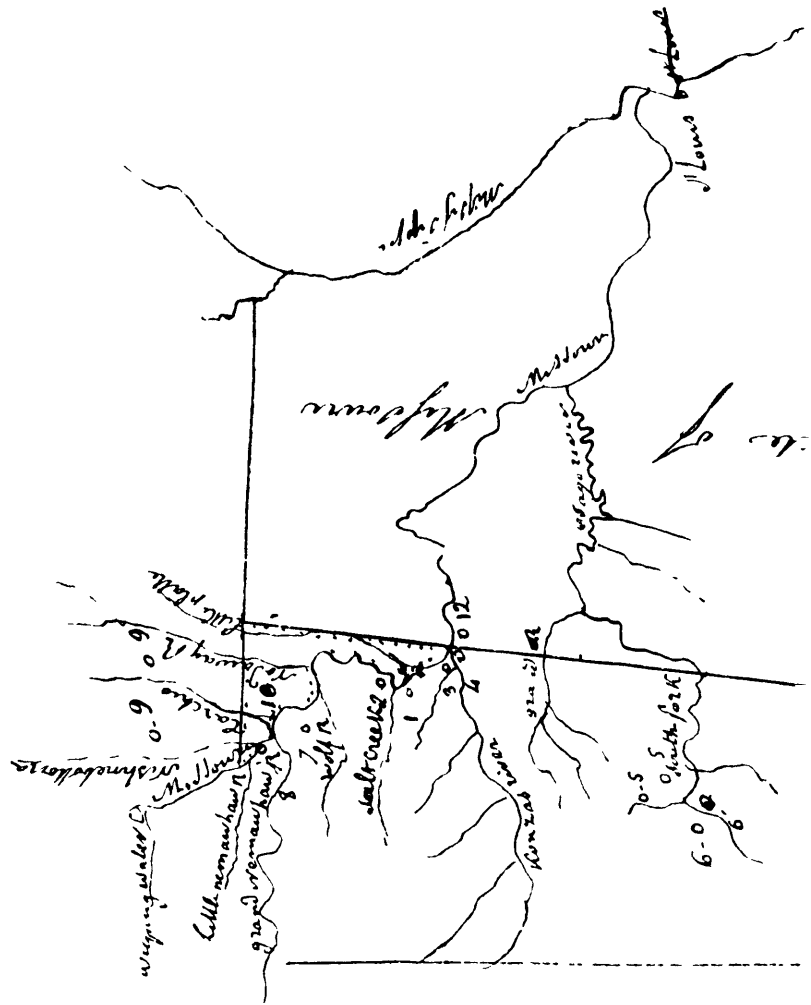
<sup>48</sup> Wetmore's *Gazetteer* (1837) gives the distance from St. Louis to Fort Leavenworth by the Missouri River as 431 miles (143 2/3 leagues)

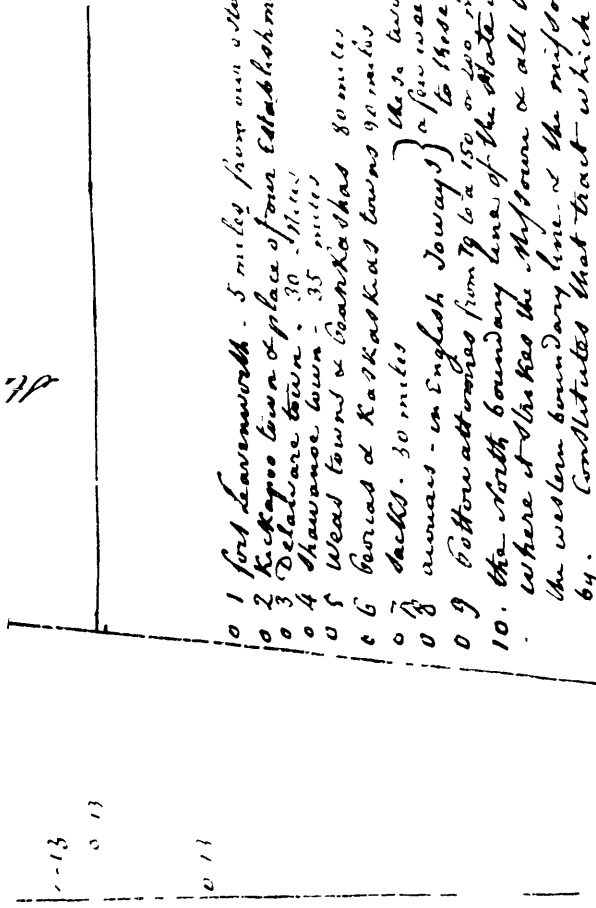
<sup>49</sup> Van Quickenborne à Rosati, Kickapootown, February 22, 1837 (C)

<sup>50</sup> *Litterae Annuae*, 1836 (A) It is interesting to note that Van Quickenborne's missionary activities extended to the Kaskaskia Indians, among whom Marquette established in 1675 on the Illinois River the historic mission of the Immaculate Conception, the protomission of the Society of Jesus in the Mississippi Valley Journeying overland, July 1, 1835, from the site of Kansas City, Missouri, to pay his first visit to the Kickapoo, Van Quickenborne was agreeably surprised to find that the first Indians he met on the way, a Shawnee and his wife, a Wyandotte, were both Catholics (*Ann Prop*, 9 97) Further on he met some Kaskaskia squaws, who, as evidence that some relics of Catholic practice had survived among them, were able to make the sign of the cross They were eager to have a black-robe visit their village and revive the Catholic life which had flourished among their ancestors, but which had now virtually disappeared, owing to the fact that no priest since the passing of Father Meurin had been able to deal with them in their own language They informed Van Quickenborne that the entire tribe now



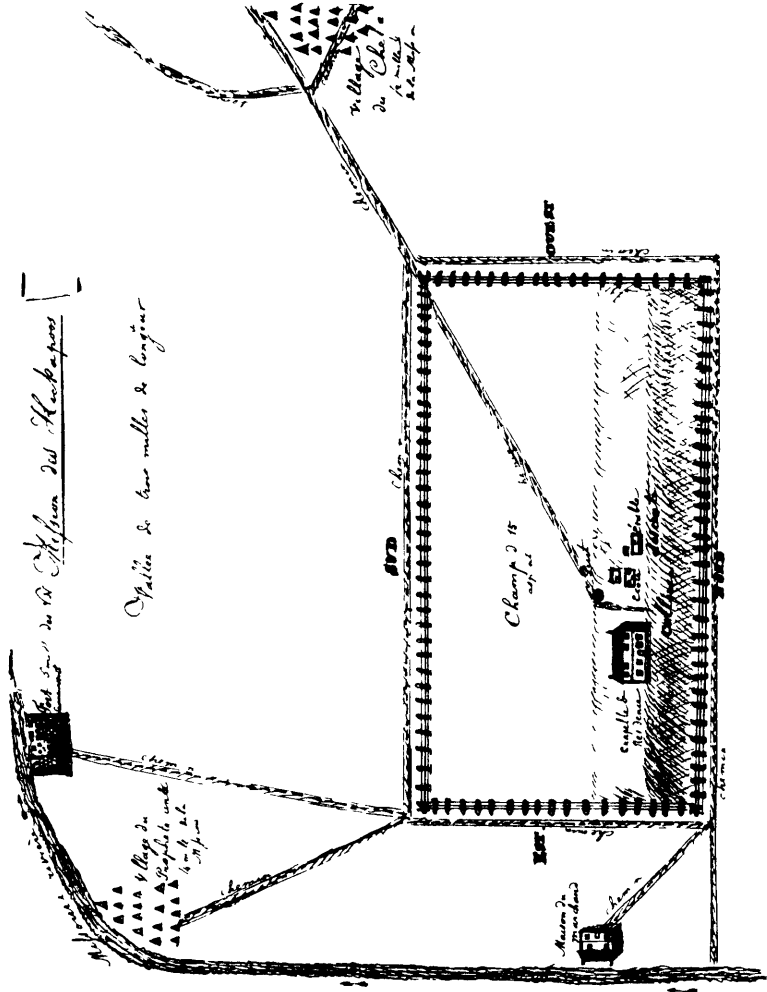
Van Quickenborne pen-and-ink sketch of "the Indian country" From a letter of his to the Father General, John Roothaan, September 24, 1835 General Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome





- 0 1 Fort Laramie - 5 miles from our establishment
- 0 2 Kickapoo town & place of our establishment
- 0 3 Delaware town - 30 miles
- 0 4 Shawnee town - 35 miles
- 0 5 West town & Bank's has 80 miles
- 0 6 Boonville & Kankakee towns 90 miles
- 0 7 each - 30 miles
- 0 8 runs - in English Joways } these two bands, by a treaty made
- 0 9 Bottom at times from 70 to 150 or 200 miles } a few weeks ago, have agreed to go
- 0 10. the North boundary line of the State is continued to a point - } where it strikes the Missouri & all the land lying between
- the western boundary line & the Missouri river, as marked } by.
- constituted that tract which is added to the State } of Missouri
- 0 12 Place, where the American fur company has built a small } Church - here live 25 families 20 of which are Indians or } half breeds. 40 miles
- 0 13 Stage towns - 190 or 200 miles
- 0 14 Kansas towns 150 miles

Van Quickenborne pen-and-ink sketch of "the Indian country" in its relations to the Kickapoo Mission From a letter of his to the Father General, John Roothaan, October 4, 1836 General Archives of the Society of Jesus, Rome



The Kickapoo Mission Contemporary pen-and-ink sketch by Father Peter Verhaegen, S J, in his manuscript narrative, *Relation d'un voyage chez les Kickapoux en 1837* Archives of the Missouri Province, S J, St Louis

The cry was soon raised among the Indians that the Catholic school was not needed. They had a school already, that conducted by Mr Berryman, the Methodist. Why open another? Nevertheless, the Catholic school was opened in the spring of 1837 in the log house which Father Van Quickenborne had built for the purpose, and at the end of the academic year it counted twenty pupils.<sup>51</sup>

In June, 1837, Father Verhaegen made an official visitation of the Kickapoo Mission. Under the caption, *Relation d'un voyage chez les Kickapoo*, a detailed account from his pen of this visit appeared in

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numbered sixty souls, all of them with one solitary exception being mixed-bloods. (General William Clark in his diary gives the number of Kaskaskia, when they passed through St. Louis on their way to the West, as only thirty-one. "July 23, 1827. The Kaskaskia arrived. The whole remnant of this great nation consists at this time of thirty-one souls [*sic*], fifteen men, ten women and six children.") The pledge which Van Quickenborne gave these stray Kaskaskia to visit them at the first opportunity was redeemed the following year in an excursion from the Kickapoo Mission (*Ann. Prop.*, 10:140). Accompanied by a Wea chief, a Catholic, as interpreter, the missionary on September 24, 1836, reached the Kaskaskia village situated along the Osage River about ninety miles south of the Kickapoo. The Kaskaskia were now fused with the Peoria, a tribe also evangelized by Marquette. The entire body of the Peoria, so it appears, and two Kaskaskia had gone over to Methodism, alleging in explanation that they deemed it better to practice some form of Christianity than none at all, as they should be constrained to do in default of a Catholic priest. Both Kaskaskia and Peoria, having made an earnest appeal for the services of a priest, were encouraged by Father Van Quickenborne to bring to the notice of the government agents their desire that provision might be made for the support of a resident priest. In the course of this missionary trip Van Quickenborne baptized twenty-five infants, refusing the sacrament to a number of other Indian children who had attained the age of reason but were without the necessary previous instruction. In Kickapootown and the Kansa camp he baptized on May 18 and 19, fourteen Kansa children, all under seven years of age. *Kickapoo Mission Register* (F).

<sup>51</sup> "Report of the teacher for the Kickapoo," signed by P. J. Verhaegen, Superintendent of the Missouri Missions Society, in *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs*, 1837. (Hereinafter cited as *RCIA*.) Annual cost of the school, about fifteen hundred dollars, cost of the school-house erected between the two villages of the nation, about a thousand dollars, money received from government since opening of school, five hundred dollars, from other sources, three thousand and eighty dollars, school unencumbered by debts. Three teachers in the school and two other persons employed in connection with it, *viz.* Rev. Ch. Hoecken, Superior and teacher of English, Rev. F. Verreyedt, teacher of music, G. Miles, teacher of penmanship, C. Mazzella, cook and J. Barry, farmer. "These five gentlemen devote their attention gratis to the school." Twenty (7) pupils registered, among them Kiakwoik, Uapakai, son of the chief, Kikakiy, Minakwoi, Papikwon, Akosiy, Pemmoaitamo, Fataan, Fetepakiy, Nimoika, Moshoon, Kaminay, Nematsiata, Baptist. "Among them Kiakwoik, Nenopoi, Wapatekwoi and Nimoika distinguished themselves by their progress, especially in penmanship and bid fair to be qualified for any employment of civilized life."



the *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*<sup>52</sup> Another account is to be found in an English letter addressed by him to Father McSherry

I returned a few days ago from my excursion to our Indian Mission My trip has been short and delightful I left St Louis on the 14th ult and arrived at the Kickapoo village on the eve of the Feast of St Aloysius [June 21] The boats that navigate the Missouri generally do not run during the night on account of the numerous snags and sand bars which render its navigation dangerous even in daylight, but when I started, the water was so high and the moon shone so bright that our captain anticipated no danger from a deviation of the general rule We struck, however, some banks and rode some snags, but without any damage to the boat I did not know, my dear Father, that the state of Missouri possessed such a prodigious quantity of fertile soil I regret that you were not with me, you would, I am sure, have been pleased with the truly enchanting pictures which both sides of the river present to the travelers Do not speak of the farms situated on the bluffs between St Louis and St Charles, good as they are, when compared with those of Maryland, on which you pointed out some prairie grass to me as we rolled along on the cars, they sink into insignificance when contrasted with the lands of our Upper Missouri When I was in the East, the beauties and improvements of which I do intensely admire, I anxiously looked for one respectable tree and one eminently fruitful spot, but in vain, in Missouri, I am now more convinced than ever, trees and spots of the kind are so numerous that in order to avoid seeing them, one must fly to Maryland What shall I say of the beauties of nature to the eye? I thought that the lofty rocks and sublime hills which the canal and railroad between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh afforded to my sight could not be equaled by any prospect in the West, but even in these, Missouri is not surpassed by the East I know your Reverence thinks I am enthusiastic in my account I pardon the impression under which you labor, because to any one who has not seen Missouri, my description must appear incredible *Veni et vide* The landing is about a mile and a quarter from the Mission house Father Van Quickenborne having been informed of my arrival by a courier, came to see me on board the boat and I accompanied him to the Indian village on horseback The site of the building is one of the most beautiful that could be selected In the rear the land is well timbered On the right the chief has his village and the ground is cleared, on the left lives the Prophet with his band and in front there is an extensive valley formed by a chain of hills on which Ft Leavenworth stands Our missionaries have a field of about fifteen acres on which they raise all the produce which they want They are about five miles from the Fort and have, of course, every necessary opportunity to procure at that post such provisions as their industry cannot yield Many of the Indians among whom they live are well disposed toward the Catholic religion and several of them have expressed a desire of being instructed However, most of them are still averse to a change of their superstitious

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<sup>52</sup> *Ann Prop*, 11 468 et seq

practices and vicious manner Of the 1000 souls that constitute both villages, hardly thirty regularly attend church on Sundays Many come to see us on week days and by the instruction which they receive during these visits are insensibly to be prevailed to come to hear the word of God Father Van Quickenborne has made but little progress in the Kickapoo language He labors under many disadvantages and at his age he will never conquer them, but Father Hoecken speaks the Kickapoo admirably well The savages call him the Kickapoo Father, a compliment which no Indian easily pays to a missionary—to be entitled to it, he must speak his language well When I was at the Kickapoo village, I assisted at one of Father Hoecken's instructions The sound of his horn drew about forty to the chapel at 11 A M , but all did not enter it at the appointed time They are a set of independent beings, they will have their own way in everything to show that they do not act from compulsion There were in the chapel benches enough to accommodate a hundred persons, some few preferred them to the floor They all kept silence well and behaved modestly The Father in surplice knelt before the altar and intoned the Kyrie Eleison of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the choir, consisting of Father Van Quickenborne, the three Brothers and two workmen, joined him, and the whole Litany was sung with a tone of variations too refined for my ear Father Fenwick himself would have failed in an attempt to keep the time and hit the notes<sup>53</sup> Such performances suit the Indians, happily they love and admire a mixed and confused kind of music The instruction lasted upwards of half an hour I heard the words "piano," "mane," "iniquo,"—I heard "pas," "pasa," "pan," and "oikia" and I was tempted to believe that the Kickapoo language was a mixture of Latin and Greek Unfortunately, on inquiry, I discovered that the sounds expressed none of the ideas which they convey in other language In the course of a few days I will, *Deo dante*, write to my good Father Mulledy, and together with several interesting items relating to the customs of the Indians whom I have visited, I will send him the Our Father and the Hail Mary in their language<sup>54</sup> Father Hoecken has composed a grammar and is now preparing a dictionary which will be of great advantage to such as will henceforth join him in the glorious work which Ours have commenced Much good can be done among the savages west of the state of Missouri The Potowatomies are now on their way to the land which they have to inhabit They are more than 5,000 in number, more than 400 already Catholics, and they (and especially their chief who is a Catholic also) are very anxious to have a Catholic missionary established among them I must beg of your Reverence some assistance to comply with the request of those unhappy people The Maryland province has already one Brother Mazella, who distinguishes himself by his zeal, holiness and success, for by his endeavors, by his good example and by his attention to the sick, he has been instrumental in procuring baptism to more than 50 children Would it be impossible to obtain from you three or four more laborers on that

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<sup>53</sup> Father George Fenwick, 1801-1857, member of the Maryland Province, S J

<sup>54</sup> Father Thomas Mulledy, 1794-1860, member of the Maryland Province, S J

extensive and fertile vineyard which is now offered to the Society? Dear Father, reflect on the condition of the poor aborigines of your country and I am sure that your sympathy for their distress will urge you to do something more for their relief<sup>55</sup>

The *Annual Letters* of 1837 dwell on the unpromising outlook for missionary work among the Kickapoo. So many obstacles had thwarted the labors of the fathers that it was plain the mission must have succumbed long ago but for the very manifest intervention of Divine Providence. The Prophet had roused his followers to more than one unfriendly demonstration. Even Pashishi, the chief, who had invited the missionaries to the Kickapoo village and brought them his eldest son, Washington, fourteen years of age, for religious instruction, assumed for a while a hostile attitude. In the beginning curiosity attracted many of the Indians to the chapel. Now the novelty was worn off and few of them were seen around the mission-house. They said "We want no prayer [their term for religion], our forefathers got along very well without it and we are not going to feel its loss." Even the children showed a marked aversion to every form of religion. It was not a desire for instruction, but the hope of food, raiment and presents in general that brought them to school. Were these to stop, their presence in the schoolroom would be at an end. "Who does not see," exclaims the chronicler, "that obstacles like these are to be brushed aside only by Him who changeth the hearts of men." What, then, had reduced the Kickapoo to this wretched condition? The proximity of the whites, from whom they purchase whiskey and with it the open door to every manner of vice<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Verhaegen to McSherry, St. Louis, July 10, 1836 (B). Letters of Verhaegen to M. De Nef about the Kickapoo, Aug. 3, 1836 (1837?), and July 10, 1837, are in the archives of the North Belgian Province, S. J.

<sup>56</sup> *Litterae Annuae*, 1837 (A). The account given of the Kickapoo by Maj. Cummins, U. S. agent, in his annual reports to Washington (*RCIA*, 1837-1841) is more favorable to the tribe than accounts emanating from the missionaries. As late as 1841, he reports the Indians as given to agricultural pursuits and fairly prosperous. In his report for 1838 he writes "Keanakuck or the Prophet's Band, that constitute the largest portion of the tribe, have improved rapidly in agricultural pursuits the last four years. This band of the Kickapoo are making great improvement and are approaching fast to a system of farming and government among themselves not far inferior to white civilization. They profess the Christian religion, attend closely and rigidly to their church discipline and very few ever indulge in the use of ardent spirits." Rev. Isaac McCoy, Baptist missionary, protests in his *Annual Register*, 1836, against the designation of the Kickapoo as Christians. "If the success [of the Kickapoo Mission] has not corresponded to the labor and expense, it is owing, first to the presence and opposition of a Methodist Minister who lives among them, to the vicinity of the whites and to the difficulties which always attend the commencement of such establishments, for instance, the absence

Now that he was realizing the dream of a life-time by actually residing among the Indians, Father Van Quickenborne, always a facile letter-writer, was careful to inform the Father General at intervals of the progress of the experiment. He recurred to his favorite plan of an Indian reduction modeled after the famous Jesuit reductions of Paraguay. A few Kickapoo families wished to separate from their savage kinsfolk and these recruits for civilization he would organize into a Christian village or reduction while teaching them to farm and otherwise helping them to get on in a material way. He was especially anxious to open additional missionary-posts, as among the Osage, the Potawatomi, and the Rocky Mountain tribes. The last-named made a particular appeal to him as appears from his letter of May 22, 1837, to Father Roothaan.

It seems that a great field for the spreading of the faith is now opened up in the Rocky Mountains. I have heard from quite a few reliable men that there are several nations in that region highly susceptible to religion and that they have sent twice to St. Louis to ask for Catholic priests. I have written this before but it is now still further borne out by new witnesses. Last year a Protestant minister went there, this current year another. Can nothing be done for the Indians? If only they could be visited by one of Ours with hope held out to them of a resident priest. All these things, Very Reverend Father, we submit to your judgment, not wishing to do anything except through obedience. But the hope is often with me that it may please God to employ our services in a number of places. For why so many societies in Europe for the propagation of the faith? And why did the bishops of the United States wish this work entrusted to the Society? Why, in fine, did the Sovereign Pontiff second this wish? Why do those nations send deputies to obtain Catholic priests with the avowal that they do not want Protestants?

It was noticed in Father Van Quickenborne that he had a tendency to leave tasks half-finished in a sort of impatience to take up something new. Probably this was the point in the official estimate of him already cited which declared him to be excellent for undertaking almost any kind of work but not for seeing it through. With the mission among the Kickapoo scarcely begun, he was now characteristically turning his attention to other fields of labor. Father Roothaan, who was no stranger to his peculiarities of temperament, sounded a timely note of warning in a letter of May 22, 1837.

Although the personnel of the Mission shows a satisfactory increase in number for the last two years, there is a great deal wanting to it before of all the facilities for the acquirement of the language, etc." Verhaegen, *Report on the Indian Missions to the Most Rev. Archbishop and Right Rev. Bishops in Provincial Council assembled* (Baltimore, 1841)

it can take on the real character of the Society. Much, too, is to be desired in the organization of studies. Now, with deficiencies of this sort nothing can be solidly begun and much less can beginnings be brought to perfection. Though I greatly desire that one or other station and even a number of them be opened up among the Indian tribes, still I should think that we ought to make haste quite slowly and not take another station in hand before the first has been firmly established. I see well enough the necessity of cultivating a little farm, I have only this one recommendation to make, that the labor spent upon it be not greater than necessity requires, so that our missionaries will not in any way, as far as possible, be diverted by cares of this nature from their spiritual ministry.

#### § 5 THE PASSING OF FATHER VAN QUICKENBORNE

During his stay among the Kickapoo in June, 1837, it became known to Father Verhaegen that things were not running smoothly in the little Jesuit group settled in that remote corner of the frontier. What had been feared by many had come to pass. Father Van Quickenborne's idiosyncrasies of temperament had set him at variance with those under his authority. Even Brother Mazzella, whom Van Quickenborne himself called a "treasure" and to whose obvious virtues he gave eager testimony, found it a perplexing problem to carry on with him. Furthermore, the hired help at the mission were in discontented mood, while, so at least it was alleged, the good-will and sympathies of the Indians were being forfeited. Yet Father Verhaegen, in reporting the situation to the General, pays tribute to the more than ordinary personal virtues of Van Quickenborne.<sup>57</sup> At all events the best interests of the mission seemed to demand the latter's recall and to this measure Father Verhaegen, after returning to St. Louis and there conferring with his consultors, decided to proceed. The minute-book of the consultorial board for July 9, 1837, records that the burden of the complaints received in writing from all the members of the missionary-staff among the Kickapoo was Father Van Quickenborne's "despotic manner of government."

Having received from Verhaegen peremptory orders to report in St. Louis, Van Quickenborne acted upon them with a promptness that left nothing to be desired in the obedience expected of him on the occasion. The earliest known letter from his pen, cited in a previous chapter of this history, drew an enthusiastic picture of the prospects of Indian missionary enterprise in the New World, it is significant that the last in his extant correspondence strikes the same note of zealous concern for the conversion of the Indians. It was written from Fort Leavenworth to the Father General.

<sup>57</sup> Verhaegen ad Roothaan, July 18, 1837 (AA)

I received this letter yesterday from Reverend Father Superior

“After mature deliberation and prayer to God and after asking the opinion of the consultors of the Mission, I have decided to recall your Reverence to this university I am indeed convinced that there is no need of a command for your Reverence to obey this wish of mine, but that you may have the merit of holy obedience, I order your Reverence to proceed on horseback to the town of Liberty within two days after the receipt of this letter I expect here of your Reverence an accurate statement of all money received and spent”

Submitting to the command of my Superior, I started on the way the day after receiving the letter

I sincerely tender you, Very Reverend Father, my most cordial thanks for your very great solcitude in beginning this Indian Mission, for which ever since I was a boy I have steadily felt and feel even yet a great desire I shall never forget in how fatherly a manner your Reverence has always acted in my regard and I do not know what better token to give of my grateful sentiments than to offer myself for whatever duties your Reverence may deign, through my Superior, to assign to me Meantime, I shall not fail to pour forth my prayers to God that, enriched with all spiritual gifts, you may continue, Very Reverend Father, to promote and develop this Indian Mission, and I still venture to hope that out of your boundless charity in my regard, you will assist me with your prayers and sacrifices so that I may obtain before God forgiveness of my sins, which certainly are the cause of this interruption, if I may call it such, and that I may receive a fuller measure of grace to walk worthily according to my vocation<sup>58</sup>

Father Van Quickenborne, now only in his fiftieth year, but with health shattered by the hardships of his strenuous career, arrived at St. Louis as the July of 1837 was drawing to a close. After a stay of two days at St. Louis University he repaired to the novitiate where he went through the exercises of his annual retreat, edifying all by his pious demeanor and by the public penance which he performed in the refectory To a novice who asked him what was the best preparation to make for the Indian mission he made the characteristic answer that the best preparation was the practice of self-denial. From the novitiate he proceeded to St. Charles and thence to the residence of St. Francis of Assisi in Portage des Sioux, where he assumed the duties of superior in succession to Father Verreydt, who in turn replaced him among the Kickapoo “Charity and gratitude impel me,” Father Verhaegen informed the General, “to see to it that in his advanced age and feeble health, he lack nothing which this locality can supply for his consolation and the relief of his frequent indispositions”<sup>59</sup> To add to his comfort, a coadjutor-brother, William Claessens, was put at

<sup>58</sup> Van Quickenborne ad Roothaan, July 22, 1837 (AA)

<sup>59</sup> Verhaegen ad Roothaan, August, 1837 (AA)

his service But Van Quickenborne had been only a few days in Portage when a bilious fever seized him and, finding no resistance from his outworn constitution, reduced him to the last extremity. The services of a skillful physician were secured, while Father Paillasson, who himself had some knowledge of medicine, was sent for from the novitiate. The last sacraments were administered to the patient, who received them with simple piety and resignation to the Divine Will. He met death without anxiety or fear and, recorded Father De Theux, "to the great edification of all." About twenty minutes before the end, having called for a mirror, he gazed into it and then returned it with the words, "pray for me." They were the last he spoke. He expired without agony at half-past eleven on the morning of August 17 while Father Paillasson and Brother Claessens were praying at his bedside. The remains accompanied by many of the parishioners were borne the next day to St. Charles, where they were interred at the foot of the cross which marked the center of the Catholic graveyard. They were later transferred to the novitiate cemetery in Florissant where they rest today with those of the other valiant pioneers who were associated with him in the founding of the work of the Society of Jesus in the trans-Mississippi West. A simple record on the tombstone sums up the story of his life.<sup>60</sup>

While Father Van Quickenborne lay dying at Portage des Sioux he sent for Father De Theux, then at the novitiate, begging him "for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ," to hasten to his side. The father having answered the summons, Van Quickenborne confided to him that before he left Maryland he had received an interior assurance from on high (*ab alto*) that he was to begin the Indian mission, that his own brethren would fail him, but that shortly after something would happen to vindicate his course in the whole affair, after which the Indian mission was to flourish. Further, he asked that in the event of his death this information be conveyed by De Theux to the Father General, a request which was faithfully carried out.<sup>61</sup> Whatever the nature of the assurance Father Van Quickenborne had received, the failure of the missionary experiment among the Kickapoo was, as a matter of fact, followed closely by the successes scored by the Jesuits among the Osage and the Potawatomi of the Kansas border.

<sup>60</sup> *Historia Missionis Missourianae* (A) "ISH [*sic*] Rev. Pater Carolus F. Van Quickenborne, Soc. Jesus Sacerdos Professor, Natus Gandavi in Belgio, die 21 Junii [?], 1788, Soc. ingressus 14 Apr., 1815, Post Restitutam Societatem, Missionis Missourianae, Primus Superior Constitutus, die 14 Apr., 1823, Post multos et arduos labores, in vinea Domini exantlatus, Obiit in pago Portage des Sioux, die 17 Aug., 1837." For an allegedly miraculous cure wrought at his tomb, cf. Lavelle, *Le P. De Smet*, p. 103 n.

<sup>61</sup> De Theux ad Van Quickenborne, August 24, 1837 (AA)

Three days after Van Quickenborne's passing, the Venerable Mother Duchesne made this entry in her journal

Feast of St Bernard [August 20, 1837]. News of the death at Portage des Sioux of the holy Father Charles Van Quickenborne, 1st Superior of the Jesuits in Missouri. He had entered the Society of Jesus in Flanders and went to Maryland[?] with several subjects of his own nationality, of whom he was master of novices. Bishop Du Bourg drew him with his eight novices to the diocese of St Louis and gave him his residence in the parish of St Ferdinand. All things were born under this skilful administrator, who created everything for the good of the Society in Missouri. It is owing to him that, with no other resources to draw on than Providence, the poor cabin of the residence was changed into an agreeable dwelling-house, the church of St Charles built, the college of St Louis founded and the 1st Indian mission set on foot.<sup>62</sup>

Father Roothaan's last letter to Father Van Quickenborne was an acknowledgment of the one written by the latter from Fort Leavenworth on his way back to St Louis. It left Rome at the end of September, 1837, some six weeks after the missionary had passed away.

I have received your Reverence's letter sent to me from the Indian mission as also your last note in which you announce to me, regretfully but with resignation to the will of God, your departure from the mission as obedience would have it. This last act of virtue has indeed been a source of great consolation to me, a something worthy of a son of the Society, which cherishes the memory of her Xavier, ready as he was at the very first letter which bore the name of his father Ignatius to halt in the course of his apostolic labors. I cannot but approve the action of Father Superior in recalling your Reverence. However, he has not ceased to concern himself for the Kickapoo Mission nor for the further mission which is to be taken up among the other Indians, nor shall I permit what has once been started to be abandoned lightly. Let your Reverence find joy in his obedience and cherish daily in the Holy Sacrifice the memory of the mission which by God's will he has relinquished. Doubt not that your services will be usefully employed elsewhere to God's greater glory. The obedient man will speak of victories.<sup>63</sup>

Nature and grace combined to render Father Van Quickenborne admirably fitted for the career of religious pioneer and travelling missionary which he followed for fourteen years in a new and unsettled country on behalf of whites and Indians alike. He had a clear and

<sup>62</sup> General Archives, Society of the Sacred Heart. Bishop Rosati wrote in his diary August 17, 1837: "The Reverend Father Charles Van Quickenborne who had returned from the Indian Missions on account of health, died today at 11½ o'clock in the town of Portage des Sioux."

<sup>63</sup> Roothaan ad Van Quickenborne, September 30, 1837 (AA)



orderly mind, stored with a knowledge of Catholic theology as ready as it was accurate, a talent for controversy, valuable for one called on to deal with the grossest religious prejudices, and a happy command of the vernacular, which he put to good account in his sermons and expositions of Catholic doctrine. Though his health was chronically uncertain, his bodily constitution was in many respects a rugged one, suited to endure prolonged bodily exertion and fatigue. To mere physical discomfort, to physical suffering even, he was steadily indifferent. As an instance of his fortitude in this regard, it is recorded that on one occasion while he and his novices were engaged in cutting timber for the new building erected by them soon after their arrival at Florissant, one of the young men, who was eagerly squaring a log with an ax, had the misfortune to let the tool strike on the father's foot. Though the wound was a severe one, Van Quickenborne remained at his work, it was only when loss of blood made him about to faint that he consented to take a seat and have the wound bound with a handkerchief. He attempted to return on foot to the novitiate, almost three miles distant, but was unable to proceed and allowed himself to be set on a horse which had been sent for him. Burning with fever, he had to keep to his bed for several days, then, recovering sufficient strength to walk, though by no means a well man, he was back again with his novices preparing the timber for the new structure.<sup>64</sup>

Together with the patient endurance of physical discomfort and pain there went in Van Quickenborne a great store of natural energy. It was by persistent personal effort that he succeeded in collecting the money needed to finance his various works of piety and zeal. The journey of 1823 from White Marsh to Florissant, the building of the St. Charles church and of St. Louis College and the establishment of the Kickapoo Mission are instances in point. At St. Charles he personally solicited funds towards the erection of a new house for the Religious of the Sacred Heart. "Sure of \$300 00," said Father Verhaegen, "he will get the rest though he should wear out six pair of shoes by running through St. Louis on begging expeditions."<sup>65</sup>

But it was supernatural rather than natural virtue which supplied the dynamic to Van Quickenborne's tireless career. "Our Father Superior," so Verhaegen portrayed him to the Maryland superior, "is a man of exceeding piety, full of zeal and most persevering, in a word, dowered with every good quality."<sup>66</sup> Like all men of supernatural outlook, Van Quickenborne felt that unless the inner life of the spirit be kept at a high level, mere external occupations may starve rather than

<sup>64</sup> De Smet, *Western Missions and Missionaries*, p. 466

<sup>65</sup> Verhaegen to McSherry, St. Louis, October 16, 1833 (B)

<sup>66</sup> Verhaegen ad Dzierzynski, St. Louis, January 18, 1830 (B)

strengthen the soul "I am very well pleased with the trip I have made," he wrote to his superior on returning to Florissant from his first Osage excursion of 1827, "and have been amply rewarded by the divine goodness, which has pleased to give me a great desire of fraternal charity, obedience and mortification, I dare entreat your prayers that these desires may be brought into effect" <sup>67</sup>

The result of this spiritual viewpoint steadily maintained in the midst of the most absorbing ministerial labors was a singleness and sincerity of purpose that is ever the first point in the missionary's equipment. A certain severity of manner to those under his charge detracted in no small measure from the success of his administration, but the severity, more temperamental than deliberate, never obscured what was patent to all, his thorough devotion to the best interests of religion. A father who in writing to a superior had expressed himself in unfavorable terms of Van Quickenborne's government of the mission declared some years later "Father Van Quickenborne has become very dear to us all . . . I am now convinced that, all things considered, he acted according to the best of his ability and always had before his eyes, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*"

In the death of Father Charles Felix Van Quickenborne the group of Jesuits who in the eighteen-twenties began to till anew the field opened by missionaries of their order in the preceding centuries lost their most valued and successful worker and the chief organizer of their pious enterprise. Under his administration of the new Jesuit mission in the West and during the few years of labor that remained to him after retirement from office, much was accomplished in the way of successful pioneering. The foundations of the Missouri Province

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<sup>67</sup> Van Quickenborne to Dzierzozynski, Florissant, September 13, 1827 (B). Cf. also the following revealing letter "Yr favor of 10th of Jan last came duly to hand. That Mother Abbess was cleaver only on paper, but yr Rev. has been so in the purse for this and many other favours I return you my sincere thanks and hope to be grateful will yr rev. have now the patience to learn how cleaver a son you have in me? I took yr letter out of the Post Office when on the road to St. Louis whither I was called by a prisoner condemned to death, but since relieved having read a few lines of it, as it were, unable to proceed, I put it back in my pocket and began my meditation having considered that I came to Religion to enjoy the happiness yr rev. afforded me by telling me of my faults, I resumed courage and, as I thought, prepared for something more, I opened the letter again and read a few lines more of it, and after I had got that something more, not having courage to read further, I shut it again and resumed anew my meditation, at the end of which I read the whole and was convinced that nothing could more oblige me to yr rev. than the reception of such infallible marks of true Xtian love I beg therefore yr rev. not to omit them on account of my exceeding weakness, but rather to consider that I stand the more in need of them" Van Quickenborne to Dzierzozynski, February 12, 1828 (B).

of the Society of Jesus were laid, an Indian school at Florissant was opened and maintained for several years, St. Louis University was started on its career as a Jesuit institution, many of the outlying parishes of St. Louis were built up, Catholic missionary work among the western Indian tribes was taken up in occasional excursions to the frontier and by the establishment of the Kickapoo Mission, while the comforts of religion were brought periodically to the little knots of Catholic settlers scattered over western and northeastern Missouri and western Illinois. We conclude with a testimony from the historian of the Catholic Church in the United States, John Gilmary Shea: "To Father Van Quickenborne as the founder of the Vice-Province of Missouri and its Indian missions, too little honor has been paid. His name is almost unknown, yet few have contributed more to the edification of the white and the civilization of the red man, to the sanctification of all."<sup>68</sup>

#### § 6 VERHAEGEN AND THE INDIAN OFFICE

Information of interest both as to conditions in the Kickapoo Mission and the attitude towards it of government officials may be gleaned from the correspondence of Father Verhaegen with Washington in reference to the modest share of public money appropriated to the school. Transmitting to the secretary of war his first report on the mission-school, he wrote:

From the several letters which I have received from our missionaries during the last three months, it appears to me that it is more than probable that many of the Kickapoos will leave ere long the land which they occupy and repair to the Red River. The Chief had several conversations with the Rev. C[hristian] Hoecken, during which he stated that his main reason for wishing to move is that his men commit many excesses in drinking spirituous liquors. Intoxication, said he, prevails to such a degree among them that in a few years it will destroy all my people. I would prefer, Honorable Sir, to see our gentlemen employed among tribes that live at a distance from our frontier and I am decidedly of the opinion of our missionaries that the work of civilization would be promoted among such tribes in a more effectual manner. I mention these things in order that the Department may fully know what obstacles we have to surmount at present. If, therefore, our services will be accepted, we are ready to go and labor among the remotest Indian nations at any place that may be assigned to us. If the Kickapoos go away, what will become of the buildings which we have erected and the improvements which we have made? Considering the manners and the inconstancy of the Indian tribes, I think that to effect any lasting good among them, it is necessary that those who labor among them should conform as much as possible to their way of living and that expensive buildings

<sup>68</sup> Shea, *Catholic Indian Missions of the United States*, p. 466

should not be constructed on their lands before they are permanently settled on farms <sup>69</sup>

The allowance in behalf of the mission-school does not appear to have been a permanent one so that Father Verhaegen could count upon it annually. In March, 1839, he inquired of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Harris, first, whether he might draw upon the department for the balance of the five hundred dollars allowed him when he was in Washington in the spring of 1838, and secondly, whether he could rely upon further aid from the government in behalf of the Kickapoo school

Before I conclude I will barely remark to you, Honorable Sir, that we have at present three schools among the Indians and that, should all government aid be refused to me, I would be under the painful necessity of carrying on the work with private means alone. No account of the Kickapoo School was sent to the Department last year for this only reason, that I could add nothing new to the exhibit already forwarded and that, far from increasing, the number of pupils, owing to the unsettled and wandering condition of these Indians, has averaged but eight during the year <sup>70</sup>

To the Indian Office an average attendance of eight appeared to indicate too slight a measure of success to warrant a continuance towards the school of government support. Accordingly, a communication from Mr. Kuntz of the Indian Office to Father Verhaegen in the summer of 1839 informed him that the appropriation of five hundred dollars in behalf of the Catholic Kickapoo school would thenceforth cease. In his distress at this intelligence Verhaegen turned to his friend, Senator Benton of Missouri.

When I had the satisfaction of enjoying your presence during your recent visit at the University, I took the liberty of mentioning to you that for some reason or other the Department of Indian Affairs refused to pay me a balance of \$250 due to our Kickapoo school and that I had been informed that all further aid towards same establishment would cease with the expiration of the last half year. I have now the pleasure to state, Honorable Sir, that Major Pilcher has had the goodness to settle my account up to the 1st of July. This is, of course, as it ought to be. But, Honorable Sir, I cannot help thinking that the whole Catholic population of the United States has reason to complain of the withdrawal of the little assistance which Government had hitherto lent me in conducting schools among the Indians. The words "whole Catholic population" may perhaps surprise you. I will therefore explain myself. You recollect that about two years ago all the Bishops of our

<sup>69</sup> Verhaegen to secretary of war, St. Louis, November 5, 1837 (H)

<sup>70</sup> Verhaegen to Harris, St. Louis, March 28, 1839 (H)

Church assembled in Council at Baltimore. They represent this population. Now it is well known that during their session they unanimously requested the Society of which I am a member to embark in the work of the civilization of the Indian nations west of the State of Missouri. In consequence of their appeal to us, we undertook the work and the present Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis is acquainted with the success that has attended our exertions. I need not enter into more details, Honorable Sir, to convince you that while other denominations are patronized in their efforts to ameliorate the condition of the savages, it would prove exceedingly painful to my fellow Catholics to hear that they are entirely excluded from a share in the funds created by the Government for education purposes. I candidly mentioned in one of my letters to the Department that our school among the Kickapoos is badly attended and behold, a circumstance which exists, I believe, in every school of the kind, is assumed as the ground on which the annual allowance is withdrawn. It does not belong to me, Honorable Sir, to dictate to the officials of the Government the course which they are to pursue, but if I be compelled to give up my labors among the Indians for want of public encouragement, I trust that you, in particular, will not be offended at my stating to the world the cause of my proceeding.<sup>71</sup>

Father Verhaegen's protest was submitted by Senator Benton on November 7 to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Crawford with the senator's indorsement in favor of the continuance of the grant. In the meantime Major Joshua Pilcher, superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, had also intervened in behalf of the Catholic Kickapoo school, writing as follows to Crawford:

In looking over the correspondence between him [Mr. Verhaegen], Major Hitchcock and the Department on the subject, I found with regret a letter from Mr. Kuntz to Mr. Verhaegen discontinuing the little allowance of Five Hundred Dollars to the Catholic Mission for civilizing the Indians, and without questioning the correctness of Mr. Kuntz' motive, I beg leave to assure both you and him that it has been done under a mistaken apprehension of the relative degree of usefulness of the different missionaries among the tribes, as, from personal observation, I am enabled and will take the occasion to state that the Catholic missionaries are operating more effectually than all the missionaries I have seen north of Ft. Leavenworth, and that so far from being abandoned by the Government, there is no Society more deserving its patronage and protection. And under these circumstances (with due deference to Mr. Kuntz whose decision seems to have been based upon a report of Mr. Verhaegen relative only to the Kickapoo school, in which he was honest and candid), I would respectfully recommend that he be reinstated in his allowance and if it be not wholly incompatible with other permanent allowances out of the civilization fund, that the allowance to the Catholic mission be doubled. These gentlemen go into the country with no

<sup>71</sup> Verhaegen to Benton, St. Louis, August 10, 1839 (H)

other view than that of furthering the benevolent objects of the government, they carry with them no little "notions" for traffic, neither do they sell the accumulation of property, and however the efforts of all may fail, it is obvious that to effect a great change in the moral character of the Indians is the constant aim of the Catholic missionaries and that their present efforts are directed to that single object without regard to personal comfort or emolument.<sup>72</sup>

The representations of Major Pilcher and Senator Benton had the desired effect. Father Verhaegen was informed by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Crawford that the allowance of five hundred dollars would be continued for another year, but that a further continuance of this appropriation would depend on the future success of the school. Verhaegen, in acknowledging the commissioner's favor, was too honest to promise a success which he could not count on.

Permit me, Honorable Sir, to tender you my cordial acknowledgment for the favor conferred on the Missouri Catholic Association by the Department. My endeavors shall not be wanting to render the school more prosperous than it has been last year, but as this cannot be effected without the cooperation of the Indians and may, of course, be impeded by circumstances beyond my control, I cannot predict what will be the result of my efforts. At all events I will state the truth in my communication to the Department, let the consequence be what it may.<sup>73</sup>

As a matter of fact, the truth was stated without reserve by Father Verhaegen in a letter to Crawford.

I promised to acquaint you with the success of this establishment and made the necessary inquiries. I learned from the Missionaries who conduct said school, that in the course of last year from twenty-five to thirty pupils have frequented it, but I am bound in justice to add that the number of those who regularly attended averaged only ten. You conceive, Honorable Sir, that my expenses for a small Indian school are just as great as they would be for a large one, since the teacher is equally to be supplied. Hence, should the Department decide that the allowance is to be discontinued, it would not belong to me to object to the decision, but I would be unable to meet the expenses. Consequently, Honorable Sir, on the decision of the Department will depend the continuance or discontinuance of our exertions for the civilization and instruction of these Indians.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Pilcher to Crawford, St. Louis, August 19, 1839 (H). Joshua Pilcher (1790-1843) was appointed by President Van Buren to succeed General Clark as superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis on the death of the latter in 1838. Billon, *Annals of St. Louis in its Territorial Days*, p. 254.

<sup>73</sup> Verhaegen to Crawford, St. Louis, December 15, 1839 (H).

<sup>74</sup> Verhaegen to Crawford, St. Louis, September 1, 1840 (H).

## § 7 THE MISSION SUPPRESSED

The government appropriation to the Catholic Kickapoo school was finally withdrawn towards the end of 1840 and with the passing of that year the Jesuit mission among the Kickapoo closed its doors. When in May, 1838, Father Verhaegen visited the mission for the second time, he met the chief Pashishi, who besought him not to remove the missionaries for at least another year. "It is I who invited you to come here. I send my children to your school. You have done more good here in a year than others have done in five or six. You have cured our children of smallpox, you have befriended us in our needs, and you have been kind even to the wicked. The storm which makes the thunder roar above your heads will not last forever. The Kickapoo will change their conduct. Wait at least for another year and then I shall tell you what I think." Within the year Pashishi himself, vexed at the annoyance he had to suffer at the hands of the Prophet and his band, moved with some twenty families to a locality about twenty miles distant from the mission. With the departure in 1839 of Pashishi and many of his people, the band favorably disposed to the mission was practically dispersed and there remained only the Prophet's following from which the fathers could expect nothing but ill-will and even persecution.<sup>75</sup>

About the Christmas of 1840 Father Herman Aelen of the Potawatomi Mission at Sugar Creek passed through Westport, near the mouth of the Kansas River, on his way to the Kickapoo Mission on business connected with the closing of that establishment. He found a fellow-Jesuit, Father Nicholas Point, residing in Westport as temporary parish priest of that frontier settlement and invited him to be his companion on the journey. Point was shocked at what he saw in the Kickapoo village. "Here had our missionaries been laboring for five years in their midst," he exclaims, "and yet on Sunday during Mass you could scarcely see more than one of them in attendance at the chapel." He found Kennekuk, the Prophet, still lording it over the Kickapoo. "By his cool effrontery and persevering industry, this man, who is a genius in his way, succeeded in forming a congregation of three hundred souls, whom he used to assemble in a church which the United States Government had built for him, and palsied all the exertions of four missionaries of the Society." The Indians listened open-mouthed to the charlatan as soon as he began to speak of his revelations. The proof of his mission was a chip of wood two inches

<sup>75</sup> *Litterae Annuae*, 1838 (A).

wide and eight long, which was inscribed with outlandish characters symbolizing the doctrines he undertook to teach<sup>76</sup>

The failure of the Kickapoo to respond to the missionaries' efforts in their behalf gave the latter opportunities to exercise their ministry abroad. Besides making frequent excursions to the Indian tribes south of the Kansas River, they said Mass and administered the sacraments regularly at Fort Leavenworth, five miles from the mission, where a number of Irish and German Catholics were to be found among the soldiers. On such occasions music was often furnished by the soldiers' band, which was likewise heard at the greater church festivals in the Kickapoo Catholic chapel. Such an occasion was the Christmas of 1838 when the Prophet himself deigned to be present at the Catholic services. Besides attending Fort Leavenworth the fathers frequently crossed the Missouri River on missionary excursions through Jackson, Clay, Clinton and Platte Counties in western Missouri.<sup>77</sup>

The question of continuing or suppressing the Kickapoo Mission was frequently before Father Verhaegen and his consultors in St. Louis. At a meeting of the board, April 23, 1838, it was resolved not to abandon the mission, even though the Kickapoo moved away. But during the next two years so unpromising a situation developed that it was decided September 19, 1840, to close the mission. Father Eysvogels and Brother Claessens were directed to go to Sugar Creek and Brother O'Leary to the novitiate. Just a month earlier Verhaegen had written to the General reporting that the Kickapoo Mission was "utterly sterile" and intimating his intention to close it. He proposed that Sugar Creek be organized into a central missionary residence from which periodical visits could be made both to the Kickapoo and to the Potawatomi of Council Bluffs.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> "Recollections of the Rocky Mountains," tr. in *WL*, Vol. XII, from French ms. original in archives of St. Mary's College, Montreal.

<sup>77</sup> *Kickapoo Baptismal Register*, (H), contains numerous entries of baptisms administered by the Kickapoo missionaries in Independence and Liberty, Mo., among the French settlers at the mouth of the Kansas and in the counties of western Missouri organized out of the Platte Purchase.

<sup>78</sup> Verhaegen ad Roothaan, August 19, 1840 (AA). The Kickapoo school conducted by the Methodist Episcopal Church was apparently closed about the same time as the Catholic school, being supplanted by the Shawnee Manual Labor School under the direction of Rev. Thomas Johnson and J. C. Berryman. The 1839 report of the Kickapoo school is signed by Miss Lee, one of the teachers. "The school numbers sixteen scholars and has averaged that for a year or two past. These are tolerably regular, though of late through the detrimental influence of the prophet and others, we have found it difficult to keep the children in regular and orderly attendance, and it seems to me that at present it is almost impracticable to keep the school under good discipline and management, while the children can, at any moment when they become dissatisfied, abscond and go home with impunity." *RCIA*, 1839.



The final incident in the history of the Kickapoo Mission was put on record by Father Point

On the first of May, 1841, Father Point went from Westport in order to consume the last Sacred Host which remained in the tabernacle of this poor mission. He arrived at the Kickapoo village towards sunset. The first news that he heard upon dismounting from his horse was that about a mile from there a pagan was at the point of death, and consequently in great danger of losing his soul. He obtained an interpreter without delay and proceeded in haste to the house of the sick man, whom he found in despair as regards both body and soul, for the only words he uttered were these: "Everyone deserts me." "No, my brother, everyone does not desert you since I, who am a Black-gown, have come to help you, and this is certainly by the will of the Great Spirit Who wishes to save you." At these words the dying man rallies, confidence springs up in his heart, the minister of divine mercy speaks to him as is befitting such circumstances, and most satisfactory replies are given to all his questions. I helped him to repeat the acts of faith, hope and charity, and as death might take place at any moment, I asked myself why should I not baptize him without delay. The remembrance of St. Philip and the eunuch of Queen Candaces came to my mind, and regarding this as an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, I proceeded forthwith to the administration of Holy Baptism. On the morrow, he exchanged this perishable life for, as I hope, that life of bliss which will last forever. Was not this the sweetest bouquet which the missionary upon his first entrance into the field of labor among the Indians could offer to the Queen of Heaven, on the very day when the month consecrated to her honor begins? But how inscrutable are the judgments of God! This same day was the last of a mission which had been plunged into the deepest abyss of moral degradation by the scandalous conduct of people who pretend to civilization.<sup>79</sup>

Thus ended in failure the Kickapoo Catholic Mission set on foot by Father Van Quickenborne as the beginning, long delayed, of Jesuit missionary enterprise among the western Indian tribes. In 1846, six years after the fathers withdrew, Francis Parkman, the historian, visited the Kickapoo village as he started from the frontier to pursue the windings of the Oregon Trail.

The village itself was not far off, and sufficiently illustrated the condition of its unfortunate and self-abandoned occupants. Fancy to yourself a little swift stream working its devious way down to a woody valley, sometimes wholly hidden under logs and fallen trees, sometimes spreading into a broad, clear pool, and on its banks, in little nooks cleared away among the trees, miniature log houses, in utter ruin and neglect. A labyrinth of narrow, obstructed paths connected these habitations one with another. Sometimes we met a stray calf, a pig, or a pony, belonging to some of the villagers,

<sup>79</sup> "Recollections of the Rocky Mountains," *WL*, 12 321

who usually lay in the sun in front of their dwellings and looked on us with cold, suspicious eyes as we approached <sup>80</sup>

A year later, 1847, an incident occurred which relieved in some measure the discouraging issue of the mission among the Kickapoo. The principal chief of the tribe, on occasion of a visit with his two sons to the Jesuit Potawatomi Mission of Sugar Creek, related that a lady and a black-robe had appeared to him and bidden him embrace the religion of the black-robos. The chief was Pashishi, who had befriended the missionaries during their stay among the Kickapoo. In obedience to the vision which he claimed to have had he forthwith set out for Sugar Creek, but falling sick on the way, put up for a while at the Shawnee Methodist Mission where efforts were made to make him a Protestant. The missionaries in charge at Sugar Creek, Fathers Verreydt and Hoecken, were absent when the chief arrived there, but a diocesan priest, Father Bernier, who happened to be on the ground, conferred baptism on him as he earnestly requested. The Kickapoo chief was apparently in the best of dispositions to receive the sacrament and entered the church singing some hymns which he had learned for the occasion. "I should like to have seen Father Van Quickenborne at this moment," wrote Father Verreydt when reporting the incident to the General, "for he it was who began this mission amid so many contradictions." <sup>81</sup> In later years Jesuit missionaries were occasionally brought into touch with the Kickapoo. In November, 1861, a father from the Potawatomi Mission of St. Mary's made a visit to the tribe, who received him kindly, while during the sixties a number of Kickapoo boys were in attendance at the mission-school of St. Mary's. But after the end in 1841 of the missionary experiment inaugurated by Father Van Quickenborne, resident work among the Kickapoo was not again undertaken by Jesuit hands.

<sup>80</sup> Parkman, *Oregon Trail*, p. 4. The mission-house built by Father Van Quickenborne in "Kickapootown" stood on the farm of C. A. Spencer, by whom it was occupied as a residence until 1920, when it was demolished. "The old Mission was built of immense native walnut logs, hewn square, notched at the ends and fastened together with wooden pegs. The walnut still is considered valuable for it is in a perfect state of preservation and so thorough was the workmanship of the builders that the building was in a good state of repair up to the time workmen recently began to raze it. After its days of usefulness as an Indian Mission had passed, the old building was used as a hotel in 1854 under proprietorship of a man named Hays. The same year A. B. Hazzard published one of the first Kansas newspapers, "The Kansas Pioneer" there. In "border war" days it was headquarters for the famous organization, "The Kickapoo Rangers," and in 1857 a United States Land Office was opened under its roof, the office being moved to Atchison in 1861." Lawrence (Kansas) *Journal*, 1920 (month and day missing).

<sup>81</sup> Verreydt ad Roothaan, April 23, 1847 (AA).