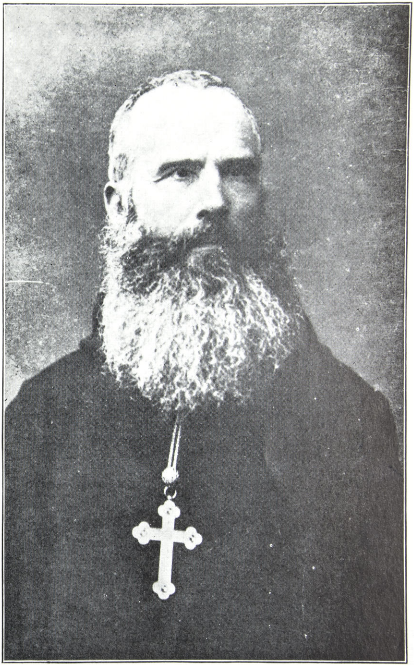
SACRED HEART MISSION AND ABBEY

The Sacred Heart Mission, now known as Sacred Heart Abbey, was founded in 1876, by Father or Abbot Isidore Robot, of the Order of St. Benedict. Father Robot was a native of France, born in Burgundy, July 17, 1837. His parents were well to do farmers, who gave him the benefit of excellent educational advantages. He was an accomplished writer in the French language and was possessed of a fair knowledge of music, especially of the plain chants and other sacred music of the Catholic Church. He was ordained to the priesthood of the Catholic Church, April 17, 1862. He served for one year as vicar general of the little diocese of Monaco. During the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, he served as a chaplain in the French Army.

In 1872, Father Robot answered the call of the Bishop of New Orleans for missionaries. He landed in the United States, January 28, 1873, and was assigned to a field of labor among the French and Creole French people of Louisiana, where he rendered faithful and effective service for several years.

Shortly after his appointment as prefect of the Indian Territory, on July 9, 1876, Father Robot came to the Shawnee-Pottawatomie Indian Reservation, which was jointly occupied by the people of the Absentee Shawnee and Pottawatomie tribes. The Pottawatomie people came to the country west of the Mississippi from Michigan and from the adjacent portions of Indian and Illinois, where French Catholic missionaries had lived and labored among them. When they removed to Kansas, in 1846, the Catholic Church sent its representatives ahead of them to the new reservation, where St. Mary's Mission was established by the time the Pottawatomies arrived. This mission was not moved with the tribe when it was transferred to a new reservation in the Indian Territory, however, though some of their youth were still sent back to Kansas to attend school there.

Many of the Pottawatomie people having accepted the



Rt. Rev. Isidore Robot, Founder of Sacred Heart Mission

Catholic faith and having been confirmed in its communion and having been for eight years removed from spiritual supervision of its ministry, except at rare intervals when some priest would pay them a brief visit, it was but natural that they should be overjoyed with the arrival of Father Robot and his fellow laborers with a proposition to establish a mission and school in their midst and for their benefit. The Pottawatomie reservation was a beauitful country, about thirty miles square, bounded on the north by the Sac and Fox and Kickapoo reservations, on the east by the Seminole reservation, on the south by the South Canadian River and on the west by the Indian Meridian. The lands of this reservation had been purchased for its new inhabitants at a price of fifteen cents per acre for grazing lands and thirty cents an acre for land suitable for farming.

Father Robot was not only warmly welcomed by the Pottawatomie people but they voluntarily offered to donate 640 acres of their tribal domain to him if he would settle among them and build and maintain a church and school. This offer was accepted and was subsequently approved and confirmed by the Government Indian office.

Father Robot's companions in the early days of the mission were Father Bernard Murphy, Father Felix Degrasse (who was a lineal descendant of Count Degrasse, who commanded the French naval forces which were allied with those of the revolting colonies in the war for American Independence), Father Adalbert Haffner, and his faithful servant, Brother Dominic Lambert. The planting of such an institution in the wilderness was no small task in those days. The nearest railway station was at Atoka, distant nearly seventy-five miles, whence lumber and other building materials and all sorts of supplies had to be freighted by wagon, over a rough, ungraded road, with no bridges or culverts.

Father Robot selected as a site for Sacred Heart Mission a location on the line of an old trail that had once been a military road, dating from 1835, and which was still used to some extent for freighting from Fort Smith as far west as Fort Reno. This spot was a well-known landmark which was locally known as Bald Hill. It had long been a favorite camping site by freighters, there being plenty of water and abundant grass in a pleasant valley just west of the hill. At the time of the establishment of the Mission, Government freight wagons still passed by occasionally, great, strong vehicles, with heavy wheels and wide tires, drawn by six mules, the lead mules usually being rather small, the middle team of medium size and the wheel mules almost invariably being fine, large animals. The driver rode the nigh wheel mule and drove the whole team with a single rein called a jerk-line.

The whole country seemed to be an immense pasture in which were numerous herds of range cattle and many horses, and wild game abounded everywhere. In traveling through the country, one might frequently see deer grazing quietly with the half-wild range cattle. Wild turkeys, prairie chickens and quails were so numerous that one scarcely noticed them as they sought safety in flight as they were approached. Almost every man that one met seemed to be armed with one or two Colt's revolvers, with a belt of cartridges and, not infrequently, a Winchester rifle as well. Quails were so numerous that the Indians would not waste powder in killing them.

With the help of the Indians, a log building was erected and this was the beginning of Sacred Heart Mission. After a time, lumber was hauled from Atoka and substantial buildings of a more permanent character began to arise. It was certainly a heroic undertaking to start a mission in such a place. There were no white men in the country except the few who had married Indian women. A free day school was established as soon as a suitable building could be completed and outfitted for the purpose. The children of Indians living within reach of this school attended it. Later on, when more buildings were available, a boarding school was opened and four Sisters of Charity came from Illinois to open a convent for girls. Some of the most prominent and wealthy people in the Indian Territory (including, among others, John Brown, chief of the Seminoles) sent their daughters to this school. The Sisters still continue their work at Sacred Heart, having Indian girls from many tribes (including the five civilized tribes) in their convent school, which is known as St. Mary's Academy.

Father Robot died at Dallas, Texas, February 15, 1887. He was succeeded by Rev. Ignatius Jean, a very zealous and devoted priest. He established several missions for scattered Catholics of the surrounding region. On the south bank of the Canadian River, there was a settlement of negro freedmen (i. e., former slaves of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians), who had no schools for their children. Father Jean proposed to them that, if they would build the log walls of a suitable structure, the Mission would have it properly roofed, furnish it for school purposes and send a teacher. The negroes gladly accepted the proposition and they were thus enabled to enjoy the benefit of a free day school, conducted under the auspices of the Mission, until the time came for them to select and settle upon allotments. After a few years, Father Jean returned to France, his native land, where he died.

Rev. Thomas Duperou, also of French birth, was the next head of the Mission. Father Dueprou carried on the work successfully for several years but finally, broken down with age and its infirmities, he, too, returned to France to die. Rev. Bernard Murphy, a young American priest, from Georgia, was the next superior. Father Murphy was the first American to administer the affairs of the Mission. He was succeeded in turn by Rev. Leo Garidor, a French priest who ruled the Mission with prudence and wisdom for several years. Father Garidor is still a very useful and faithful member of the community.

Rev. Celestine Smith, a young American priest from Columbus, Ohio, was the next head of the Mission. He was a very pious and zealous leader. Rev. Alphonso Sausen, a native American, from Minnesota, is the present superior. Father Sausen is a devoted priest and a thorough business man and Sacred Heart Mission is expected to flourish under his administration as it never has flourished before.

Sacred Heart Mission is still doing its good work, as the friend of humanity, especially for the benefit of the under privileged Indians and the down-trodden of every race and color, with no thought of reward except the satisfaction of following in the footsteps of Him who went about doing good. Its main object is to teach by advice and example the ways of civilized life to the Indian people and to place them on a level with their white brothers and sisters.

It would be scarcely just to close this account of Sacred

Heart without emphasizing the great credit that should be given to the members of that band of noble women, the Sisters of Charity, who have conducted an Indian convent in connection with the Mission for forty years past. Their house is open to visitors at all times and a visit there will convince anyone, even though previously prejudiced, of the thoroughness and effectiveness of the work that they are doing for and among the Indian girls. There is an air of culture and refinement in every nook and corner of the house. Those who have attended the schools of Sacred Heart Mission are glad to bear testimony to the great good accomplished in the unselfish work which has been done by the Fathers and Sisters who have labored in its precincts.

BROTHER JOHN LARACY, O. S. B.

Since the foregoing paper by Brother Laracy (which was written for the program of a meeting of the Pottawatomie County Historical Society) seems rather brief considering age and importance of the subject in hand, it is deemed fitting to supplement it by reprinting from the file of Sturm's Oklahoma Magazine, for July, 1909, an account of Sacred Heart Mission which was written by Joseph Lanchet, a young French immigrant, as he saw it in May, 1884. Mr. Lanchet had come into Oklahoma (then the Indian Territory), making brief stops at Bluejacket, Vinita, Chouteau, Muskogee, Eufaula, McAlester, and Atoka all of which were then villages or very small towns on the line of the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway. From Atoka, he had gone southward to Texas but he soon returned to that station, where the following narrative and description begins.

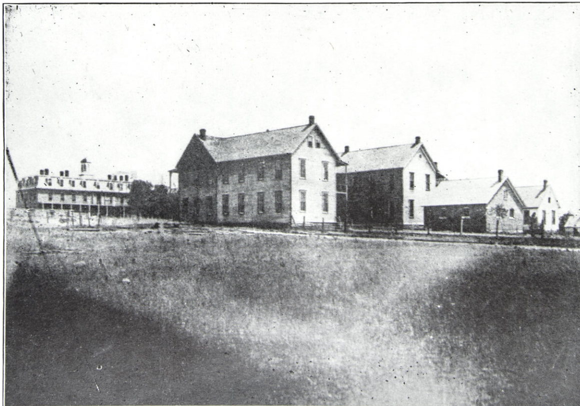
J. B. T.

DIARY OF A YOUNG FRENCH IMMIGRANT

BY JOSEPH LANCHET

May 12th, 1884. I am at Atoka again. With me are a Benedictine Monk, Brother Paul, and an Indian whose name is something like Nack-Nins-Cook. We are loading three wagons with lumber for the building of an addition to the college at Sacred Heart Mission.

Sacred Heart is about seventy miles northwest from here



Sacred Heart Abbey—1902-26

in the Pottawatomie reservation. It was founded in 1870 by Rev. Father Robot, a Benedictine missionary, from Pierre Qui Vires Yonne, France; the last successor to Father Joliet and Marquette in the last wild spot left in the United States.

At Atoka Father Robot found the first Catholic church ever built in the Indian Territory. It had been erected a few years previously by the efforts of an Irishman, John Harding, and service had been given by a missionary traveling over the railroad from Parsons, Kansas, to Denison, Texas. After the establishment of Sacred Heart a priest was sent from there from time to time, to say mass and minister to the spiritual needs of the small congregation.

May 13. We take the road to go back. The atmosphere is very heavy. The heat is stifling. Big black clouds hang high up in the air threatening, and to-day is the 13th; that is an ill omen and we shall be caught on the road by a bad storm, sure.

We are hardly five miles out of Atoka and our horses are completely wet with perspiration and panting as if they had suddenly got a bad case of the heaves.

But if one considers the condition of the roads it is not so very surprising to see the horses in that miserable plight, for there are simply no roads so to speak. There are only trails, and poor ones at that. And such a heat!

About nine or ten miles from Atoka is the mining camp of Lehigh. All the coal mines I have seen in the Indian Territory, thus far, are in the Choctow Nation. The country occupied by that tribe contains not only magnificent forests and fertile prairies, where the grass grows five feet tall, but on the bosom of the earth there are incalculable mineral riches yet untouched.

All the miners are white people and belong to several European nations. There are a good many Italians, a few Germans and Belgians, very few Frenchmen. A good workman earns from three to five dollars a day. That seems pretty good. But the miner is about the only member of his family, if he has one, that works, except when the boys get to be about twelve years old, then they begin to earn something themselves. Meanwhile the whole family live on his sole earnings, and in these parts most of life's commodities are very high in price, higher than in France, except for the meat. Raw meat, I mean, for when it is cooked it costs as much as in the old country; and to more effectively prevent him from growing rich there are frequent breakdowns, lock-outs, strikes, etc. Notwithstanding all this an industrious, sober, prudent miner may save a little money, but I have not yet heard of anyone having got rich at this hard labor.

About six o'clock p. m., we stop near a creek, in a prairie. We have traveled about foruteen miles since eleven o'clock a. m. In two minutes the poor foaming, panting horses are unhitched and stripped of their harness, and go to roll themselves in the dust of the road. Then, as Nack-Nins-Cook and I attend to them, Brother Paul prepares our supper.

The rain is imminent. We set up our tent, make the fire inside, and the cook goes to work. We have a French chef, just like the best favored American millionaires or the richest European potentates, and when the Indian and I smell the delicate and appetizing odors of the dishes he is preparing for our meal, we feel very hungry and very impatient to eat. But we have to wait.

We are so hungry that we think our French chef is very slow. Does he not, perchance, like a mischievous old boy, take a delight at making us wait? We help him and try to spur him on, but to no avail. Then, as a means to silence and forget a little of our hunger, Nack-Nins-Cook and I go to tie the horses in the prairie with long ropes provided at one end with a steel or iron pin about eighteen inches long, which we stick in the ground. They call these ropes lariat ropes, and so tied, the horses are going to browse on the grass around them as far as the length of the ropes will permit all night long, if they so wish.

We have hardly got back under the tent after having performed that task, and right at the moment when Brother Paul finishes and bestows his last cares to the supper, a torrent of rain pours down from the heavens as if we were going to have another universal deluge, striking our tent with such force that it causes a deafening roar. Big, great, lurid and dazzling streaks of lightning succeed one another in all directions, precipitately, and without interruption, while rumblings of the thunder are continuous and formidable. One would think that the earth is going to crack open and be broken all to pieces, at least the part of the earth where we take our supper.

I think that is what some travelers tell us is a tropical storm, or a storm of the tropics, one can take it which way one likes best.

The horses which, according to Buffon, are the noblest animals of creation—(man not accepted?), press their tails between their hind legs, turn their croup to the windward, bend down their heads and resign themselves stoically to submit to that furious downpour.

Their drivers, under the tent, are as well as if they were in a house. We proceed with our supper, making the best of the last glimmering of light of a closing, stormful day, so prodigally supplemented by wireless electric lights, as serenely and with as good an appetite as if we could see the sun go down on the western horizon in a cloudless sky, and surely better than we would have if we were seated down at Delmonico's. Would you like to know what kind of supper we have? Here is our bill of fare: Fried Irish potatoes, a la graisse; Jambon roti, dans san jus; apple butter, au sucre; bread, no butter, coffee and clear, good water.

Although prepared by a French chef, that supper has nothing stylish about it, but we all found it good, fine. Its smell had not spoiled our appetite at all. Besides, our cook did not consider his work finished when he had spread it ready on the table—or, rather on a mat on the ground, but he continued to season it with stories while we were busy eating. After he had got the bill of fare done in good shape and given it an appetizing appearance, he still helps us to digest it with his wits. It is not all cooks, be they French, Japanese, or colored, that are willing or able to do as much.

In the course of the evening I find myself busy considering that Indian who is freighting with us. I have known him for several months now, and we have traveled over this same road together several times already, yet I find he is as interesting to look at and study, as when I first saw him. He is a Pottawatomie and a fine type of his race. Standing he must be about six feet tall. Just now he is seated, like the rest of us, on a buffalo robe spread on the ground, his legs forming a half circle and crossed. He is broad shouldered, and in proportion to his stature, is big, fat; he is even inclined to obesity. He is about forty years old (I never inquired about his age), and when standing up, straight as a sapling. His head is remarkable, of a copper colored hue, very pronounced, is impassive; his countenance is calm, full of dignity. When talking you believe he weighs his words and measures his jestures, like a bishop, a king, or a sage, even more than they. A smile lingers sometimes on his thick, red lips, and in his big benevolent, black eyes. And when one observes this big fellow for an instant one cannot help but think that the saying that the only good Indians are the dead ones is not exact, for this one, if his physiognomy indicates anything, must be a good one, though living. It is said he is a good shot and a good swimmer; but one cannot say that of most Indians. He also has a reputation of being an honest man and a good workman; and I have myself made the remark that he does well what he has to do, but he does it slowly and almost mechanically.

May 14, 1884.—I slept the sleep of the just, between Nack-Nins-Cook and Brother Paul. That Indian never knew the use of a tomahawk, neither did he kick or use his fists at all during the entire night; he is what the French call a "bon couchuer," a good bed fellow, and I wake up with my scalp yet on my head and in good spirits.

I may be mistaken, but if I judge them right the redskins are generally good natured and will hurt nobody unless provoked first. Notwithstanding the absence of police there are very few crimes committed among them; if they sometimes do wrong it can safely be said that nine times out of ten they do it at the suggestion, at the instigation, of some white people. The gangs of outlaws that overrun the country are almost composed of white fellows. If there be any Indians among them one may take it for granted that he is a very civilized and spoiled one—spoiled by white influence.

One hour after we have got up the breakfast is ready, eaten; the horses fed, harnessed, hitched up—off we go. The wind blows from the south, a few small, flaky and tardy clouds, are dissipated and the sun rises up at the east, over the hills resplendent.

Very soon, under the combined action of his hot rays and of the wind the road dries up. Nevertheless, at the start, the wheels of the heavily loaded wagons would sometimes sink

Sacred Heart Mission—1876-1901

down in the mud ten inches. We have to incessantly clap our tongue, crack our whip and call, "Gee dop, gee dop," to the horses and the poor beasts pull their heavy load with all their will and all their might. You believe sometimes that they pull away with a desperate energy, and every quarter of a mile have to stop, out of wind and exhausted.

We never use the whip on them except when circumstances call for a pull extremely vigorous, prompt and decisive, but that happens very seldom. The horses are well cared for, kindly treated; we never exact from them an unreasonable or an impossible amount of exertion, and the result is that they are intelligent, as much as an animal can be, courageous and always ready to do the bidding of their driver whenever they hear and understand his voice.

After noon the road is far better and we come to camp at about two miles northeast of a small village of perhaps fifty inhabitants. We are now in the Chickasaw Nation and the village is called Stonewall.

May 15.—At six o'clock a. m., we depart. Yesterday we traveled mostly across forest and a rocky broken country; to-day we go over some charming dales, we climb some sunny, flowery hillsides. What a pity that one cannot get a piece of that fertile and useless land, raise wheat and corn in the valley, set out an orchard and a vineyard on the slope of that hill; and, near by, on the banks of that stream, build a cottage with a vegetable garden beside it and a good lawn with plenty of flowers and fruit!

But—unless he marries an Indian maiden, a white man cannot own any land. Even then, the land is not his; but he can raise crops and cattle, sell them and—pocket the money. And although it does not positively belong to him, he has a home. Those are the chief reasons, I believe, that prompt many white folks to marry Indian young ladies—or old ones. As many of them are very nice, very genteel, there are also very probably some genuine love affairs in these marriages; but can a white and an Indian, married together, make a happy couple long—after the honeymoon is over? Yet look at Dillon and Hebert, of Atoka,—they are all right; they are well off and have each a charming family. By the way, I wonder if that young man Bassett is not courting pretty Miss Hebert. And again, look at Murray, of Erin Spring, who has a boy and a girl at school at Sacred Heart. He is a rich cattleman, perhaps a millionaire.

Well, there may be happy unions between redskins and pale faces, and you who have a romantic, adventurous turn of mind or who want to marry for lucre, take notice.

I? No. My ambition and my ideals do not run in that line. Let met have that dear old and humble home, shaded by those great walnut and chestnut trees, encircled with grape vines, nestled on the beautiful and picturesque mountain side, with all the sweet memories it calls back to mind.

But I must not indulge in such reminiscences. It is not healthy. It hurts.

About eight miles north of Stonewall we climb a high hill with steep slopes. I have been told that in the neighborhood there are indications of iron ore; there are also petrified matters, the most notable being an entire oak tree, of which Brother Paul gets part of a limb. On the top of that hill, which is a part of a chain that runs across the Indian Territory from east to west, and from where is enjoyed a very extended view over the country around, there is a good spring of cool, clear water bubbling out of the rocks. We stop, and horses and drivers quench their thirst with an evident satisfaction. A little farther northwest we descend into a deep creek, to climb up the opposite bank, a forty degree escarpment. We take the team of the second wagon, add it to the first one, use the tongue and the whip, and—out of the hole we are.

In a few minutes the three wagons are thus pulled up out of that creek, which they call Big Sandy, without mishap.

At sundown we reach the South Canadian River, where we camp. The valley here is quite narrow and is almost entirely occupied by the river bed. On the banks, both sides of the river, one sees some fine trees, nothing extraordinary, however.

May 16, 1884.—Sometimes after heavy rains or in consequence of the rapid melting of the snow in the Rockies, the river rises and fills up all the space between the two banks with an impetuous flood of thunderous murky waters. Then it is dangerous to attempt a crossing on account of the quicksands, into which horses and wagons may sink and be lost.

But to-day the river is good, the water is low and we cross easily.

The Pottawatomie Reservation—Sacred Heart Mission.

We are now in the Pottawatomie reservation. At about two miles to the east is the Seminole Nation. Five miles almost due north we shall find the monastery of Sacred Heart Mission. That is where our trip will end, for the present.

Since we left Atoka, and exclusive of Lehigh and Stonewall, we have not seen ten dwellings on our passage of over seventy miles. A few were built of lumber and others with the trunks of trees—such as the woodmen and the charcoal makers build on our mountains. Those built with tree trunks or logs are called log houses and are generally inhabited by negroes. These negroes are liberated ex-slaves or their descendants. They belong to the Indians, Choctaws and Chickasaws. After the civil war the Choctaws adopted theirs and they are now members of that tribe; the Chickasaws tolerate theirs in their nation but did not adopt them.

After we have crossed the Canadian River we climb up a series of table lands rising over one another with easy grades and shadowed by grand oak trees. The beams of a bright sun filter through the thick leafy branches which form at many places like a green bower above our heads; and that varied combination of lights and shades produces enchanting effects in this verdant, quiet and majestic landscape.

But here is a grave a few feet from the road. It is surrounded by rails that protect it against carniverous animals —not against all, however. No epitaph on that grave—only a cross at the top of the nearest tree. Who lies there, in that soltary tomb in the wilderness, in that abandoned tomb on which the passer-by casts an indifferent look and of which nothing will remain after a few years? Who, and how dead? Many conjectures present to one's mind in answer to these questions, but they are so many blanks. How many lives thus end, dramatically, violently, perhaps, mysteriously, and not the least trace of anything left!

We sight now, on our left, the first Pottawatomie home. It is a log house having several rooms and a comfortable look. Close by is a small orchard, with fine trees, in full bearing, and a cornfield. And there on the porch, seated in a rocking chair, is the owner of that home, reading a newspaper. I am told he is an American married to a Pottawatomie lady. They call him Colonel—one can find more Colonels in the Indian Territory than there are privates in the United States army—he is Colonel Young. That is the kind of savage one finds in the center of the Indian Territory.

We are in the timber again. Soon we see a girl on horseback coming in our direction. She is an Indian girl, thirteen or fourteen years old, the daughter of that man we have just seen reading. An Indian—this young lady riding with as much ease and grace as our Parisiennes at the Bois de Boulogne. Slender, blonde as ripe wheat, with blue laughing eyes, little mocking mouth, a rosy complexion, a little dimple on her cheek—an Indian! One would rather believe she is of pure Anglo-Saxon blood, a sister of Gretchen or a daughter of Albion.

She answers to our greeting with a slight nod of the head and a good morning wrapped up in smiles. She looks us square in the eyes. She is evidently not afraid of three freighters; but then I suppose she knows who we are. She rides in the woods all alone, by herself, and is safe, even in this Indian wilderness.

We pass three more houses, and we reach by the east side the top of the highest hill there is in this locality. This is Bald Hill. Let us stop a few minutes to give our horses time to catch their breath, and let us look. In front of us, not quite half a mile distant, at the foot of the west slope of the hill on a little knoll, is the monastery of Sacred Heart Mission and the convent. The sudden view of these edifices in such a retired spot in striking. The monastery is a frame building of some two hundred feet in length, from south to north, to which an addition is presently made to be used as a school. The building is two stories high with two little square towers at about the middle of its length and distant from each other about twenty or twenty-five feet; between the two towers, at the height of the second story, is a gallery; below this the porch preceding the main entrance to the monastery, while above, on the roof, is a metallic statue from Paris, France, of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. At about three hundred feet south is the convent and the school for girls. North of the monastery are the stables, and, on a row from east to west, the

BROTHER JOHN LARACY, SACRED HEART ABBEY

employees' house, the blacksmith's shop, the tool house, the carpenter shop and the bakery; on another row, more to the north, are the wagon sheds, a granary and four-horse-power engine used to saw wood, thresh, etc.

Like the monastery, the convent is surmounted by a cross. Both buildings are well located and have a fine setting. The dark, green, wooded hill that is half a mile farther west forms an admirable back ground. They stand there on that little knoll, shut up, so to speak, on three sides by hills, with an opening to the south which affords a good view in that direction; they are as in a nest with forests on the north and the west and prairies on the east and south; they are snugly nestled in the center of Indian Territory, hidden from the impertinent looks of the world midst silence and peace and surrounded by the handiwork of the Creator.

From the top of the hill, where we are, one has a splendid view of the surrounding country. Toward the south and the east that view can reach twenty to thirty miles over prairie and forests. And right at our feet the hill is covered with a fine carpet of green grass, enlivened by brilliant colored flowers which captivate the eyes and seem to graciously offer themselves to be admired, to cheer up and perfume one's existence. It is altogether of a poetic and sweet beauty that makes one feel happy to live and in such balmy air.

It is 10:15 a. m. We go down by a wide avenue bordered on each side by two rows of catalpas. One can now discover that silence does not reign supremely here as one might have supposed a little while ago. In front of the monastery, boys, dressed like they are in our mountains, (I mean the Alps) and in their shirt sleeves, are busy with various games and quite boisterous—as boys are everywhere—while in front of the convent little girls and young ladies are also at play on the green lawn. The occasional screams and the sonorous and clear laughs of that youth in such a pleasing scenery contrast agreeably with that almost mute solitude we have been through.

But we are home safe and in good health. Nothing happened to sadden or mar our trip. No bad Indian, no coyote, no outlaw. The worst that befell us besides the storm we experienced the first night on the road was this morning when our French cook burnt our breakfast bacon to a crisp. But we teased the cook, ate the bacon all the same and have not felt any bad effects from it yet.

We have been gone seven days. Everybody seems pleased to see us back and extends us friendly and noisy greetings, even the dog, except Brother Dominic Lambert. This is the boss. He knits his brows and asks us if any accident befell us that we should have been so long on the road. He superintends the unloading of the wagons and all the while is about as pleasing as a chestnut burr. Presently we go to dinner. This time we have an Irish cook, Brother John Laracy, and we eat the best dinner we had in one week.

Originally the Pottawatomie Indians used to hunt and live on that part of the great American republic which is now the state of Michigan. About three quarters of a century ago, to make room for the incoming white pioneers, they sold their lands to the United States government, crossed the Mississippi, and came to settle on one part of what is now the state of Kansas, that had been set aside expressly for them. In 1872, many left Kansas and came to live in Indian Territory on the lands given them by the federal government.

This reservation is said to contain 575,877 acres. Divided between 1,180 persons that would give each one a little over 484 acres. It is watered by three rivers and numerous small streams; there are in it fine oak forests, a few small prairies, but in general it is rather a broken and rough country. As a rule it is fertile, but it is more suitable for fruit culture, dairying and the raising of stock than for the profitable culture of the cereals; it is better adapted for intensive than for extensive culture.

The Pottawatomie Indians are almost all Catholics. In 1870, wishing to have a priest of that faith among them, they offered Rev. Father Robot a section of land on which he was to build a church and a school house where their children could be taught free. That proposition was accepted. Rev. Father Robot settled here with Brother Dominic Lambert, started to build a log house in which mass was celebrated on Sundays, and later they erected the buildings we have seen on our arrival.

From the first a farm was also organized. A few grapevines and a few fruit trees were set out, and a garden very soon furnished enough vegetables for the use of the missionaries. Year by year the fields were enlarged, a few more grapevines and few more fruit trees were planted until now there is quite a little orchard and vineyard, and about one hundred acres in culture. At the time I am writing this, fields, garden, orchard, and vineyard promise bounteous crops.

When one thinks of it one is surprised that the Indian don't have the ambition, neither the courage, the energy, to have and work a good little farm, everyone of them. There is plenty of room to choose the best land and the most convenient places. With a little industry they all could be well off. But they are too lazy. They can work for other people when they are forced to it by hunger; but they cannot work for themselves and be independent. They possess the reservation in common, and they build their huts here and there, anywhere, under big trees and as close to a spring or a perennial stream as possible, seldom stay very long on the same place, and not fifteen per cent can boast of a potato or cornfield of any importance.

"Why don't you work like us?" asked one day of a friend of mine, to a young Indian, about twenty years old. "If you would work like white people you would have your pockets full of money."

"What would be the use?" was his calm answer. "I don't want to kill myself to make money! what for, when I have clothes to wear and food to eat? I have all I need. White people kill themselves to live."

I believe the answer shows the character of most Indians.

Notwithstanding this, the Pottawatomies are intelligent. Some of them have been to college, know Latin and can play on the organ. A few young ladies can play on the piano; but I am in doubt as to whether they can darn a sock, make bread or prepare a good soup. A few young men can also play on the violin, and dancing parties are of frequent occurrence. Like every other youth, Indians do love to dance.

If he has a larder empty most of the time he nevertheless likes to be well dressed. He affects gaudy, showy colors. He is polite, speaks little and speaks slowly, as if he had to choose the exact word used for the expression of his thought before he utters it. Whenever they have to work, or want to, they are skillful workers in the fields or in the shop. There is not one farming implement they don't know exactly the special use and the right way to use it; and nothing amuses them so much as to see a white fellow in a quandary in presence of a modern agricultural tool or implement he knows nothing about. That makes him smile and feel happy.

Quite a number of white men are married to Pottawatomie ladies. Some are in easy circumstances, but none that I know of are very rich.

The best thing about life at Sacred Heart is that one has no intimation whatever of the existence of any administration. There is no prefect, sub-prefect, nor mayor; there is no tax collector, field keeper, game keeper, river keeper, forest guard, road engineer, policeman or gendarmes. For a Frenchman who could not take ten steps in France without bumping his nose against a uniformed functionary of some kind or other, this is a pleasant and very welcome relief. One feels as free as an eagle that soars up in the air and it seems that one can breathe easier.