

JEAN-PIERRE AULNEAU
OF THE
SOCIETY OF JESUS
MISSIONARY TO WESTERN CANADA

A THESIS

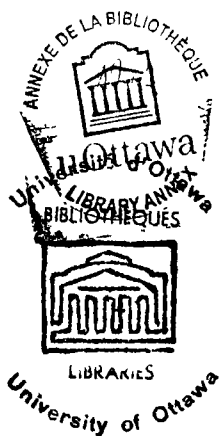
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CHAPTER I

The dawn of the sixteenth century found the peoples of Christian Europe stirring to an uncontrollable urge, that of discovering new lands, where the Gospel might be preached to the nations who were still sitting in darkness; where fortunes might be amassed and immortal glory won. Following this threefold impulse, brave men, taking their lives in their hands, ventured into the unknown.

Portuguese navigators had sailed further and further southward until, in 1497, Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope, then sailing north and east, landed at Calicut in May, 1498. Six years previously, in 1492, a Genoese mariner, Christopher Columbus, had secured the patronage of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain for his scheme of seeking another way to the East. His plan was to sail westward until he should reach the coast of Cathay. The Bahama Islands, where he landed, he mistook for the outlying possessions of the Great Khan, and for this reason he called them the Indies.

In 1513, other Spaniards, under Balboa, crossed the Isthmus of Panama and looked on the Western Sea. This discovery opened men's eyes to the fact that the newly-found continent was not Asia, though they still clung to the idea that a few days' sailing would bring them to the shores of China and Japan. Magellan's epoch-making voyage around the globe, a voyage which lasted three years, finally dealt this theory its death blow. Two seas, not one, lay to the west, and between them loomed the huge mass of two continents

connected by a narrow neck of land.

But though one mystery was solved, there were scores of others to tempt would-be explorers. What was the extent of the Americas, and what secrets did they hold? For two hundred years, adventurers from Europe, and the native-born sons of the colonists strove to find the inland passage to the Western Sea.

Foremost among the peoples of the old world in this new quest for glory were the French, who, having claimed the northern half of North America for the King of France, dreamed of founding there a vast colonial empire. Their herald was Jacques Cartier, who in three voyages between the years 1534 and 1541, sailed up the St. Lawrence River as far as Montreal. In 1608 Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec and, before his death in 1635, had penetrated the interior as far as Lake Nipissing, Georgian Bay, and the northern part of New York State, all the time striving to reach the Western Sea. Jean Nicolet pushed back the frontier to Green Bay on Lake Michigan. Radisson and his brother-in-law Medard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers were the first white men to explore Lake Superior and the surrounding territory. They entered the upper waters of the Mississippi and explored a part of Lake Michigan, but, learning that the best beaver country lay towards the north they turned their steps in that direction, where again they were pioneers, being the first of Europeans to make the over-land journey to Hudson's Bay. This was between 1661 and 1663. Ten years later, the Jesuit, Jacques Marquette and the royal

hydrographer of New France, Louis Joliet, explored the whole of the Upper Mississippi as far as the confluence of the Arkansas river. Robert Cavalier de la Salle, whose dream of finding the coveted passage to China, is immortalized in the name given to his seigneurie, Lachine, followed the Mississippi to its mouth in 1682, but it was a sore disappointment to him to find that the great river flowed into the Atlantic Ocean and not, as he had hoped, into the Gulf of California.

From 1678 to 1681 Daniel Greysolon Dulhut with his brother Charles, Sieur de la Tourette established trading posts in the country north and west of Lake Superior, the chief of which was at the mouth of the Kaministikwia River. Dulhut made extensive journeys throughout the country southwest of Lake Superior, besides establishing friendly relations with the Indian tribes of the West. About 1688, Jacques de Noyon made his way still further west to Rainy Lake, on the western side of which, at the mouth of Rainy River, he built a temporary trading post; then travelling down Rainy River, he, first of white men, saw the Lake of the Woods. De Noyon's exploration made such an impression upon the colonial authorities that about 1716 they recommended to the King the establishment of three trading posts, one at the mouth of the Kaministikwia, a second on Rainy Lake, and the third on the Lake of the Woods. When this line of communication was formed a party of fifty picked men was to be chosen under a competent leader to make a dash for the Western Sea. Two years would be

required for the execution of this plan, the cost of which the King was asked to cover by granting the sum of fifty thousand pounds for the enterprise. The court did not see fit to advance the money and the officer deputed to build the three forts, considered that one, at the mouth of the Kaministikwia, was sufficient, but the competent leader was even then preparing to emblazon his name across the pages of Canadian history. He was Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye. Born on November 17th, 1685, in the historic town of Three Rivers, of which his father was governor, Pierre entered the Army as a cadet at the age of twelve. Having received appointment as an ensign in 1707 he served in the War of the Spanish Succession. He won his spurs in the bloody battle of Malplaquet where he was wounded nine times, and left for dead on the field. Though he had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant there was little hope of further advancement for him, because he had no influence in high places, and in 1712 he determined to return to Canada. Given charge of the fur-trading post on the St. Maurice River, and later, of the more important fort on Lake Nipigon,¹ he heard many tales of the Western Sea from Indians² and fur traders.

La Verendrye was convinced that the long-sought goal was within reach; acting on his conviction he returned to

1. The post established by La Tourette in 1678.
2. One Ochagach averred that paddling westward along a great river, he had come to a point where the water ebbed and flowed.

Quebec, where he was willingly accorded permission, but no material help for his expedition of discovery, except the rather dubious favour of a monopoly of the fur trade in all the territory which he would explore. With him went three of his sons, Jean-Baptiste, Pierre, and Francois, his nephew Christophre du Frost, Sieur de la Jemmeraye³, who was to be his second in command, with a crew of fifty men, soldiers, canoe men and hunters. This was in 1731.

Still the party was not complete; there was no missionary. The French explorers were not mere adventurers, they were empire-builders, whose aim was to conciliate the native tribes, civilize them, and make them willing subjects of the King of France. A missionary was, therefore, indispensable on every voyage of discovery. Champlain had brought to Canada, first the Recollets and later the Jesuits. Maisonneuve had secured the aid of the Sulpicians in his colony of Montreal; the Jesuit, Marquette was co-discoverer of the Mississippi; the Sulpicians, Dollier de Casson and Galinée had accompanied La Salle on his first expedition in 1669. La Vérendrye had as his first missionary Father Charles Mesaiger, S.J.⁴, who joined the company of voyageurs at Michilimackinac. After

3. La Jemmeraye was the son of La Vérendrye's sister; she had a daughter Marguerite, who later became Mme. d' Youville, foundress of the Sisters of Charity, popularly known as the Grey Nuns.

4. Father Charles-Michel Mesaiger, or Messenger, was born in Paris, 1689, studied at the College, Louis le Grand, taught humanities and rhetoric in France before coming to Quebec in 1722. From 1723 to 1731 he was stationed at Michilimackinac.

two years in the wilderness Father Mesaiger's health broke down, forcing him to return to Montréal in 1734.⁵ From the Superior of the Jesuit missions in Canada, Father de Lauzon, La Vérendrye obtained the appointment of a successor to Father Mesaiger, a young priest, newly arrived from France, Father Jean-Pierre Aulneau de la Touche.

5. Father Mesaiger was attached to the College at Quebec from 1735 to 1749, when his weakened health forced him to return to France. He died at Rouen in 1766.

CHAPTER II

Father Aulneau¹ was a native of the heroic province of La Vendée², at that time called Bas-Poitou. His family were "Sieurs et Seigneurs de la Touche", whose seat was at Moutiers-sur-le-Lay, where Jean-Pierre was born, April 21, 1705, the eldest of the family. The Aulneaus, like the rest of the Vendean nobility, lived in patriarchal simplicity³. Contrary to the usual custom of the French aristocracy, they remained on their estates, instead of flocking to Versailles to enhance the splendour of the court, and to sap the vitality of the country. The relations between the land-owners and their dependents were most cordial. The noble was to his tenants almost as a father. He visited them, talked to them of their interests, shared their misfortunes, as well as their joys. The lord of the manor was a willing guest at every peasant's wedding-feast, nor did his lady disdain to join in the dancing which was part of the regular Sunday entertainment in the courtyard of the chateau. According to the testimony of an eminent prelate⁴ in the next century,

"The nobility in this country had enough confidence in itself not to seek that artificial magnificence which needs to be heightened by arrogance, and it had, especially, a faith that was deep enough and practical enough to realize that between one Christian and

1. Also spelled Auneau.

2. In 1790, the National Constituent Assembly substituted the name of La Vendée from a small river which marks the boundary.

3. de Volkaersbeke, K. Charette et La Vendée, P.8-12. Brochet, L. La Vendée à travers les âges, vol.11, P.329-331

4. Mgr. Pie, in the funeral oration of Mme. de la Rochejacquelin.

anotherthe difference in rank should be signalized only by superiority in breeding and courtesy".

In 1793, one of the Vendean insurgents wrote to Danton,⁵

"We had nobles who loved us, who treated us with inexhaustible kindness, who stood by us, who came to our assistance, who fought for us and enabled us to live in peace, under the protection of their standards and their swords".

These cordial relations between master and tenant are attributable partly to the character of the Vendean, partly to the influence of religion.

The province divides roughly, into two parts;⁶ one, le Marais bordering on the Atlantic, low and marshy; the other, le Bocage, north and east of the marshes, hilly and wooded. Between them lies a narrow strip of arid land called the Plain. Physical conditions make life hard in La Vendée. The land must either be cleared of the forests or reclaimed from the sea - a work which was begun by the monks in the twelfth century, and received a notable impulse in the reign of Henry IV. This incessant warfare with the elements makes the Vendean energetic, and at the same time resigned. Accustomed to struggle, he can face death calmly; a stranger to luxury, he is capable of heroic sacrifice; living close to nature, he acquires the habit of silence and reflection. But the Vendean is far from passive. Proud and independent, he obeys, but only those who have won his confidence. Julius Caesar found him very refractory;-mala gens,

5. de Volkaersbeke, K. loc. cit.

6. de Volkaersheke, K. loc. cit.

Brochet, L. op. cit. Vol.1, P.1-7

is his characterization of the men of Lower-Poitou. Oppression in any form the Vendean will not tolerate, witness the insurrection of 1548 against the iniquitous gabelle,⁷ and the epic war of La Vendée,¹ wherein the men of one small province braved the might of Revolutionary France, which sought to deprive them of their ages-old religion. The Vendean is not, by nature, a soldier; he is too firmly attached to the soil for that. Only the menace to his faith made him take up arms in one of the most heroic struggles of all history, for he is, above all things, a man of faith.⁸

The faith was first planted in the West of France by St. Hilary, the Bishop of Poitiers, the implacable enemy of Arianism. The work of evangelization was begun as early as A. D. 353, though not completed until three centuries later. In 601, at the death of St. Martin of Vertou,⁹ the second apostle of La Vendée,¹ the province was entirely Christian.¹⁰ The foundation of numerous monasteries insured the future of the Church in La Vendée¹ by providing centres of education and missionary recruiting agencies.

7. Salt tax.

8. de Volkaersheke, K. loc. cit.

9. St. Hilary and St. Martin were gratefully cherished by the Vendean. At the beginning of the fourteenth century seventy-two churches were dedicated to St. Hilary and nineteen to St. Martin. Only the Blessed Mother of God, and St. Peter could lay claim to a more widespread cult, she with eighty-one churches, he, with forty-four.

10. Brochet, L. op. cit. vol.1, P.123-124.

Fourteen abbeys founded in the two hundred years from 1007 to 1210 are eloquent testimony to the firm hold which the faith had taken in La Vendée.¹¹ Mediaeval religious enthusiasm reached its apex in the Crusades when tens of thousands of Europeans descended on Asia to "re-conquer ruins and a tomb." Of these hosts, one of La Vendée's sons, Guy de Lusignan, was destined to wear the crown of the ill-fated kingdom of Jerusalem.¹²

Some four hundred years later, the Vendéans were again summoned to defend their Catholic heritage, this time against a foe much nearer home. In the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century, Bas-Poitou suffered horribly, more horribly perhaps than any other part of France. The new religion, it is said, was introduced into Poitou by Calvin himself. During the fifty years of civil war that followed on the break-up of Christian unity, churches and monasteries were burned and sacked; among others the church of St. Peter and the episcopal chateau of Moutiers-sur-le-Lay, the one being burned, the other appropriated by the Calvinists.¹³ The bishopric of Luçon, in which almost the whole of La Vendée is included, was sacked during the religious revolt of Soubise, in 1622. To grasp the strength of the Protestant attack on Bas-Poitou one need only remember that La Rochelle,

11. Brochet, L. op. cit. vol.1, p. 239.

12. Brochet, L. op. cit. vol.1, P. 268-269.

13. Brochet, L. op. cit. vol.11, p.44.

the Calvinist stronghold, the fortified city, whose magnates treated with the King of France as with an equal, was a mere twenty miles south of Lucon, and it was fanatically eager to preach its gospel.

In the late sixteenth century the Jesuits undertook the task of combatting Calvinism in Bas-Poitou. They were successful, but one heresy was no sooner crushed than another appeared. The Calvinistic doctrine of absolute predestination was remodelled to become the doctrine of the irresistibility of grace, the pivotal point of Jansenism. This repulsive religion, which like its parent, Calvinism, drove men away from God, took a strange hold on the naturally warm-hearted people of France, largely because its advocates enjoyed the prestige that the practice of great asceticism gives, and added to it by a very deluge of brilliant pamphlets in defence of their error.

Nowhere was the plague of Jansenism more widespread than in the Western provinces, where, thanks to the concessions made to Calvinism, the people had become half-Protestant. It was an easy matter for them to imbibe the subtle fallacies popularized by Port-Royal. Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, better known as St. Cyran,¹⁴ one of the authors of Jansenism, was for a time vicar-General of Poitiers, and the neighbouring diocese of Angers¹⁵ was ruled for

14. Laveille, A. Le Bienheureux L.-M. Grignon de Montfort. P. 213.

15. Laveille, A. op. cit. P.238, N.2.
Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 1, p.745-746.

forty-two years by Bishop Henri Arnauld,¹⁶ one of the celebrated family which controlled Port Royal, the storm centre of the French Church in the seventeenth century.

In La Vendée, many of the clergy had become infected with Jansenism; monastic discipline was relaxed in proportion as the Sacraments were less frequented; churches and chapels were in a ruinous state. But the land was not irrevocably doomed. Towards the close of the seventeenth century an intense religious revival stirred the entire West. Its author was Blessed Louis Grignon de Montfort, whose purpose was to stamp out Jansenism and rekindle devotion to the Blessed Virgin. His methods were those of the genuine revivalist. To induce the poor to attend his missions, he provided food which he himself distributed after the sermons. He often solicited the aid of his hearers in the restoration of some ruined church or shrine, or the erection of a Calvary which remained as tangible souvenirs of the mission. Blessed de Montfort composed innumerable hymns in which sound doctrine was wedded to simple language, and these hymns figured prominently both in the mission exercises and as a reminder of them. But his chief weapon against heresy was the devotion of the Rosary which he planted so firmly in the hearts of the Vendéans that at the

16. To show how stubbornly Jansenistic Arnauld was-- He was one of the four French bishops who refused to sign the Formulary of Alexander VII, professing submission to the Bull which condemned Jansenism.

close of the century they went to battle with the Rosary fixed to their standards, and the 'Hail Mary' on their lips, while their war-songs were De Montfort's hymns. De Montfort is justly called the very soul of the Vendean people.

This was the atmosphere in which Jean-Pierre Aulneau spent his childhood and early youth. Of his family we know little enough. His father died before the son left France, for the missionary's letters¹⁷ to his mother are addressed to "Madame la Veuve Aulneau". Probably le Sieur de la Touche died either before, or shortly after his son's entry into religion, since several of his fellow-Jesuits, who were intimately acquainted with the Aulneaus, make no mention of the father; therefore it may be concluded that he had died before they were admitted into the family circle.

One of these Jesuits, writing to Madame Aulneau, congratulates her on the care which she has always taken of her sons' education, and on the good fruit it has borne. The burden of the boys' education would not have fallen entirely on the mother, especially in that age, if the boys' father

17. These letters were brought to light in the Advent of 1889, when three Jesuits, Fathers Dauchez, Lallemand, and Legall were giving missions in La Vendée. The then head of the Aulneau family mentioned to the missionaries that, some 150 years previously one of their family, a Jesuit, had been murdered by Indians in Canada. A number of his letters were preserved as an heirloom handed down from father to son. That this treasure escaped destruction during the Revolution was owing to the fact that the Aulneau manor was the headquarters of the Vendean staff. These letters are our most valuable source of information concerning Father Aulneau.

had been living.

Mme. Aulneau was an exemplary mother, we may be sure. Her eldest son's devotion to her is sufficient proof thereof. He never ends a letter to her without a warm expression of the deep gratitude he owes her. His first letter from Canada is to her. He assures her repeatedly that his only regret at going to the far-away mission of the West, is that he will not be able to write to her as often as he would wish. His greatest joy, he tells her, is in thinking of her, which he does often, and in saying Mass for her, which is the only mark of gratitude that it is in his power to give her.

Mme. Aulneau was evidently the truly motherly sort who takes her children's friends right into her heart and home. Besides her own son, there were at least three other Jesuits¹⁸ who addressed her as "Mother", wrote frequent and intimate letters to her, and were indebted to her for numerous benefactions to their missions. Father Besson, missionary to Cayenne, after eulogizing his friend's virtues, congratulates Mme. Aulneau on having a son worthy of her. All her Jesuit correspondents express themselves as greatly edified by the heroic resignation with which she accepts the separation from her son, and still more, his tragic death.

18. Fathers Nau, Faye, and du Jaunay.

But Mme. Aulneau's best claim to glory is her family.¹⁹ There were five children of whom we have record, four boys and a girl. In their order of birth they were Jean-Pierre, born, as we have seen, on April 21, 1705; Jean-Baptiste, born December 15, 1709; Charles, born February 14, 1711; Thérèse, born probably about 1713, and François-Michel, born February 20, 1716. There may have been other girls in the family, for, in one of his letters Jean-Pierre sends his love to all his brothers and sisters.

Of these five children, four devoted themselves to the service of God--Jean-Pierre and Charles in the Society of Jesus; Thérèse, in the Union Chrétienne at Fontenay, and François-Michel in the Society of St. Sulpice. What an excellent mother Mme. Aulneau must have been, to have brought up such a family!

Very little is known about the second son of the family, Jean-Baptiste, beyond the fact that he was for some time, separated from the others, for Father Besson writes to Mme. Aulneau, in May, 1743, to rejoice with her over the return of this son, now the eldest. It was a point of honour with the Vendean²⁰ nobility to have a son in the service of the King, that he might pay the debt of his rank. So we may hazard a guess that Jean-Baptiste, reported killed in action, or missing, returned, as it were from the tomb to be his

19. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montreal, Fonds Rochemonteix, No 4015, P.169.

20. de Volkaersbeke, K. loc. cit.

mother's reward for the generous sacrifice which she had made of her other children.

The third son, Charles, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1731 and made his profession in 1747, was endowed with superior gifts,²¹ though of a rather cold temperament. The several Jesuit friends of the family complain, in their letters, of his silence which they set down to absorption in his many duties.²² The only letter of his which has survived is to his mother, and it corresponds perfectly to this description-- the brief, businesslike missive of a man who has more important matters on hand. He says: "In the shape of news, all I send you this time, my dear Mother, is the copy of a letter from China.... the copy is not in my handwriting, as I had not time for that, but I hope that you will not have more difficulty in reading it than if it had been transcribed for you by myself."²³

Charles too, was a credit to his Christian mother. Father de Saint-Pé, in charge of the Canadian missions, hoped ardently that Charles would elect to fill the place left vacant by his elder brother's death, "for," says the Superior, "he is a saint, and consequently, he is just what we need." The Jesuit records bear out this opinion,

21. The registers of the Society put him down as possessing a superior intellect, excellent judgment, much prudence and experience; a distinguished writer, a good professor and a good superior.

22. He was professor of philosophy.

23. Jones, A. E. (Edit.) Aulneau Collection, p.160

setting him down as "inclined to virtue²⁴."

Thérèse, the only girl of the family, of whom anything is known, entered the Union Chrétienne at Fontenay in 1730²⁴. There is one letter from the missionary to his sister, which shows the strong bond of affection existing between them. Like many another nun, she loved to provide linens and altar furnishings for needy missionaries, and articles of devotion for their neophytes. Her brother asks her to send him some altar linens, and the family friend, Father Nau, petitions for a chalice veil, and some strong rosaries for his Iroquois. According to the testimony of Father Besson, Sister Aulneau²⁵ was highly esteemed by those who knew her, an esteem which her community evidently shared for they elected her Assistant Superior in 1777, a position which she occupied for only two years. She died in 1779.

The youngest of the family was François-Michel, who was of rather delicate health. He suffered from a weakness of the lungs²⁶. He too, was a pupil of the Jesuits of Luçon where Father Besson²⁷ was one of his professors. At the age of eighteen he entered the Congregation of St. Sulpice²⁸; his ecclesiastical studies were completed at the Grand Seminary of Angers and he was ordained priest about the year 1740.

24. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montreal, loc.cit.
25. Jones, A. E., op. cit. pp.53, 128, 83
26. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 145
27. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.83
28. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montreal, loc. cit.

He died at the Seminary of Autun, at the early age of thirty-six.

The family circle seems to have included an uncle also. Jean-Pierre frequently mentions him in his letters to his mother or states his intention of writing to him.²⁹ Another of Mme. Aulneau's correspondents,³⁰ asks to be remembered to M.l'Abbe Aulneau who may be the same as the uncle so often mentioned.

Life at the chateau of Moutiers was not eventful. The Vendean aristocracy were anything but ostentatious, and such a basically Christian family as the Aulneaus would have been even less so than others. France, at that time was going through a period of depression as the long reign of Louis XIV drew ingloriously to a close.³¹ The day of brilliant victories seemed to be passed for defeat after defeat was humbling the French arms -- Ramillies and Turin in 1706; Toulon and Marseilles in 1707, besides the loss of the French fleet. Then, in 1709 came the terrible winter, when, according to St. Simon the temperature sank as low as that of Sweden. Vines, olive trees, fruit trees, even sturdy oaks were frozen. On the West coast the rivers were ice-bound to their very mouths; thirty thousand people are

29. Jones, A. E., op. cit. pp. 46, 51.

30. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.99.

31. Blanchet et Pinard, Cours complet d'histoire de France, p.362 - 378.

Drioux, A., Précis de l'histoire moderne, p.300

said to have perished from the cold.³² In the same year, 1709, came the crushing defeat of Malplaquet. Domestic afflictions fell thick and fast upon the aging king. In 1711 his only son died; in 1712 his eldest grandson, leaving the latter's son, a child of three, as heir to the throne of France, which he was to ascend later as Louis XV. Overwhelmed by these calamities, Louis agreed to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, signing away Hudson's Bay, Acadia and Newfoundland to England. Two years later the Sun King died.³³

Under the Regent, Philip of Orleans, a worthless profligate, France sank lower and lower into the abyss of debt and misery. Louis XIV had left a deficit of three hundred billion francs; Orleans adopted the scheme proposed by a Scottish adventurer, Law, who organized a West India Company for the development of Louisiana.³⁴ Wild speculation ensued, until Louisiana was found to possess no gold, but a very unhealthy climate. Of course, a panic followed, and Law had to flee the country leaving behind him a debt of 1,700,000,000 francs. In addition to the financial distress, the country was suffering even more cruelly from the blight of cynical immorality which was exemplified by the Regent and the Court.

32. Blanchet et Pinard, loc. cit.
Laveille, A., op. cit. p.298

33. Blanchet et Pinard, loc. cit.
Drioux, A., loc. cit.

34. Blanchet et Pinard, op. cit. p.378-380
Hayes, C. J. H., A Political and Social History
of Modern Europe, vol.I, p.255-256.

This plague, however, was unknown in La Vendée where Blessed de Montfort's revival was in full swing. It may be taken for certain that during these most impressionable years the young Aulneaus learned the precious lessons of patient endurance of hardship, of compassion for the needy, of the joy of giving, and of entire devotion to the Mother of God.

It was during the regency that Jean-Pierre began his school career in the Jesuit College of Luçon.³⁵ Details of his school life are entirely lacking, but since he attended a Jesuit school, it is certain that he followed the regular curriculum,³⁶ sketched in its broad outlines by St. Ignatius himself, completed by a later General, Claude Aquaviva, and followed in the schools of the Society in all countries. This system, based on the study of the classics, comprised three or four years of grammar classes, humanities, rhetoric, and two or three years of philosophy. Before his entrance into the novitiate of the Society, at the age of fifteen, Jean-Pierre had completed the grammar, humanities and

35. Luçon, on the border of the marsh-lands, had been erected into an episcopal see by Pope John XXI in 1317. Armand Duplessis, later Cardinal Richelieu, began his climb to fame as Bishop of Luçon, where he was the first of French bishops to found an ecclesiastical seminary as prescribed by the Tridentine decrees.

36. Cretineau-Joly, J., Histoire religieuse, politique et littéraire de la Compagnie de Jésus, t.111, p.158-213.

Fouqueray, H., Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus en France, t.11, p.197-211.

rhetoric, equivalent to two years of University in our present day system, which proves that he was no mean scholar. To obtain a clearer notion of Aulneau's college life, it must be remembered that in the first third of the eighteenth century mathematics and the natural sciences were almost absolutely neglected, and practically the entire study in the college classes was concerned with Latin and Greek authors. The students, especially those engaged in humanities, had to speak Latin habitually,³⁷ to exercise their style in Latin compositions, and, once a week, one of the students would read a discourse in Latin or Greek in presence of the faculty and even of outsiders.³⁸ Though no stress was laid on the study of the vernacular, we may be sure that Aulneau was thoroughly proficient in it, for he belonged to a good family and was brought up in cultured surroundings, from which we may rightly infer that he spoke his own language correctly from boyhood, and perfected his knowledge of it in the course of his classical studies. Current French literature was not very favorably viewed by college authorities if we are to judge from a rule laid down for the students of Clermont by Father Maggio, visitor, in 1587, "In the matter of French books they will allow only books of devotion."³⁹

37. Crétineau-Joly, J., op. cit. t.111, p.166.

38. Ratio Studiorum Societatis Jesu.

39. Fouqueray, H., op. cit. t.11, p.206.

Literary studies were to St. Ignatius' mind only a means to the better service of God; his chief aim was the development of Christian personality. For this purpose, daily attendance at Mass was prescribed for the boys, and monthly Confession and Communion⁴⁰. Twice daily they were required to spend a quarter of an hour in prayer, the morning period being extended to half an hour on feast days. Everyone was to learn to serve Mass. As a principal means of fostering piety in its collegians, the Society had established the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin,⁴¹ whose members were to strive for personal sanctification and the performance of good works in behalf of their neighbour. Doubtless, Jean-Pierre was a Sodalist, and it may well have been that in the Sodality he first experienced the desire to adopt the apostolic form of life exemplified by his masters.

40. Fouqueray, H., op. cit. t.11, p.208.

41. Crétineau-Joly, J., op. cit. t.111, p.198-201.

CHAPTER III

Jean-Pierre lost no time in putting his design into execution. He had not yet studied philosophy, but that could be left until later. Accordingly, on December 12, 1720, he entered the Jesuit Novitiate at Bordeaux¹, where he spent the next two years. When the noviceship was completed, in 1722, Brother Aulneau was assigned to the College of Pau in the Pyrenees, there to study philosophy. After this preparation, the Jesuit Scholastic is considered ready for his first essay at teaching. Master Aulneau remained at Pau for a year, as professor of the third year of grammar. The next two years he spent at the College of La Rochelle, professing humanities and rhetoric. From 1728 to 1730 he taught third year grammar and humanities at Poitiers².

No contemporary account has come down to us of Master Aulneau's teaching, but it may safely be inferred that he was an accomplished Latin and Greek scholar, from the fact that he was put to teach the humanities and rhetoric. The medium of teaching was Latin, in which the teacher had to be especially well-versed, in order to ensure the observance of the rule laid down by St. Ignatius, that the students speak Latin as elegantly as possible. The professor's translations from the Greek had to be in Latin, and his interpretation of Latin authors had to be by Latin amplifications

1. Established in 1606.
2. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montréal, loc. cit.

of the text and the use of easier synonymous words.³

Moreover, the study of Latin and Greek was not confined to prose but was carried into the various forms of Latin and Greek verse, which the students had to study thoroughly not only as to their meaning but also as to their metrical forms, which they had to imitate by writing Latin and Greek verse themselves. Periodically there were entertainments at which the Rector of the College and some of the Fathers assisted, and the verses were posted up for inspection or even read out by their authors. All these had, of course, to be corrected by the professors, for they had to be listened to by the Fathers, some of whom were expert classical scholars. This would prove that the professor had to be a competent man. If other proof were necessary it would be found in the report sent to Rome-- as was done in the case of all the Fathers and other members of the Society-- in which Father Aulneau was said to have literary talents above the ordinary.⁴

His five years of teaching ended, Master Aulneau was ready for the next phase of his training - the theological course, which he followed at the College of Poitiers, a foundation dating from the reign of King Henry IV, 1607.⁵ This College had scarcely been founded when it was, by

3. Ratio Studiorum Societatis Jesu.

4. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montréal, loc. cit.

5. Fouqueray, H., op. cit. t.111, p.137-138.

popular demand, incorporated with the University of Poitiers itself dating from 1431. Father Aulneau's ordination to the priesthood took place either towards the close of 1732 or early in 1733, for, from 1733 he is given the title of Father in the registers.⁶ He had still one year of theology and his third year of novitiate or tertianship to put in, before his long course of training would be ended. We know that he spent his first year in Canada studying theology, whence we may conclude with a fair degree of certainty, that his last year in France was devoted to the tertianship.

During this last year, the Superior of the Canadian mission Father de Lauzon visited France in search of volunteers for his mission field. When he returned to New France it was in company of four other Jesuits, Luc François Nau, Jean de la Pierre, Barthelemy Galpin, and Jean-Pierre Aulneau.⁷

What was the origin of Father Aulneau's vocation to the foreign missions? Had the desire of preaching the Gospel to the peoples still in darkness been implanted in his heart from boyhood by his mother? That this excellent woman was mission-minded is evident from the keen interest she took in several other Fathers of the Society, notably Fathers Nau and Besson, who, in their letters to her,

6. Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie, Montréal, loc.cit.

7. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.5

thank her warmly for the many gifts she has sent them for distribution among their dusky converts. Father de Gonnor, in a letter dated April 23, 1742, advises Mme. Aulneau against her Sulpician son's coming to Canada, where the climate would be fatal for one suffering, as he was, from a weakness of the chest.⁸ The missionary spirit may well have been in the very air of the Aulneau home.

It was certainly in the air of France and in that of the Society of Jesus. There were French missionaries in China, in Asia Minor, in India, in the islands of North and South America⁹ as well as on the mainland of these two continents. Every one of these mission fields was crying aloud for labourers; there was abundant fruit to be gathered, much consolation in spite of the hardship involved, and, perhaps, the coveted crown of martyrdom. North America had an especially brilliant record both for the privations suffered and for the glorious deaths endured; North America, which was France's peculiar charge; which was called the Mission of Saints,¹⁰ for such they had to be who volunteered for it.

Whatever its source, the fire of missionary zeal had been enkindled in Aulneau's heart, never to die out until it had consumed him as a holocaust, though if we may judge

8. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p.145.

9. Rochemonteix, C.de, Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIII^e siècle, t.1, p.137.

10. Rochemonteix, C.de, op. cit. t.1, p.143.

from a later statement of his, he had very little attraction for the life for which he offered himself. Indeed, the prospect was far from inviting. He, the scion of a noble family, brought up in cultured surroundings, with the possibility of a pleasant and withal fruitful career as a teacher of French youth, to exchange all this for a life of hardship among the crudest barbarians where death from exposure or starvation could be considered a kindly fate!

The facts of the Canadian mission were not kept a secret; quite the contrary, they were set forth for the public in the popular "Relations" which appeared regularly, and were read in all French literary circles. It was therefore, with his eyes wide open that Father Aulneau made his choice.

In company with the four other missionaries, Father Aulneau sailed from La Rochelle May 29, 1734.¹¹ Their vessel was a man-of-war, the Ruby, commanded by the Chevalier de Chaon. A voyage across the Atlantic in the eighteenth century was at best a dangerous and unpleasant business, and Father Aulneau's was particularly disagreeable. We have a vivid account of it in the letters which he wrote to his mother and to friends in France. The crossing took eighty days of most adverse weather. For eight days the Ruby was unable to carry a shred of sail; the seas dashed over the

11. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.7-13.

gunwale as if it had been a shell. The fury of the elements was not, however, the cause of their greatest suffering. To anyone who chanced to read it, the Ruby's passenger list would have caused mild surprise. The list would have indicated the presence of the Bishop of Quebec, Mgr. Dosquet, several secular priests destined to fill vacancies in his vast diocese, three Sulpicians, probably Fathers Chevalier, Piquet and Sartelon, and the five Jesuit missionaries. Further on, the reader would have seen the names, if such they had, of eighty smugglers released from prison, who were being sent to Canada as colonists, perhaps in the hope that the invigorating air of the colony would change them into law-abiding citizens. Lastly, there were one hundred soldiers, posted for service with the colonial troops. The smugglers were in a pitiable condition, half naked and covered with sores; some even were eaten alive with worms. The swarms of vermin which infested them soon spread to all the other passengers.

Living conditions on board the King's ship were far from ideal. The passengers, subaltern officers, and gunners all shared the same cabin--the gun-room, where, according to Father Nau, they were packed like so many sardines in a barrel. What a repulsive place this cabin was may be gathered from Father Nau's statement, that after the first day's experience, one of the missionaries who had faced the prospect of life with the Indians broke down.

On the eighty-day voyage provisions ran low, and even

while as yet there was no shortage, the tossing and pitching of the vessel often rendered the preparation of food an impossibility. Father Aulneau tells his mother that, on Whitsunday, their festal fare consisted of a few biscuits and dry bread. When, after forty-seven days' travel they reached the Grand Banks of Newfoundland, the sailors replenished the larder with a large catch of cod. Father Aulneau's comment is: "They were much relished by some, others found them very insipid, myself amongst the number."¹²

Yet food shortage was not the worst. A pestilence broke out on board, attacking all and sundry. Father Nau writes to his Provincial at Bordeaux that the fever carried off twenty men at a stroke. Father Aulneau mentions that when they were in the vicinity of Newfoundland, there were more than sixty persons ill, and the number had increased considerably when they were in the St. Lawrence. At this juncture, the passengers had to aid in manning the ship; Father de Lauzon was made boatswain's mate for the ecclesiastics. The missionaries chief work was caring for the victims of the pest. All the priests shared this duty but Father Aulneau distinguished himself therein. "He set no limits to his charity. He was forever at the bedside of the sick and dying, in the midst of vermin and infection, performing for

12. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.8.

them the most menial and loathsome services. God preserved his health during the voyage for the consolation of those on board.¹³"

So wrote Father Nau to Mme. Aulneau. The subject of this eulogy, in his account, confines himself to facts; "We all enjoyed good health though we moved about among two hundred fever-stricken or convalescent patients."¹⁴ His praise is reserved for the three Gentlemen of St. Sulpice, who "edified us extremely by their zeal and care of the sick; this act of charity was the cause of all but the death of two of them."¹⁵

This modesty and the habit of looking on the bright side of things are characteristic of Father Aulneau. Nowhere does he insist on the hardships of the long journey; rather, he passes lightly over them, emphasizing the few pleasurable incidents. In contrast to Father Nau, he says of the "cabin" "A few little stirring incidents took place in the gun-room, where we were all huddled together, but as we took no active part in them, but treated them as so many jokes, I shall not speak of them."¹⁶ In another passage of the same letter he says: "As for incidents between decks, neither did I nor my brother Jesuits meet with any but agreeable ones. All the officers showed us marked attention, and even real friendship."¹⁷

13. Jones, A. E., op. cit. P.31.

14. Jones, A. E., op. cit. P.20.

15. Jones, A. E., op. cit. P.20.

16. Jones, A. E., op. cit. P.20.

17. Jones, A. E., op. cit. P.19.

On the other hand, his letters both to his mother and to his religious brethren are full of interesting details. He is unusually observant, giving his mother vivid pictures of the islands that lay in their course, of the strange species of birds he had seen and of the sea creatures. The many delays which the Ruby suffered in the St. Lawrence he considers as opportunities of admiring at leisure the snow-white porpoises¹⁸ and seals, and of obtaining further supplies of fresh provisions which were a great relief to the sick. Concerning the weather, he admitted that in all his experience he had never endured such intense heat as that encountered in the St. Lawrence¹⁹.

This reticence may be explained as the natural desire of a son to spare his mother undue anxiety. That Mme. Aulneau suspected her son of such motives we may gather from a letter which Father Nau wrote²⁰ to her shortly after his arrival in Canada, in fulfilment, he says, of his promises to let her know, every year, all that he could learn, comforting or otherwise, about Father Aulneau. But with regard to his fellow Jesuits this motive could have very little weight. Every man of them went to the mission field with the hope of having great things to endure for the love of Christ, and the fact that Father Aulneau so lightly dismisses the discomforts of that tedious voyage proves rather, that he

18. Jones, A. E., op. cit. pp.17,11.

19. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.12.

20. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.30-32.

thought them trifles in comparison with the sufferings for which he longed. That he did so long for labours is evident from another statement of Father Nau's to Mme. Aulneau; "He no longer sighs but for the toils of some painful mission²¹." These letters give us a faint glimpse of another side of Father Aulneau's character. The Vendean is said to hide a deep vein of Gallic humour under a rather taciturn exterior, and Father Aulneau's impression of the Indians - they were Micmacs - is typical. "I scanned them with attention; they were the first of the aborigines I had set eyes on, and I assure you I hoped never to meet with more uncleanly specimens. The great number I met with afterwards at Quebec undeceived me²²."

Still, this destined victim of Indian cruelty had not yet made sufficient preparation for his short career. As Father Nau put it: "he had given splendid proofs of his zeal, he must needs now give the same of his patience²³." When the Ruby was within fifteen leagues of Quebec, Brother Boispineau of the College of Quebec came down in a launch to meet it. For a few days previous, Father Aulneau had been suffering from severe headaches, which made his fellow-travellers fear that he had contracted the ship-fever. Father de Lauzon, therefore, sent him on with the Brother

21. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.31.
22. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.18.
23. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p.31.

to Quebec, where he landed at six in the morning of August 12, 1734. Immediately he hurried off to visit the sick at the hospital. He was forbidden to continue this work of charity, but the prohibition came too late. Exhausted by his labours for the fever-stricken he fell ill and in five days was at death's door. The skilled treatment of Brother Boispineau tided him safely over this crisis, but eight days later he suffered a relapse more dangerous even than the first attack. He was not however, destined to die of sickness. He recovered, and both he and Father Nau assure Mme. Aulneau, in their letters dated October 1734, of his complete restoration to health.²⁴

The historian of the Jesuits of New France, Père de Rochemonteix, describes Father Aulneau as the living image of the illustrious martyr of the preceding century, St. Isaac Jogues.²⁵ He had the same modesty, the same affability of character, the same virginal beauty of soul, the same unbounded charity. The choice of this latest arrival for the distant mission to the West, where everything combined to terrify even the strongest, shows what a favorable impression Father Aulneau had made even on this band of veteran apostles. On his part, the new recruit thanks God repeatedly for giving him the inestimable grace of witnessing such heroic virtues as he sees practised by the Fathers in the College of Quebec. In a letter to Father Faye at Bordeaux,²⁶ Father Aulneau begs him to do

24. Jones, A.E., op. cit. pp.12, 31.

25. Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle France au XVIII^e siècle, p.211.

26. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 35.

all he can to recruit new laborers for the Canadian mission.

He says:

"Though missionaries here do not find as much comfort and consolation as in many other countries, these are not wholly wanting, while they will find here more numerous occasions than elsewhere of suffering and of becoming more like their model, Jesus Christ crucified.

So true is this.....that most of those of whom Providence makes use for the conversion of the poor savages are men in whom we see reproduced all that virtue and saintliness which the Society admires in the most holy of her children. I have met with them nearly all this winter, and the striking example they have given me of zeal, recollectedness, self-denial and interior union with God, has, through our Lord's mercy, awakened in my heart a true and sincere desire to make every effort I can to imitate them.....(In) one among others.....I had occasion to admire all that I had heard and read of in the lives of the most eminent in sanctity in the Society."

It will be remembered that Father Aulneau had another year of theology to complete when he left France. The winter of 1734-35 which he spent in Quebec was devoted to theology which he studied under the learned and saintly Father Guesnier, who died in the course of the year, worn out by labours. His pupil writes a glowing account of his virtues:²⁷

"He was a man of unwearied zeal and of great mortification and prayer. He had a most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and it might be said that it was in some sort his very devotedness to the Mother of God which was the cause of his death. Worn out with fatigue and labours, persuasion was used to induce him to take some rest and to entrust to another the duty of preaching on the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady. But he gave for reason

27. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 36.

for his persistent desire to preach that he believed it would be the last sermon of his life, and that he would be happy before dying, to give once more some further proof to the Blessed Virgin of his devotion and love. I had the happiness of listening to him two days after we landed, and it was one of the best delivered, beautiful and impressive sermons that I ever heard.....It was my privilege to watch at his bedside for two nights during his last illness."

Such was the man whom Father Aulneau took more especially as his model.

Father Aulneau's impressions of his first Canadian winter are of interest. In a letter of October 29, 1734, he tells his mother:²⁸

"It is now over a month that winter set in here, and at the present writing the ground is covered with snow. It is as cold as it was in France in 1729. This severity of temperature will increase, and we shall not catch a glimpse of the ground until next May. This need not alarm your affectionate heart on my account, for we have every means of protecting ourselves against the rigour of the climate and the season. And, after all, were it not so, I would not be a subject of commiseration since I would have more frequent occasion to suffer something for the love of a God Who has suffered so much for us."

Father Nau is more explicit. About the same date he writes:²⁹

"It is becoming bitingly cold and I can scarcely hold my pen."

This winter found Father Aulneau engaged in preaching in Quebec, where he stirred up no little admiration. Father de Gonnor, writing to a fellow-religious in France, says:³⁰

- 28. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 28.
- 29. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 32.
- 30. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 87.

"Last year (Father Aulneau) preached during the carnival at Quebec to the great satisfaction of all; those who were not able to attend forming their judgment of him from the testimony of those who were present. The crowd who followed eagerly his sermons were outspoken in their praise."

This eloquence, was, no doubt, due in part to the preacher's literary talents, which were very great. But, to Frenchmen of that period, even colonials, pulpit eloquence was a commonplace. Indeed it would have been strange if men, steeped from boyhood in the rich beauty of the classics, had been otherwise than eloquent. Therefore it must have been something more than the mere witchery of words that held Father's Aulneau's audience. It is much more probable that he charmed them by his winning humility and modesty, and fired them with his burning zeal and charity---qualities which breathe from every line he wrote.

According to Father de Gonnor, it was shortly after his course of sermons that Father Aulneau underwent his fourth year examination in Theology "with ease and all possible success."³¹ With the coming of spring there was then nothing further to hinder him from setting out on the long road that was to lead him to his mission field. Almost from his arrival in Canada, he had known that he would accompany La Vérendrye's expedition as chaplain and missionary in succession to Father Charles Mesaiger whose health had broken down under the hardships of life in the wilds. When Father Aulneau landed in

31. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 88.

Quebec, August, 1734, the season was much too far advanced to permit of his reaching his destination before winter cut off all possibility of navigation. So, in a letter written to a fellow-Jesuit, under date October 10, 1734, he states that ".....in the spring (I) am to set out, they say, for the Sioux.....³²

32. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 20.

CHAPTER IV

Before following Father Aulneau on his long trek, it will be enlightening to look back over the history of the Canadian missions, the better to gain an idea of the conditions, the methods, and the possibilities of success of apostolic labour in this field.

The first missionaries in Canada were the Recollets, a branch of the Franciscan Order. When their number proved insufficient for the task they solicited the aid of Jesuits, the first contingent¹ of whom arrived in New France in 1625. Recollets and Jesuits followed the same plan of evangelization. They spent some time among the Indians, in order to learn their language and customs, then tried to establish missions among them. From this came the two types of missionary work in Canada--the sedentary and the nomadic.²

Among those tribes which practised agriculture, the missionaries established themselves as permanent residents. In the centre of the village they built a church with a cabin for themselves--they generally worked in pairs--hard by. The first missionaries who settled with the Hurons in the region of Georgian Bay had but little reason to congratulate themselves on their success. The Indians were brutal and degraded and superstitious to an incredible degree. Every misfortune which befell the tribe was attributed to the influence of the

1. Two Jesuits, Father Biard and Father Masse had been at the Calvinist settlement of Port Royal in 1611. They were deported when the colony fell to the English in 1613.
2. Rochemonteix, C.de., Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVII^e siècle, t. III, p.374-550.

Blackrobe whose presence so angered the Great Spirit that he visited his wrath on the Indians in the form of pestilence or famine or defeat in battle. This senseless superstition was one obstacle to the Indians' embracing Christianity. There were countless others--divorce, polygamy, immorality, the influence of the medicine-men, the nomadic life, the continual inter-tribal warfare, the ignorance and instability of the Indian nature.

Nevertheless, by dint of heroic endurance, the priests succeeded at last in making an impression on the obtuse sensibilities of the red skin, for the Indian does admire courage, which, he conceded, these pale-faces with their unusual garb and their strange postures and prayers, possessed in a very high degree. The Indians slowly realized that the missionaries desired only their good, and, in a primitive way, they responded. When the Huron nation was all but destroyed by the Iroquois in the middle of the seventeenth century, the handful of survivors followed the Fathers to Quebec, where they formed a new colony at Lorette.

This did not mean that the task of conversion was complete. In these missions there were usually a few neophytes, a few catechumens, a large number of baptized children; the rest were pagan adults among whom conversions were rare. The missionaries taught the Indians agriculture and the mechanical arts, in order to make them less dependent for a livelihood on the chase, and to free them from another favorite Indian vice--idleness.

The incumbents of these missions had a very full programme. One of the Fathers said an early Mass which those who had to go to work in the fields could attend. Morning prayers were then said in common, followed by the beads. An hour later the other Father said the community Mass, during which the congregation sang the hymns of the Church, which the missionaries had translated into the Indian tongues and set to the psalm tones. After the second Mass the children assembled in the church for morning prayers, and the boys learned to serve Mass. At an appointed hour in the morning the adult catechumens received their instruction. In the afternoon the Fathers made the rounds of the village to visit the sick and settle any quarrels or disputes that might have arisen. In the evening the children gathered in the church for night prayers and their catechism lesson; then the men and women for their prayers.

On Sundays and holy-days, there were confessions in the morning, followed by High Mass, which the Indians sang, the men forming one choir, the women, the other. In the afternoon there were meetings of Confraternities; Vespers were sung and Benediction given.³

These were a missionary's ordinary tasks, but by no means the easiest. He had not only to make the Indians Catholics, he had to keep them such--no easy matter, when there were traders or coureurs-de-bois, or soldiers in the vicinity. The missionaries made no effort at all to Europeanize the Indians:

3. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 61-64.
Rochemonteix, C.de., loc. cit.

rather they strove with all their might to keep their neophytes from any contact with the whites, because these latter could ruin in one day the work of months or years. The Indians had a fatal weakness for brandy, and under its influence were capable of any crime. The traders knew that once the taste for "fire-water" was acquired, the Indians would pay any price for it. Hence the Fathers' extreme care to keep their neophytes out of the reach of temptation.

Of these Christian communities there were several--Lorette, inhabited by the remnant of the Hurons; Sillery, St. François de Sales, Béancourt, and St. François, inhabited by the Abenakis; and Sault St. Louis, by the Iroquois. The site of the missions was changed as the soil and the supply of firewood were exhausted. In missions of this sort, some of the Indians became model Christians, witness Katherine Tekakwitha.

The other kind of mission was even more difficult, and was productive of fewer results.⁴ The nomadic life of the Indians was, perhaps, the greatest obstacle of all to their conversion, as the early missionaries were not slow in realizing. Their first plan of contacting the savage was that the missionary should take up his residence at the point where the Indians came to trade, and instruct them during their stay there. This labour was practically wasted, for no sooner were they back in the woods than they slipped into their old habits and superstitions. After much hesitation and with many misgivings the missionaries decided

4. Rochemonteix, C. de., loc. cit.

to adopt a new method, one that seemed almost beyond the range of human endurance. ' So it was; but the grace of God supplied for the deficiency of man. The priests undertook to follow the Indians in their hunting expeditions. To obtain an idea of what this decision involved, think that, for seven or eight months of the year, these men, many of them scholars and men of letters and reared in luxury, had to travel leagues and leagues through dense woods, over rocks, trying to keep pace with the natives to whom the wilderness was home; to live in wretched cabins where the smoke stung their eyes; where vermin swarmed; where privacy was impossible; where the food was nauseating; where cleanliness was unknown; where heat and cold were intolerable; where superstition and immorality were brazen. It was in these surroundings that the missionary, worn out with the day's labour of racing after the hunters and climbing rocks, had to try to implant the sublime truths of Christianity in the gross minds of the Indians.

The first and hardest of these missions was that at Tadoussac, on the Saguenay, in favour of the Algonquins, Montagnais and other northern Indians. It was abandoned about the beginning of the eighteenth century, for lack of laborers. The second was the mission of Acadia, for the benefit of the Abenakis living between New England and Acadia. Michilimackinac was the central point of the third nomadic mission, which ministered to the needs of the Ottawas, Monsonis, Wood Crees,

in the country north west of the Great Lakes as far as the valley of the Mississippi; and the fourth was the mission of the Illinois who lived in the region between the Fox, the Wisconsin, the St. Joseph, the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. In this last mission climatic conditions were not as trying as in the more northern ones, but the other difficulties were so great that one of the early missionaries affirmed that the conversion of these tribes would be nothing short of miraculous. The miracle was performed; the Illinois became fervent Catholics and fast friends of the French.

These missions were all begun in the seventeenth century, the golden age of the Canadian missions. In the next century they suffered a decline because of the scarcity of workers. Many of the veterans had died; broken health had forced others to seek the milder climate of Old France, and the vacancies were not so rapidly filled by new recruits as they had been formerly. Promising fields of labour were being opened up in China and Asia Minor, where there was a well-grounded hope of reaping an abundant harvest. The people of China, especially, possessed a high degree of culture and showed a marked leaning towards Christianity. It seemed then the more reasonable course to provide missionaries for the Far and Middle East, where their work would bear fruit, rather than to spend themselves almost profitlessly among the apathetic North Americans.⁵

5. Rochemonteix, C. de., *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIII^e siècle*, p. 143-145.
Jones, A. E., *op. cit.* p. 35.
Crétineau-Joly, J., *op. cit.* t. V, p. 1-118

The dearth of missionaries in New France was really great. In the years from 1711 to 1715, there were only four or five priests in the territory from Michilimackinac to the Mississippi; at each of the Abenakis and Illinois stations, there was but one labourer. Yet the governors were insistent about having missionaries among all the tribes, for they had learned from long experience that there was no surer method of winning the Indians' allegiance to the French. The unwavering devotion of the Blackrobe for his dusky converts was set down in their minds, to the credit, not only of his religion, but also of his race. France always made friends of the Indians, and that, largely, through the influence of her saintly priests.

For La Vérendrye's expedition in search of the Western Sea, Governor Beauharnois asked for two missionaries, but two were not then available, though there would have been ample scope for their zeal, for besides the wandering Crees and Assiniboine and Sioux and Saulteux and Monsonis, whom they would meet en route, whose paganism was still untouched by the least breath of Christian teaching, there was, far away to the West, a wonderful tribe of Indians, white and bearded like the French, who lived in houses built of wood and earth and dwelt in fortified towns; had horses and cattle, cultivated the ground, dressed like the palefaces and even wore armour. They spoke a language that was something like French, but quite unlike English. Though a peaceful nation they were able to defend themselves bravely when attacked.

This tribe dwelt far towards the setting sun, on a great river that flowed into the ocean.⁶ So the Assiniboine of Fort La Tourette assured La Vérendrye. He well knew that a heavy discount must be taken from every Indian story, but he felt that there must be some grain of truth in a tale so often repeated. Indians of such a kind as this would be heart's desire to any missionary; hence the Superior of the Jesuit mission in Canada readily assigned Father Charles Mesaiger to the task. When, as has been said, his health gave way, the latest arrival from France, Father Aulneau, was deputed to the post of missionary to the Mandans, for so these remarkable Indians were called. Their name in the Assiniboine idiom was Quant Chipouane, "those who live in holes", or Ouachipouennes-"Sioux who go underground".⁷ In their own tongue, they were See-pohs-ka-nu-mah-kak-kee, "the people of the pheasants".⁸

When La Vérendrye visited the Mandans he was much disappointed to find that they had been exaggerated beyond recognition. They were, according to La Vérendrye, of mixed blood, tall, active, good-looking and affable. The women had not a savage cast of features. For all that however, they were Indians, not differing greatly from the Assiniboine. The white man's clothing and armour were nowhere to be seen. Instead, the Mandans went about naked with only a buffalo robe carelessly slung over the shoulders. They were fond of tatoo-

6. Publication of the Champlain Society, Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and his Sons. p.108
7. Publications of the Champlain Society, loc. cit.
8. Catlin, G., The North American Indians, vol. I, p.91.

ing, though neither men nor women had more than half the body tattooed. The Mandans were very sharp traders; La Vérendrye tells in his account of them that they cleaned the Assiniboine out of everything they had in the way of guns, powder, balls, kettles, axes, knives and awls. This judgment of the Mandans is confirmed by the reports of the early British traders who visited them.⁹

In La Vérendrye's day, the Mandans were distributed in seven villages or forts. Speaking of these he admits that "their fortification has nothing savage about it."⁹ The village at which he stayed had one hundred and thirty cabins, all of uniform design. The village was laid out in streets and squares which were kept very clean. The village ramparts were smooth and wide; the palisade was provided with four bastions. The fort was built on an elevation, surrounded by a ditch, more than fifteen feet deep, and from fifteen to eighteen feet wide. Entrance to the fort was effected by means of steps or pieces of wood, which were removed when the fort was threatened by an enemy. The lodges of the Mandans were circular in shape and covered with earth; neat, comfortable and spacious enough to house from twenty to forty persons. The lodges were divided into rooms by means of planks.¹⁰ Unlike the lodges of other Indians, these were kept very tidy; instead of leaving every sort of article in heaps about the lodge, the Mandans packed their belongings in large bags,

9. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. pp. 319, 324, 325, 339-340.

10. Publication of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p.342.

which were hung on posts. Another remarkable feature of the Mandan dwelling was the beds, which, the explorer says, were somewhat like tombs, and surrounded by skins, the latter sometimes beautifully decorated.¹¹

The Assiniboine report of the agricultural pursuits of the Mandans was substantially correct; they cultivated the soil with a hoe made from the shoulder blade of the buffalo, and raised such crops as corn, pumpkins and squash. These vegetables they preserved for winter use in cellars, with which the Mandan fort was well provided. The cellars were holes dug six or seven feet deep, whose inner sides were somewhat in the form of a jug, and tightly closed at the top. George Catlin who spent a season with the Mandans in 1833 says that their diet included buffalo berries, service berries, strawberries, and wild plums, though their staple food was buffalo meat. Lewis and Clarke still earlier in the nineteenth century mention a "mixture of pumpkins, beans, corn and choke cherries all boiled together in a pot and forming a composition by no means unpalatable."¹² Prince Maximilien of Wied states that the Mandan boiled or roasted maize, pounded it, mixed it with fat and baked it into small cakes. La Vérendrye was regaled with cooked grain and flour, worked into a paste with pumpkin. He describes the Mandans as great eaters and very

11. Ibid,
Catlin, G. loc. cit.

12. Catlin, G. op. cit., p. 136-139.
Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p.325.

fond of feasts. Every day he was served with more than twenty dishes, consisting of corn, beechnuts and pumpkin, always cooked.¹³ Catlin mentions one rather strange custom; any inhabitant of the village might eat at any time and in any lodge, where food was always prepared.¹⁴

La Vérendrye affirms that the Mandans were the most skilful of all the tribes in dressing leather; that they worked very delicately in hair and feathers, and wickerwork, which they made both flat and basket-shaped.¹⁵ He calls them an industrious tribe--unusual praise for Indians.

La Vérendrye makes no mention of the religion of the Mandans but Catlin has left quite a complete account of their beliefs and ritual. Like the general run of Indians, they practised polygamy, having as many as six, eight, ten or even fourteen wives. In true Indian fashion, the proud husband of this family of wives--he was generally a chief or a medicine-man, for any one of lesser rank could not support such an establishment--left the work of the fields entirely to them and it was unlawful to hire anyone to do work.¹⁶

The Mandan religion was a form of dualism.¹⁷ The evil spirit existed first and possessed the greater power. They believed in a future life of reward and punishment though the

13. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p.325.
14. Catlin, G., op. cit., p. 139.
15. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p.332.
16. Catlin, G., op. cit. p. 133-134.
17. Catlin, G., op. cit. p. 176-178.

punishment was not eternal. Their hell was a very cold place where the good spirit dwelt to meet those who had offended him, in order to increase their tortures and to administer penalties. Heaven was a warm place where dwelt the evil spirit to tempt the blessed ones. After a certain period of punishment the souls in hell would go to Heaven where they would again be tempted and have to answer again for their transgressions.

Among their traditions were three¹⁸ which had a striking resemblance to the truths of Christianity--one of them, the transgression of Eve, for which all others had to suffer; the second, the story of the Deluge; and the third, the appearance on earth of a Saviour conceived and born in a strange manner. This Child did wonderful deeds. For instance, when the Mandans were about to starve, he gave them four buffalo bulls which were enough to satisfy the whole village, and yet always left as much meat as before. Then the "first and only man" found the Child and threw him into the river.

A tradition resembling the Scriptural fact of the Deluge was perhaps, the most important of the Mandan beliefs. Indeed, one of the chief ends of their annual religious festival, at which Catlin was present, was to celebrate the subsiding of the Flood. The festival began, not on a particular day, but at the season when the willow leaves under the bank expand fully,

18. Catlin, G., op. cit. pp. 178, 180, 203.

because "the twig that the bird brought home was a willow bough, and had full-grown leaves on it". The bird was the mourning or turtle dove. It was therefore forbidden to any Mandan to kill turtle doves. The most important personage in this rite was "the first and only man"--the only one saved in the universal calamity when the waters overflowed on the surface of the earth; he landed his canoe on a high mountain in the West, where he made his home. At his appearance in the fort for the annual celebration, he had to receive from the owner of every lodge some edged tool, to be sacrificed to the water; otherwise there would be another flood, in which no one would be saved. All these tools were then dropped into the river in the presence of the whole people, nor might they ever be retrieved. In the medicine lodge of the Mandans there were four objects of great veneration--bottles made of the skin of a buffalo's neck sewn in the form of a large tortoise, containing three or four gallons of water; the water, supposedly, having been gathered from the four quarters of the world, and preserved ever since the settling down of the flood.¹⁹

Concerning the possibility of converting the Mandans, Catlin, who knew them well, was very hopeful.²⁰ They could, he thought, be converted and civilized. Of course, the task would require patience and perseverance, but the labours of a missionary would certainly be rewarded. One of the great

19. Catlin, G., op. cit. p. 184.

20. Catlin, G., op. cit. p. 208.

advantages was the comparatively²¹ small number of Mandans, and their permanent location in villages situated within easy distances of one another.

21. The Mandans have since entirely disappeared. They were wiped out by an epidemic of smallpox in 1837, only 31 souls surviving out of 1600.

CHAPTER V

Such was the tribe to which Jean-Pierre Aulneau was appointed to bring the good tidings of Redemption. What were his feelings at the prospect? He is quite frank in his letters to his family and friends in France, that the announcement of this appointment gave him anything but pleasure. His opinion of Indians he thus expresses to his mother:

"I have already seen a few of almost all of the tribes, and there is no more repulsive sight, but they have been ransomed by the Blood of a God. How happy shall I be if He deigns to make use of so unworthy an instrument as myself to bring them to love and adore Him in spirit and in truth."¹

The degradation of the Indians was not then the cause of his shrinking from the task set him; rather was it the isolation in which he would have to live, removed as he would be by half a continent from his nearest priest-neighbour. He writes to Father Faye, April 25, 1735:

".....there I will be for at least three or four years without the least spiritual succour, and removed several hundred leagues from any other priest. You will not find it difficult to comprehend that it is the severest trial I could meet with in life. I confess that I can only look on my destination with fear and trembling for my eternity. What reassures me is that it is not through any choice of mine that I find myself thus exposed to so many dangers. I even did what I could to have another missionary appointed to accompany me. I succeeded to the extent of having one promised me, if they send one over from France, and some are expected this year."²

To his mother he says:

"I am now on the point of departure, and henceforth I must devote myself to the work of saving the

1. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 13.

2. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 34-35.

Indian. My joy would be complete had I been able to secure the companionship in the expedition, of another Jesuit. But Providence has not seen fit to grant me that consolation. God alone, from this out, must be my only consolation. Beseech Him to grant me the grace of never rendering myself unworthy by my sins of His protection and of the effects of His mercy."³

To Father Bonin he confides:

".....(I) think you will be glad to know what my destination is..... It may be that it will make you tremble as much as I do for my salvation. If anything gives me confidence it is that I have had no hand in it myself..... My superior has singled me out for the mission to which he sends me, without consulting me, in spite of my natural repugnance. God's Holy Will be praised; for He alone will now be my consolation, and whatever help I count upon will be derived from Jesus expiring on the Cross..... Doubtless....I shall have to undergo many hardships; they would have been more than welcome had it been advisable to give me as companion another Jesuit, but I am to be sent alone among these tribes.....I humbly confess, Reverend Father, that it was not without a pang that I brought myself to obey. May God accept the sacrifice I make of my life and of all human consolation for the expiation of my sins. My hope is that He will not abandon me, while I find in the consideration of Jesus Christ crucified enough to strengthen me to bear with all the hardships and difficulties which Providence may have in store for me.

I shall be removed several hundred leagues from any other priest, and in that lies the great hardship of all my mission, because I am far from flattering myself that I shall seldom need to cleanse my soul in the Blood of Jesus Christ. But God seems to require of me the sacrifice of this very consolation. I can refuse Him nothing; may His Holy Will be for ever blessed!"⁴

An extract from a letter of his intimate friend Father de Gonnor will complete the picture:

3. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 44-45.
4. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 47-49.

"He felt a great repugnance for this post, as he would have to go there alone...; he generously overcame this reluctance through zeal and love of obedience, much to the admiration of those who knew how painful the sacrifice was; those on the contrary, who were ignorant of it fancied that he was delighted with the idea of discovering new regions."⁵

This generosity was speedily rewarded. His fears gave place to a great joy. Before leaving Montreal he wrote to Father Faye at Bordeaux:....."the closer insight of the worry and sufferings of the life I am to lead, the more thankful I am that God has deigned to call me to the missions of this forlorn country."⁶

To his sister he thus expresses himself:

"If I had more virtue than I possess I would congratulate myself much more on being obliged to commence thus to devote myself to missionary life as so many other holy missionaries..... who in the early times of French settlements in this desolate country watered the wilderness with their sweat and with their blood."⁷

He begs his mother:

"Pray God, my dear Mother, that I may acquit myself in a manner worthy of Him. I trust, that, separated from all that might afford human consolation He will not forsake me; and that if in the midst of the forests, whither I go to pass the rest of my life, and in the midst of wild beasts I find nothing to flatter my self-love, I may find at least an opportunity to destroy and annihilate it by my sufferings. Conjure Our Lord to send me many sufferings and to give me patience to bear them with resignation, conformably to His holy and divine Will."⁸

5. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 88.
6. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 53.
7. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 52.
8. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 51.

The dread has vanished. If he must go alone, go, he will, but not alone, for God is in the great Northwest as He is in the centre of Christendom. To the fire that burned in Father Aulneau's heart, the sufferings that he envisaged in the wilderness were but fuel. As one of the pioneers of the Indian mission, that giant among men and among saints, Jean de Brébeuf, had written a century before:

"I bear a holy jealousy towards those who are already enduring these sufferings. All these labours seem to me nothing in comparison to what I should like to endure for God. If I knew a place under Heaven where one could suffer yet more, I would go there."⁹

Father Aulneau left Quebec towards the end of April, 1735. Contrary to his expectation, he had a long wait at Montreal, which gave him the opportunity of visiting his friend, Father Nau, at the Iroquois mission of Sault St. Louis,¹⁰ where he spent the feast of Corpus Christi. The piety of these savages so moved him that, says Father Nau, "(he) could not restrain tears of joy and devotion while the procession lasted".¹¹

Father Aulneau left Sault St. Louis under the protection, as he said, of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, to begin his long journey of twelve hundred leagues¹² to the country of the Mandans, a country which he was destined never to see. What sort of man is he who sets out on "the longest, most painful and

9. Thwaites, R.G. - Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vol. 10.

10. Now called Caughnawaga.

11. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 62.

12. A French league is equivalent to two and one-half English miles.

dangerous (journey) ever undertaken by a missionary in Canada",¹³ which is to lead him to the poorest and most destitute of all the missions? Physically, he is in the full vigour of early manhood, thirty years of age, of medium height, rather stockily built,¹⁴ superbly healthy. His rapid and complete recovery from the dangerous attack of fever, after all the privations of the sea voyage, shows a constitution of iron. He endured the rigours of his first winter in Canada, in perfect health, as he tells his mother, a statement which Father Nau corroborates, calling him "as robust as he is courageous".¹⁵ Even the grilling trip from Montreal to Lake of the Woods did not overtax his strength; he arrived at Fort St. Charles in excellent physical condition. His own explanation is that with every increase of work his health becomes more robust,¹⁶--a happy endowment for a missionary to the Canadian North West.

Of Father Aulneau's character and virtue, no higher eulogy can be given than that he was chosen, without any desire on his own part, in fact, much against his will, for the most trying post in the Canadian mission, which was itself, by far the most difficult mission-field in the entire world at that time. The choice was made by a veteran missionary who knew what stamina was needed to endure life among the Indians, even among those who had accepted Christianity. If he chose Father Aulneau to go alone among tribes absolutely unknown, where he

13. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 69.

14. Prud'homme, L.A., Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye, p. 143.

15. Jones, A. E. op. cit. p. 66.

16. Jones, A. E. op. cit. p. 53.

would be for years without any kind of comfort, either of body or of spirit, it was because he saw in him a hero. Father Aulneau was just that, a hero--not a sort of spiritual Hercules, who went out in search of giants with whom to wrestle, but the far more attractive man who would think it presumptuous, deliberately to go looking for giants, but who, if suddenly faced with one, would confront him manfully, and either conquer him or die in the attempt. The giant who had suddenly risen in his path, had either been sent there by God, or allowed; therefore God would see him through the battle, and give either victory or death as His wisdom saw fit. This was exactly the spirit in which he accepted what he calls the greatest trial of his life; the spirit which animates flesh-and-blood heroes, an almost uncontrollable urge to turn and flee, overcome by the sheerest force of will. Father Aulneau did not want to go to the Mandans any more than a sane man would want to go into a machine gun barrage, or a burning building. But sane men do face machine gun barrages, and do enter burning buildings, because of some higher motive which rises superior to their fear. Father Aulneau went to the Mandans because God wanted him to go there, and he trusted to God to make up for the insufficiency that was so painfully evident to him.

For Father Aulneau had no heroic ideas about himself; far from thinking that he would be the Francis Xavier of the Indians, he feared rather for his own salvation when he should

be left alone deprived of all spiritual succour in the great North West. To the very last he feels this dread. One of the last letters he wrote has this typical thought, "Continue to pray God for me and recommend me to the Blessed Virgin; I hope to finish my course but dread to finish it badly".¹⁷

It was this genuine humility that enabled him to take the ups and downs of life so cheerfully. He never ignored the existence of the rough places, but he treated them in the matter-of-fact way that one would treat such commonplaces as air and light--to be noticed only when they are absent. He had a keen eye and a ready tongue for all the happy incidents, whereas he dismissed with a mere mention the unpleasantnesses. Could anything be more casual than his description of the voyage on the "Ruby", or the still more exhausting canoe trip across Canada? He sums up both in this phrase "I enjoyed perfect health to the end of the journey"¹⁸--and his correspondents are to infer from that that it was a most delightful trip.

Indeed it was so to him, for it gave him many things to suffer and so to become like his Divine Master. It is almost superfluous to say that this desire of resembling Christ by suffering for Him was the driving force of his entire life. Those who knew him best affirm it; he even admits it himself, and his election of the Canadian mission proves it to demon-

17. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 88.

18. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 71.

stration.

But this rather awe-inspiring virtue did not exclude the more attractive qualities. On the contrary, it showed itself in the guise of the most winning of them all, charity. The fever-stricken, vermin-infested convicts on board the "Ruby" were to him, in real earnest, so many Christs, whom he considered it a privilege to serve. The Indians, the very sight of whom filled him with disgust, had been bought with the same Christ's Precious Blood, and no suffering was too great not to be welcomed if it could bring them to know and love Him. And what crowns his charity is the winning self-effacement with which he serves his neighbour. No wonder that people loved him! He was all thoughtfulness for others and simply unconscious of himself. What care he took to spare his mother any worry on his account! He tells her again and again that his health is perfect; that he has spent the winter most agreeably at Quebec; that his joy at going to the Mandans would be complete if only there were another priest to accompany him; that in his mission he will be very well off, for the Indians there are very well disposed towards the whites, lead a sedentary life, practise agriculture and have flocks and herds, and domestic fowl. If she does not hear from him she is not to worry, because, remotely situated as he will be, his letters may not reach Quebec in time for the boat, but Father Nau will keep her informed of him.¹⁹

19. Jones, A. E., op.cit. p.44-46, p.51.

This thought for others became something very like timidity when he was forced to appeal to another to supply his wants. Not that he wished to be haughtily self-sufficient, but he dreaded that he might put them to some inconvenience. There are two of his letters in which he makes such an appeal, one to his sister and the other to a fellow religious, and in each he is emphatic that they must not inconvenience themselves.²⁰ To Father Aulneau everyone that he met was a master from whom he could learn. His letters are full of the praises of the holy men he has met in Canada, and of the great desire he has to resemble them.

Nor was this the only way in which Father Aulneau was like the little child to whom the Kingdom of Heaven belongs by right. He had a child's delicacy of conscience, and fear of sin. The ruggedness of life among the natives was not what froze his blood when he received his obedience for the Western Sea, but rather the isolation in which he would have to live, the utter lack of guidance which, he feared, would be fatal to such frail virtue as his. With his mother he was always just a boy. His letters to her are minute in their account of what he has seen and done, but one can feel that the real purpose of his writing to her is to tell her that he loves her, that he has no greater joy than that of thinking of her. When he is in Montreal, already on his way to the West, he writes her a last little note saying that he has now no other sorrow than

20. Jones, A. E., op.cit. p. 53.
Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Quebec,
(1926-1927), p. 271.

that of going too far away from her to be able to write to her often.²¹ How his mother must have smiled through her tears as she read and re-read those lines that told her more than volumes could have done.' Only one of Father Aulneau's letters to his sister has survived, but it is enough to show that his burning zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of infidels has not consumed the lesser, but still dear virtue of family affection. He writes "Good-bye, my dear Sister, and let your love for me in our Lord Jesus Christ be as deep as mine is for you."²² She was a fortunate sister indeed to have such a brother, and no great flight of fancy is needed to picture her beaming with pride as she read snatches of his letters to the other nuns at recreation or told them of the thousand and one endearing traits of his that she loved to remember.

This was the man, "a true Jesuit and a truly apostolic man"²³ as a close friend put it, whom God had appointed to seek the Western Sea and the tribes that dwelt thereon, though not to find them. He was to form part of the company of Sieur de la Vérendrye, who had come down to Montreal from the West in the spring of 1734 to do what he could to satisfy his creditors. He had to spend the winter in the East, since the journey to or from his territory required a whole season. He had arranged that his youngest son, Louis-Joseph should spend that winter studying mathematics and map-drawing in order that he might be able to make correct maps of the regions they would explore.

21. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 51.

22. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 53.

23. Jones, A.E., op. cit. p. 88.

Louis-Joseph had completed his studies in the spring of the following year. La Vérendrye decided therefore, to take him West that year; his four sons were now engaged with him in his great enterprise.²⁴

It was then, in company with the Sieur de la Vérendrye that Father Aulneau made the long journey across Canada. The ocean voyage had been long and painful and dangerous enough; this was to prove even more trying. At Sault St. Louis, he said good-bye to Father Nau, who could not conceal his emotion,²⁵ and stepped aboard the frail birch bark canoe that was to carry him half the width of the continent.

These voyageurs, like countless others before them, took the Champlain Road, so-called because it had been first followed by Champlain on his journey to the Huron country in 1615. That was little more than a hundred years before, but the country was already rich in heroic traditions, which the voyageurs did not fail to tell the new-comer.--The story of the imposter Vignau who had led Champlain far up the river telling him that it was the direct road to China. When the Indians had undeceived the explorer he left this gigantic liar, as he himself grimly wrote, "to the Mercy of God".²⁶ The story of Dollard des Ormeaux who with sixteen Frenchmen and a few Indian allies had held three hundred Iroquois at bay at the

24. Burpee, L. J., Pathfinders of the Great Plains, p.36.

Prud'homme, L.A., op.cit. p. 61

25. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 69.

26. Shortt and Doughty (Editors) Canada and its provinces, vol. I, p. 50.

Long Sault and thus saved the colony. It was a deed seldom equalled in the history of any country, and the voyageurs loved to recount it. These and a thousand other tales they told, and interspersed them with song that moved in time with their paddles, whose springing strokes lifted the light craft up against the current of the river. It was exhilarating work for a time but hour after hour of it was unspeakably wearying, as even voyageurs knew, and, in this method of travelling all passengers were "hands". Father Aulneau bent to the paddle with the others and thus won the men's hearts to himself. Paddling was child's play, compared to portaging, when falls or rapids blocked their way and there was nothing for it but to make for the shore, shoulder the canoes and the baggage and foot it along the bank until calm water was reached. The standard method of carrying the load was by means of a tote-rope, a band placed around the head, with the bundles fastened to it in such a way that the burden, four or five hundred pounds, rested on the head and shoulders and left the arms free to fight off the swarms of mosquitoes that infested the river bank. Here again, the priest, fresh from cultured France was only a man who packed a load as gracefully as he might, and thought of the stalwart missionary of the previous century, Jean de Brébeuf, who could carry a heavier pack than even the strongest Indians, to their astonishment and secret admiration; and still more, of Him who carried the weight of the world's sins on His torn and bleeding shoulders. When night came, the

voyageurs had no other pillow than the earth, no other roof than the starry vault of heaven, and no escape from the mosquitoes, but they slept like children. At the first streak of dawn they were up and off again, having put many miles behind them before the halt was called for breakfast.

There was much to delight the eye on this long journey-- the beautiful falls of the Rideau, which hung like a curtain across the river; the seething, boiling cauldron of the Chaudière, into which the Indians threw an offering of tobacco to appease the angry Windigo; the leagues and leagues of forest teeming with game that daily replenished the travellers' larder.

From the Ottawa the route lay through a series of small lakes and streams into Lake Nipissing, a miniature sea, whose clear waters, calm to look at, could, under the breath of a steady wind be churned into a violence dangerous for the fragile canoes. From Lake Nipissing, the voyageurs ran down the French River to the placid, emerald waters of Georgian Bay, where islands grew like mushrooms, and the clear waters hid no secrets. Skirting the north shore of Lake Huron, they reached Fort Michilimackinac, where a welcome halt was made. This fort was the rendez-vous for all the traders and trappers of the upper country. It stood on the south shore of the strait that connects Lake Michigan with Lake Huron, and it had been for years a bone of contention between the civil and religious authorities of New France. It was a fairly large enclosure of some two acres containing thirty houses and a small church. It

was at once the military headquarters for the West and the central point of the Mission to the Ottawas. These two functions were not congenial. The soldiers were a lawless lot whom often the commandants did not try to restrain, and whose conduct was a scandal to white man and red alike. The traders, thinking of nothing but their own gain furnished the Indians with fire-water, and against these two arms of the devil, the missionaries' best efforts were almost hopeless. In the previous century, after the anarchy of de la Mothe-Cadillac's administration,²⁷ the mission had been closed for a time, but it was now reopened under considerably better conditions. Father de Saint-Pé was in charge, and with him was one of Father Aulneau's most intimate friends, Father du Jaunay.

These were very happy days for the new recruit, in company with his brethren, who were equally happy to receive a visitor, remotely situated as they were in their outpost. They listened eagerly to the news he had to give of their mutual friends in sunny France, of the state of the kingdom, of the condition of the various colleges, of this Father and of that, of the possibility of recruits for the missions, of recent developments in Quebec, and of the thousand other details that interest men whose lives are spent far away from their kind. For their part, they gave him all the help they could for the arduous task that lay before him, one that staggered his mind with its immensity.

27. Rochemonteix, C.de., *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVII^e siècle*, t. III, pp. 494-527.

There were many things that a tried missionary like Father de Saint-Pé could tell this novice--how to approach the Indians, what their customs and their taboos were, what motives appealed to them, as well as elementary hints on living in the wilds--how to ward off the bitter cold, what herbs were good for medicinal purposes, and other like practical pointers. When Father Aulneau left Michilimackinac, it was with feelings of regret, but also with renewed courage to face the long and lonely exile which was God's Will for him.

The voyageurs likewise, had gained new strength from their welcome rest, and greatly did they need it, for the hardest part of their journey was still to be faced. They had been nearly two months on the way and the leader was eager to get back to Fort St. Charles. Doubling back fifteen leagues, the tiny fleet threaded its way through the maze of islands that dots the North Channel of Lake Huron, headed up the St. Mary's River, and embarked on that vast inland sea, Lake Superior, which could swallow Ireland and still leave a good-sized lake. The largest body of fresh water in the world, it must have made Father Aulneau gasp with surprise. He had seen huge lakes in this strange new land, but here he might have wondered if it was not the Atlantic that he was about to sail once more. An Atlantic indeed it could be in its fury, when the impetuous winds swept down upon it and threw up very mountains of water. To think of venturing on those sombre waters, which were never still, and icy cold even in the heat of summer, and that, in a

shell-like birch-bark craft was foolhardy. Yet here they were afloat on its vast expanse making their way carefully along the north shore, never knowing when a sudden storm might break upon them and bury them in a watery grave.

As they paddled farther and farther west, La Vérendrye's son, young Louis-Joseph began to realize that the search for the Western Sea, noble enterprise though it was, was not all romance. There was surely an equal amount of rugged labour and loneliness, aptly pictured by the rocky shoreline of this unfriendly lake, and he wondered if the whole venture would be like this. Puzzled and vaguely fearful, he looked about for someone in the band who would set his fears at rest. His father had gone ahead with a picked body of men, for he had been long away from his western headquarters and there were many things that would require his presence. Louis-Joseph, therefore, timidly sought out this missionary who was at once strong and gentle, who had also felt a sickening grip of fear around his heart, when he realized that he must go to seek the Indians on the shores of the Western Sea. Out of the seemingly inexhaustible resources of his unflinching courage, Father Aulneau restored the boy's confidence, and from then on, the two were fast friends.

Days and days of steady paddling at last brought the voyageurs to calmer waters. Passing Thunder Cape which rose, an image of the everlasting, sheer out of the water to a height of 1350 feet, and Mount MacKay, an imposing promontory of 1000

feet, the fitting gateway to the great NorthWest, they reached Grand Portage, near the mouth of the Pigeon River, about fifteen leagues south-west of Fort Kaministikwia, now the City of Fort William. Just ahead of them lay the Grand Portage, the most taxing part of their thousand-league journey. It was here that La Vérendrye's men had mutinied on their first trip west. Terrified by the prospect of a three-league portage, they had refused to go further. There was no difficulty this year, but there was an unfortunate incident. The season was already far advanced, and the boatmen so mismanaged things that the goods remained behind at the Portage--a blunder which was to bring on fatal consequences in the not-far-distant future.

Most of the travellers went up the Pigeon River to the chain of small lakes and streams that connects Lake Superior with Rainy Lake. This lap of the journey with its forty-two portages, required from twenty to thirty days, through a very sterile country. Perhaps it is this region that Father Aulneau describes in a letter to Father Bonin:²⁸

"We.....journeyed nearly always on foot for the space of two or three days, we headed sometimes towards the west, sometimes towards the southwest and sometimes even towards the south, threading our way among a profusion of lakes. Several of these lakes have a circumference of more than a hundred leagues.

.....We journeyed nearly all the way through fire and a thick stifling smoke, which prevented us even once from catching a glimpse of the sun. It was the Indians, who in hunting

28. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 91-72.
There are several passages in the original manuscript torn off or defaced by time.

had set fire to the woods, without imagining however, that it would result in a terrible conflagration.

So long a journey in any other country would have been diversified by a number of interesting features calculated to awaken one's curiosity, but all that was to be met with in this vast region was limited to lakes, rocks, immense forests, Indians, and a few wild animals.....On one occasion, however,..... I thought I saw a lunar eclipse.....I noticed also, on several occasions, especially while on Lake Huron, grand displays of the Aurora Borealis."

Such is Father Aulneau's opinion of what Canadians are wont to consider their magnificent scenery. It may be presumed that had the missionary spent a longer time in Canada, he, too, like so many others, would have fallen a victim to its rugged charms.

At the end of Rainy Lake the voyageurs made another short halt at Fort St. Pierre, near the present town of Fort Frances. This Fort had been built by La Jemmeraye in 1731,²⁹ and named in honour of the leader of the expedition. A few days' rest here, and they were on their way again down Rainy River. A short run brought them to Lake of the Woods, a maze of channels and islands, where wild life abounded, and every variety of scenery--great cliffs, reddish brown in colour, curving lichen-covered rock sweeping down to the water-edge, low-bouldered shores, or long stretches of gleaming sand. Heading north-west through this watery labyrinth, the weary canoe-men seemed to gain new strength at the thought that the paddling was over for the season. The missionary's heart

29. Burpee, L. J., op. cit. p. 29.
Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 36.
Shortt and Doughty, op. cit. p. 119.

exulted as he approached this promised land whose wretched inhabitants he hoped to bring into the household of the Faith. The men in the canoe broke forth into a lusty cheer as they rounded the bay; a cheer answered them from the little stockade. As the miniature fleet drew in to the shore the men streamed out of the north gate of the palisade and the warmth with which they greeted the new-comers, for a moment transformed into a veritable palace the tiny outpost that was Fort St. Charles.

The scene of Father Aulneau's short year of labour is this Fort St. Charles, of which he gives a graphic description in one of the last letters he wrote, dated April 30, 1736, and addressed to Father Bonin:³⁰

".....This Fort St. Charles.....is merely an enclosure made with four rows of posts, from twelve to fifteen feet in height, in the form of an oblong square, within which are a few rough cabins constructed of logs and clay and covered with bark."

According to La Vérendrye's account,³¹ the interior of the enclosure measured one hundred feet by sixty feet, with four bastions. The cabins provided a house for the missionary, a church, another house for the commandant, four main buildings with chimneys, a powder magazine and a storehouse. Two gates, on opposite sides, gave entrance to the enclosure, which was also provided with a watch tower. La Vérendrye had built this post in 1732, and named it Fort St. Charles in honour of his first missionary, Father Charles Mesaiger, who had chosen the site because of the excellent fishing and hunting to be found

30. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 72-79.

31. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p.103.

in the vicinity. In the autumn of 1733 the Frenchmen caught four thousand big whitefish, not to mention trout and sturgeon. Wild rice grew there in abundance, and the fort had the added advantage of being in the Cree country and within easy reach of the Assiniboines. Here it was that Father Aulneau spent his first and last winter in the upper country.

How did he spend it? From the last letter that he wrote, addressed to Father Bonin,³⁰ the story can be very well pieced together. He tried to learn Cree and Assiniboine, for which task he needed all the leisure to be had in the long Canadian winter. When he arrived at the Fort towards the end of October, he found that most of the Indians had gone off on the winter hunt, to return only after the break-up of the ice in the Spring. There would, however, always be a few dusky visitors coming and going to the trading post, but these were not of much help, averse as they were to teaching a stranger the mysteries of their tongue. He was engaged on a dictionary and grammar of the Cree idiom,³² which he hoped to have finished before the companion who had been promised him, arrived in the following year. By that time he should have mastered the Cree, and have gained a smattering of Assiniboine, for Providence, he admits, had endowed him with a certain facility for learning these odd jargons. Such a statement, coming from Father Aulneau, an inveterate belittler of self, can be safely interpreted to mean a remarkable gift for Indian languages.

32. Jones, A. E., loc. cit.

What else did he do? He endeavoured to systematize the Cree religion---a strange belief indeed. The Crees' one idol was the devil, to whom they offered their sacrifices; some of the Indians had even seen him. The reason of their attention was that from him came all their misfortunes, hence they tried to propitiate his wrath. They acknowledged God as the author of all the good they received, but they paid no heed to Him, since they had nothing to fear from Him. They believed in the immortality of the soul. Their idea of Heaven was the standard Indian conception of a happy hunting ground, with an abundance of meat, continual feasting, dances and games. The path to Heaven was beset with dangers which the Crees visualized in this fashion. To get to the happy hunting ground the souls had to cross a wide ditch, which was filled, on one side with muddy water, ill-smelling and covered with scum; on the other side, with fire which rose in fierce tongues of flame. The only way of getting across the ditch was by means of a pine tree swung across with the ends resting on the banks; the bark of the tree was besmeared with a slippery substance. If the souls on the way to Heaven fell from the slippery pine trunk, they were irrevocably lost, condemned either to drink of the foul water or to burn forever in the flames. To hear of the wondrous works of God surprised the Indians not at all. A Monsoni's comment on the resurrection of Lazarus was: "(God) had already given him life once, could He not give it to him a second time?"

Father Aulneau must have had a more than fair grasp of their language to have deciphered so much of their religion.

What else did he do in that long winter? He gathered what information he could about the country, and he communicated it to Father Bonin with an apology for its probable inaccuracy on many points. The latitude of the Fort he ascertained from La Jemmeraye, as $48^{\circ}5'$. He enjoyed the displays of the Aurora borealis which hung its gorgeous curtains across the northern skies every night of the winter.

What else did he do? He endeavoured to pierce the fastnesses of the minds of the straggling Indians of the Fort, though the task of converting them seemed to him almost hopeless. Nevertheless, he developed a plan of evangelization, which, he thought, might obviate some of the difficulties. The Crees, he said, were superstitious and morally degraded to a degree beyond comprehension, a degradation, which the generality of traders had helped to deepen by giving them the fatal fire-water, which had become their only topic of conversation, the sole object of their petitions. La Vérendrye's company formed a striking exception to this deplorable rule. Notwithstanding, their crassness, the Indians could not help respecting the Christian religion, though they showed no eagerness to embrace it. Father Aulneau sums up the situation thus:

"When we speak of Christianity to them, one of their standing reasons for not embracing it is, that the Indians were not made for that religion; but the true reason which they do not wish to

avow, is their fear of the devil, and the necessity in which they would be placed of renouncing what they called their (religion) which they imagine they could never abandon without immediately being stricken with death...
....I am convinced that, if there were five or six missionaries in this region, their efforts would not be fruitless.....But what can one poor mortal do in such an extent of country, the very limits of which are as yet unknown?

Scarcely have we entered upon the question of religion with some one of the natives, and commenced to entertain some faint hope of his conversion, than confronted with the necessity of supplying the wants of life, he has to betake himself to an erratic life in the woods. There the devil invests a thousand subterfuges to turn him from his purpose, and makes him ashamed that he ever lent an ear to what was said to him about the other world.

Were there several missionaries here, it would be otherwise. They would be stationed at different points, and could head off, as it were, the roving savage, who, if he escaped from one, would fall into the hands of another."³³

These were the facts which he signalled to his confrere at home. Characteristically, he omits everything that touches on himself. There is nothing even faintly resembling a complaint but one or two phrases would show something of the price he was paying for the happiness of announcing the Gospel to these benighted pagans. He speaks of "the day of my departure and of my complete separation from all that could afford me any satisfaction." Further on in the same letter, he says: "This war (between the Crees and the Prairie Sioux) was the occasion for us of much suffering during the winter, as we had no other nourishment than tainted pike, boiled, or dried over the fire".³⁴

33. Jones, A. E., loc. cit.

34. Jones, A. E., loc. cit.

They must have been hungry indeed, to eat such fare, even the thought of which is nauseating. Why were they reduced to such straits? First, because the wild rice crop had been ruined by unusually high water; second, because the supplies that La Vérendrye had brought from Montreal had not got further than Grand Portage, thanks to the bad management of the boatman in charge; the provisions intended for Fort St. Charles had to be shared with Fort Maurepas; third, because the Indians were on the war-path, hunting Sioux instead of game, very little of which found its way to the trading post. So great were the privations suffered by the Frenchmen that the Indians named the island opposite the Fort, "Bucketete"--Famine Island.³⁵

Yet, in one sentence Father Aulneau dismisses the subject of the hardships of life in the hinterland--the terrifying loneliness, and the ever-present uncertainty of life. Every day was just like every other day; there was always before his mind the huge and humanly impossible task for which he was responsible, and the thought of his own utter insufficiency for it. Deprived as he was, of all spiritual help, his sensitive soul suffered torture. Yet of this there is not a word, even in a letter to an intimate friend. Only those who knew him well would have suspected the heroism that he needed to take each day of that long winter as it came.

With regard to the members of La Vérendrye's expedition, he made himself all things to all men. He does not so much as

35. Prud'homme, L. A., op.cit. p. 64.

mention his dealings with them, but from their own testimony, to be quoted later, his influence over them is evident. These men were hardy voyageurs, used to life in the wilds. Some of them had been with La Vérendrye from the very beginning of the enterprise; they knew how much of hunger, of cold and of privation there was to endure in a winter spent in the upper country. Yet at times, even their stout hearts quailed. The long days seemed endless, the cold was biting, provisions were low in the Fort. Nothing can so dishearten men as scarcity, and it was painfully noticeable at Fort St. Charles. In this crisis Father Aulneau was as their guardian angel. His unquestioning trust in the fatherly Providence of God put new courage into the men. When they grew homesick for their kindred far away on the St. Lawrence a little chat with the missionary put new heart into them. What a blessing, they thought over and over again, that in this gaunt winter, they had such a whole-souled, utterly devoted priest with them. Even the hardest among them felt better because of his presence.

Between Father Aulneau and the La Vérendrye's, a close bond of friendship grew up. They could not fail to remark his complete self-forgetfulness, and his devotion both to the Indians and to the voyageurs, while, on his part, the valiant missionary recognized and appreciated at its true value the sterling patriotism of this family that was so ardent in the service of the King, though it received scant credit from him.

Louis-Joseph especially loved Father Aulneau. He was of the blood of explorers and he had thrilled at the thought of joining his father's expedition. But, in the long winter, the boy---he was only eighteen---was often sick with longing for home and mother. He could not tell his father or his brothers of such things; they would think him a weakling, unworthy of their family, unfit for such an enterprise as the search for the Western Sea. But Father Aulneau would not think like that. His big heart would understand and sympathize. Louis-Joseph could talk to him about his mother and that relieved a little of his longing for her. The boy often thought of the hosts of things he would have to tell his mother when he saw her again, maybe in a year or two, after they had reached the Western Sea, and how thankful she would be that her son had found such a good friend as this lovable missionary!

Then there was Pierre, whom history knows as the Chevalier. He had such a wonderful facility for Indian languages that when he left the North-West in 1744, he spoke seven of them fluently, and he willingly gave Father Aulneau the benefit of his knowledge. For Jean-Baptiste, the eldest of the family, Father Aulneau conceived a high regard, admiring his steadiness of purpose, his utter dependability, and his indomitable courage.

These two older sons were not at the Fort all winter. Towards the end of February their father sent them with two

other men to Fort Maurepas to bring him news of their cousin. The commander intended,³⁶ as soon as the delayed supplies came through to Fort St. Charles, to proceed thither with Father Aulneau who would instruct the Indians of that region, and then accompany them on their journeys, in order to make contact with the other tribes of the plains. While La Vérendrye was anxiously waiting for the convoy to arrive from Grand Portage, his sons returned from Maurepas with the staggering news that La Jemmeraye, the lieutenant of the expedition was dead.³⁷ Only the death of La Vérendrye himself could have been a greater set back to the enterprise, for La Jemmeraye was as its second soul. He died on May 10, 1736, as a result of the hardship and exposure endured in reconnoitring the country. His cousins buried him where he died, at "La Fourche aux Roseaux" and erected a cross over the grave of this "first victim of the search for the Western Sea". There were soon to be others.

This news added immeasurably to La Vérendrye's anxiety about the food situation, and it necessitated an entire remodelling of his plans for further operations. On the day after his sons' return from the Red River, that is, on June 3, 1736, the leader called a council to deliberate on means of

36. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p.202.

37. Burpee, L.J., op. cit. p.37.
Prud'homme, L.A., op. cit. p. 62-63.
Shortt and Doughty, op. cit. p. 122.

obtaining provisions, goods and powder. The council resolved to send three well-manned canoes to Kaministikwia whence relief was expected; from there they should go on to Micilimackinac and return in all haste with the supplies needful for carrying on the exploration.

When this decision was reached Father Aulneau asked to be allowed to join the party. He was in a rather difficult situation. The first instructions that he had received were that he should go on to Fort Maurepas to preach to the Assiniboine, and accompany them in their annual visits to a more westerly tribe from which they obtained their supply of corn. Now, because of La Jemmeraye's untimely death, the journey to Fort Maurepas was out of the question. What then, was he to do? The simplest way out of the difficulty was to go to Michilimackinac, and there consult Father de Saint-Pé, the regional superior, on the matter. He could, at the same time, seek that spiritual aid which his delicate conscience longed for so ardently.³⁸ When the missionary put the case to La Vérendrye the latter readily granted the request, but he demurred somewhat when Father Aulneau asked that Jean-Baptiste, the leader's eldest son, be placed in charge of the party, in order that the journey might be made as expeditiously as possible. Jean-Baptiste, the explorer pointed out, was now his first lieutenant, since the death of La Jemmeraye, and moreover,

38. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 87.
Prud'homme, L.A., op. cit. pp.64-65, 74.

he had but lately returned from Fort Maurepas, a journey of eighty leagues. Yet in the end, La Vérendrye yielded. He writes in his journal: ".....My eldest son went with them, as I could not refuse him to the Reverend Father who had asked for him."³⁹ What further influenced the leader's decision was the report that there were Sioux on the Lake of the Woods, who were lying in wait for Crees; he considered that the flotilla would be safer under his son's leadership.

The date of departure was set for June 5. La Vérendrye inspected arms, and distributed powder and balls to the men, advising them at the same time to keep a sharp lookout for war parties. They assured him that he need not be anxious about them, that they would exercise all vigilance. In Father Aulneau's canoe were six good men whom La Vérendrye himself had chosen, and who had promised to return and continue the exploration with him. Seven hardy voyageurs stepped into each of the other two canoes, and at the word of command from the youthful captain the light craft leapt forward on the long journey of two hundred leagues, the term of which they were never to reach.

39. Publication of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p.215.

CHAPTER VI

The voyageurs set out with light hearts, though the way ahead of them was long and arduous enough. Their mission, if successful, as they were sure it would be, would bring succour to the anxious men at Fort St. Charles. Jean-Baptiste, the youthful leader, was just a trifle exultant that his father, cautious, and a good judge of men, had seen fit to appoint him to this post of danger. He was proud too, of the fact that Father Aulneau, who knew every man in the Fort as only a priest can know men, had asked for him as leader of the expedition to ensure a safe journey and a speedy return. Both the missionary and the young lieutenant were grudging of time spent at anything but their main business. Jean-Baptiste, assuring the priest that there would be no time lost, took the lead, his keen eyes scanning the horizon, his every sense alert for the least sign of danger, determined to prove worthy of the confidence that his father and the chaplain had shown in him.

The men bent to their paddles with the steady stroke of the skilled canoe-man, while to their lips, unconsciously and as if by second nature, came the refrain to which the shores of every lake and river in New France had resounded:

"En roulant ma boule roulant
En roulant ma boule".

There was hard paddling ahead of them, but that was their daily fare, and on this trip they were going towards home.

True, their destination was only Michilimackinac, not the St. Lawrence, but at Michilimackinac there would probably be old friends from other remote points of the vast hinterland, and there too, they would receive news of the doings of the outside world. To Michilimackinac and back would be a pleasant run. There was nothing to fear for they had their priest with them--one of the finest men they had ever known, whom they loved for his genuine manliness, and revered for his evident holiness.

The priest enjoyed their happiness and shared it, for he, too, would see friends and brothers at Michilimackinac. For a few days at least he would not be so lonely. His soul was counting the minutes until it could unburden itself to a fellow-priest who would reassure him on the problems that had cropped up during that interminable winter, and would share with him the accumulated wisdom of long years of experience in the missions. The regional Superior at Michilimackinac would lay down a plan of action for his work which had been checked by the temporary abandonment of Fort Maurepas. Father Aulneau's heart was light as a school boy's at the thought of the banquet of the spirit that was ahead of him, and he, joined in the boatmen's song:

"A la claire fontaine
M'en allant me promener
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je me suis baigné."

So the little party left the Fort, eager and not overly-anxious. Little did they dream that death was so near. The exact details of what happened on that fatal day, June 5--6 are God's secret, and so they will remain. We know for certain that the travellers reached a small rocky island, about eighteen miles southeast of Fort St. Charles, where they were massacred to a man by the Sioux. What was the cause of this unprovoked attack on the exploring party which had always maintained friendly relations with all the tribes? Governor Beauharnois' report to the Minister of Marine at Paris furnishes some clue to the enigma. Under date of October 14, 1736, he writes:

"I made enquiry.....and I learned that the savages of La Vérendrye's post had attacked the Mascoutens Pouanes, (Sioux of the Prairies) who called out: 'Who is killing us?' to which they answered: 'It is the Frenchmen'. At once they resolved on vengeance."¹

The Relation² of a voyageur Bourassa by name, who left Fort St. Charles for Michilimackinac a few days before the departure of Jean-Baptiste's party, throws a little more light on the mystery. A letter which he wrote to La Vérendrye from Fort St. Pierre tells practically the same story as his Relation.² He affirmed that, at a distance of about twelve leagues from Fort St. Charles, he was surrounded by a fleet of thirty canoes, manned by some hundred Sioux, who disarmed

1. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p. 202.
2. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. pp. 212, 218, 252.

him and his four men and plundered their goods. When Bourassa protested against such treatment at the hands of those whom the French had always considered as brothers and friends, the warriors replied that it was their custom not to know anyone when on the march. Besides, they had a grievance against the French for distributing arms to their enemies. Bourassa very aptly replied that the Crees might make the same complaint, for the Sioux too, had obtained firearms at the trading post. He informed them that, if they were looking for Crees, they would find five or six lodges of them in the vicinity of the Fort. Satisfied with this information, the Sioux released Bourassa, telling him to wait for them, and on their return, they would restore his arms--an injunction which the voyageur thought it wiser to disobey. The Sioux failed to find the Crees, who had fled. Bourassa's letter to La Vérendrye makes no mention of the information which he thus supplied to the Sioux.

Beauharnois' report to Maurepas,² already quoted, adds this further detail, that the Sioux had fastened Bourassa to a stake, meaning to burn him to death when a female slave of that tribe, whom he had with him, interceded for him, protesting that she owed her life to this Frenchman who had never done her anything but good. If revenge was what they sought, let them but go on a little, and they would find another party of whites and among them the eldest son of the white chief,

the very one who had slaughtered the Sioux.³ The warriors, willing enough to wait for better prey released Bourassa and his party, went on and eventually destroyed the convoy which was following.

Supposing the truth of this story, it is easy to understand why Bourassa omitted it, both in his Relation and in his letter to La Vérendrye. Yet there are reasons for doubting it. It stands, it is true, in an official report from the chief executive in Canada to his Superior in France, yet that is not an absolute guarantee of its correctness, for the same report states that Bourassa was conducting Father Aulneau's canoe--a manifest error, since the missionary set out in company with La Vérendrye's eldest son, as we learn from the explorer's journal.⁴

How did the Sioux woman know that Jean-Baptiste was in command of the flotilla? Bourassa left the Fort on June 3, the day on which the council was held, and from the context of the journal we may infer that Jean-Baptiste's appointment to the command was by no means a foregone conclusion. But, whether the incident has any historical basis or not, the fact remains that the Sioux all too soon found an opportunity to glut their vengeance.

There were no survivors of the tragedy, therefore an exact history of the event can never be learned. But many

3. Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye had been adopted as a Cree chief, and had joined a war party in the preceding winter, but he had not taken any part in the fighting.
4. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p.218.

reliable witnesses viewed the scene of the massacre shortly after it took place; these witnesses knew the victims very well; they also knew the character of the attacking Indians, so they could form at least a general idea of the sequence of events.

The Frenchmen after about four hours' paddling had landed on the island either to camp for the night, or to have a meal--possibly to do both. The Sioux were on the Lake, but it is highly improbable that they took the voyageurs by surprise. La Vérendrye, who was best able to judge of the situation, thoroughly acquainted with his own men and with the Sioux, and very close to the event, makes no mention of such a possibility. Besides, he had warned the company to keep a careful watch, and it is only reasonable to suppose that men, accustomed to life in the wilds, and conversant with the ways of the Indian, would have the elementary good sense to realize the necessity of such a precaution. The surprise theory may then be dismissed as negligible.

La Vérendrye, who was certainly best qualified to judge the matter, thinks that his men were killed by treachery while they were holding council with the Sioux.⁵ This was a favorite device of the Sioux, who were notoriously cunning.⁶ They would come to their intended victims, with overtures of peace on their lips, would parley with them, and then, at a preconcerted

5. Publications of the Champlain Society, op.cit. p. 225.

6. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 69.

signal, would fall upon their prey, who would have no chance at all to ward off this unexpected attack. Such procedure would surely be base treachery, but not inconsistent with the known character of the Sioux. What the other Indians thought of these "Iroquois of the Plains" is evident from the fact that their name, "Sioux", is the Chippewa word for rattlesnake.

La Vérendrye's reason for thinking that his men were massacred while at a council, is that the dead bodies were found lying against one another in a circle.⁷ It was approved Indian etiquette to hold council around the fire, and it is hardly to be imagined that after the massacre the Sioux would have troubled to arrange the bodies in such order.

What could have been the subject of the parley? That too, can only be guessed. The Sioux might have been upbraiding the French for furnishing firearms to their Indian enemies or accusing young de La Vérendrye of harboring evil designs against their people, since he had accepted a chieftainship from the Crees, their hereditary foes. Who were the speakers at the conference? In other words, who was there in the French party able to understand the Sioux orators, and to reply to them? The Sioux and the Assiniboine spoke kindred languages, bitter enemies though they were, and Father Aulneau admitted having a smattering of Assiniboine, which, taking into account his extreme modesty may be fairly interpreted as a working knowledge of the idiom. Father Aulneau may have

7. Publications of the Champlain Society, loc. cit.

had the post of interpreter; the majority of the Sioux seemed to have borne no ill-will against him personally, as the sequel will show.

Indians love speeches, lengthy and numerous. The council was probably of the usual duration, in order the better to allay any suspicion on the part of the whites. Then, at a given signal, the Sioux threw off the mask and set to the bloody work for which they had come. We have no idea how many there were, but if Bourassa's figures are correct the odds against the Frenchmen were hopeless. For there was certainly fighting. Two months after the massacre some Monsoni Indians found two of the voyageurs' canoes, and twenty Sioux canoes tied in pairs, on another island in the southern waters of the lake. The many blood stains on the canoes and the human remains which the Monsoni discovered buried on the sandy beach are proof enough that some of the Sioux had been wounded and some killed.⁸

The principal victim whom the Sioux sought was Jean de la Vérendrye, on whom they wreaked the worst of their vengeance. They slashed his back with their knives, severed his head from his body, ran a sharp-pointed stake through his loins, and in mockery, decked the headless body of this Cree chief with bands of porcupine.⁹ The fate of Father Aulneau was the subject of some controversy among the murderers.

8. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p.225.

9. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p.264.

Most of them held that he should be left unmolested, fearing that his Manitou might avenge his death upon them. There was in the band one savage who wished to show himself superior to such womanish fears. With all the bravado he could muster, he took aim from the rear and his arrow reached its mark, just at the base of the missionary's skull.¹⁰ His body was found in a kneeling position, with the right hand raised, and the left resting on the ground. Father Aulneau died in the act of absolving his doomed companions.¹¹ The Sioux then proceeded to mutilation, cutting a deep gash in the breast and severing the head from the body.

So died Jean Pierre Aulneau, at the hands of a boasting Indian, with his dreams unfulfilled and his life work hardly begun. He had not so much as baptized a dying Indian child. Yet he had come to this far off country longing to spread the Kingdom of God, willing to endure any hardship if he might but bring these wretched savages to the knowledge and love of their Creator. The hardships he had certainly endured

10. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 110-111. There is a typical Indian tale that, immediately upon the perpetration of this sacrilege, a mighty clap of thunder drove the terrified Indians from the spot.
11. None of the Frenchmen escaped. Some of them probably tried to flee in the canoes, but they were shot down as they fled. Those who were murdered on the island were all decapitated, as La Vérendrye clearly states in his Journal, and Bourassa adds that most of them were scalped. All the company however, did not perish there, for La Vérendrye says, "most of the bodies were found."

but the joy of recovering the lost sheep was not to be his. God was satisfied with his desires and for these he was rewarded, while others came to reap where he had sown and to gather where he had scattered.

For a week, life at the Fort went its usual quiet way, until on June 12, three Monsonis brought word that Bourassa had been robbed by a party of Sioux on June 4. The details of this event were learned from Bourassa's letter which was delivered to the commandant on June 14. Three days later, Sieur le Gras, one of those who had been held up at Grand Portage in the previous autumn, reached the Fort with two canoe loads of merchandise. La Vérendrye anxiously asked for news of the convoy, but Le Gras had none to give. Torn with dreadful apprehension, La Vérendrye despatched Le Gras in search of the three canoes, providing an escort of eight men, commanded by a sergeant who was instructed to follow the same route as Jean-Baptiste had taken. Thirty Crees who brought game to the Fort the next day, also joined in the search. On June 22 the sergeant and his men returned to tell their leader of the tragic fate of his eldest son, the missionary and their nineteen men.¹² To show in what high regard the voyageurs held Father Aulneau, one of this search party took possession of his skull cap, "calotte", remarking that, poor as he was, he would not part with it for a thousand crowns.¹³

12. Publications of the Champlain Society, op. cit. p. 215-227.

13. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 89.

This was a blow to make the strongest man reel, but La Vérendrye was of the stuff of which heroes are made. He was not a man to dilate upon his disappointments--indeed these had been his daily bread since he had set out to discover the Western Sea--yet, in a memoir which he addressed to Maurepas vindicating the uprightness of his intentions and his conduct against those who impugned both, he says: "In that calamity I lost my son, the Referend Father and all my Frenchmen, to my life-long regret."¹⁴ There was nothing for him to do however, but to go bravely on, with his three remaining sons. On September 17, his sergeant and six men went to the scene of the tragedy to recover the bodies of the victims. On the following day, September 18, simple funeral rites were held, and the bodies of Father Aulneau and Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye, as well as the heads of their companions were interred in the chapel of Fort St. Charles.¹⁵

The report of the massacre was not long in getting abroad. The Sioux, certainly made no secret of it. After murdering the Frenchmen, they had plundered their goods, which they then tried to trade at other French forts. De Laronde, commander of the post at Chagouamigon, informed Governor Beauharnois that he had seen a sun-dial and other articles which belonged to the missionary. He regretted that he could not get possession of the chalice, which had been thrown into the river by a squaw

14. Publications of the Champlain Society,
op. cit. p. 444.

15. Publications of the Champlain Society,
op. cit. p. 227.

on account of her sons' death. The Sioux had made off with Father Aulneau's altar stone, chalice and vestments. The chalice fell to the lot of a squaw whose stalwart sons had been in the attacking party. Not long afterwards all these sons perished, one after the other, before her eyes, a misfortune which she attributed to the baleful influence of the chalice. She therefore rid herself of it by throwing it into the river.¹⁶

In September of that same year, 1736, a Sioux chief visited Fort Beauharnois, where le Gardeur de St. Pierre was in command. The latter noticed that the chief had a silver seal, hanging from his ear. This, le Gardeur recognized as Father Aulneau's. When de St. Pierre inquired where he got it, the chief only laughed, which so incensed the commander, that he tore the seal and part of the ear with it, from the Indian's head, and ejected him from the Fort.¹⁷

As soon as Father Aulneau's death was learned in Quebec there was universal mourning, for he had been highly esteemed throughout the colony. Father Nau attests that his memory was held in benediction; that he was invoked as a powerful advocate and that many persons had obtained very signal graces through his intercession. For his own part, Father Nau had never invoked him, he said, without obtaining his requests.¹⁸

16. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 81.

17. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 80.

18. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 106.

If there was universal regret in Quebec at the loss of this promising young missionary what must have been the sorrow of the heroic mother, who had, so short a time before, sent him to the far-distant Canadian mission! That first painful sacrifice she renewed in the same spirit of complete conformity to the Divine Will. Her other "sons" in the Society of Jesus are outspoken in their admiration for her courage; and their eagerness to impart to her every smallest fragment of information on the circumstances of her son's death is such as the son himself might have inspired.

Some of it is only hearsay, but for the grain of truth there is in it, they relate it to the sorrowing mother. Father Nau,¹⁹ for instance, informs her that the French had captured the Sioux who had murdered her son, and intended to punish him by death, but that through the intervention of other Indians, he made his escape, because, says the writer, God had reserved the punishment of the crime to Himself, and did not will that a death so precious in His sight should be avenged by men. Father du Jaunay²⁰ tells her of the squaw who had come into the possession of Father Aulneau's chalice, and of its ultimate fate. He mentions a Sioux²¹ who professed to have been one of the aggressors at Massacre Island, but the fellow proved an impostor, and Father du Jaunay was once more cheated of his hope of giving Mme. Aulneau precise infor-

19. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 106.

20. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 111.

21. Ibid.

mation. Father de Gonnor²² notifies her that La Vérendrye and his men have reached the Mandans, whom her son had so ardently longed to evangelize; who would, according to the reports given of them, have been very willing to embrace the Catholic faith.

From Michilimackinac, Father du Jaunay writes to Mme. Aulneau that he is sending on to Quebec her son's skull cap which the Fathers there will forward to her. The voyageur who vowed that he would not part with this precious relic for a thousand crowns must have ceded his rights to those of the bereaved mother, probably at Father du Jaunay's instance. In the letter in which Father de Lauzon notifies Mme. Aulneau of the package he was forwarding, he adds, "This is all that Father du Jaunay has sent me. The French and Canadians wished to keep for themselves all else that belonged to him."²³ It is to be hoped that the voyageur who so gallantly surrendered his relic to the stricken mother, was able to keep some other souvenir. Father de Lauzon admitted to Mme. Aulneau that he was not sending the skull-cap whole and entire; he had cut out of it a little scrap which he would treasure carefully. We learn from a letter of Father Besson's that the precious keepsake reached its destination. The same Father gratefully acknowledged the souvenir sent him by Mme. Aulneau, which he would treasure as a relic. Four years after the massacre

22. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 117.

23. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 108.

Father du Jaunay forwarded some papers found in Father Aulneau's pocket-book, which, he protests, he would not part with except in favour of their common mother.²⁴ The incredibly slow communication between the western posts may be inferred from this, that the papers did not come into Father du Jaunay's possession for nearly four years, though Michilimackinac was comparatively close to Fort St. Charles. After her son's death, Mme. Aulneau was affiliated to the Society of Jesus by the Reverend Father General. Her several Jesuit correspondents were happy to receive her into the Company,²⁵ a privilege which, they agreed, she richly deserved. Her interest in these adopted sons seemed only to be increased after the death of her eldest. In their letters to her they often make mention of benefactions received from her, or assure her that they stand in need of nothing. Mme. Aulneau's missionary zeal was by no means lessened by her grief. She thinks and speaks of the possibility of her second Jesuit son going to Canada to take his brother's place--an eventuality that would have greatly pleased Father du Jaunay,²⁶ who hoped to be sent with him to the Mandans. Neither of these hopes was fulfilled. Father Charles Aulneau lived and died in France, probably at the College of Pau. Father Coquart was appointed missionary to the Mandans, whom he too, failed to reach, and Father du Jaunay remained at his post of Michili-

24. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 122.

25. Jones, A. E., op. cit. pp. 101, 108, 116, 131.

26. Jones, A. E., op. cit. p. 110.

mackinac, repeatedly promising Mme. Aulneau that he would keep her exactly informed of everything that time might reveal concerning the circumstances of her son's death.

But time did not throw any more light on the mystery; in fact, the mystery deepened. La Vérendrye, sunk in debt, and calumniated on every hand, resigned his post as leader of the expedition to the Western Sea. His three remaining sons, on fire with the same enthusiasm as their father, offered their services to succeeding commanders, but were uniformly refused. The expedition made very little progress under the later leaders, who had neither the vision nor the courage of La Vérendrye. Then came the disastrous colonial wars. The remote trading posts were abandoned in order that all the energies of New France might be concentrated on the death struggle with the English colonies.

Gallantly defended though she was, Canada fell before the superior numbers of the invaders, and a new era began for her in which even the memory of her western outposts was lost. Of the sons of the great explorer, one, François, was killed at the siege of Quebec; Pierre, the Chevalier returned to France; Louis-Joseph, the youngest, set out for France in 1761, with his two sisters, but they perished in a wreck off Cape Breton.²⁷ Small wonder that the epoch-making discoveries of this family of heroes faded into legends, and that their

27. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. pp.123-126.

rude forts fell into decay or entirely disappeared. Fort St. Charles, remotely situated on a lake that is a maze of bays and inlets, vanished most easily of all.

CHAPTER VII

The discovery of the Aulneau letters reawakened men's interest in this former outpost of civilization, and in the hardy pioneers who had peopled it. It would have been no small task even to find the Fort, and would have been impossible without the aid of the Indians, whose memory for traditions is remarkable. Massacre Island was fairly easy to identify, for, even at that late date, it was an object of terror to the Sauteux Indians who inhabited the region. They would never land on its shore nor so much as point at it. Even the pagans would make the sign of the Cross as they approached it, and paddle away as if pursued by a thousand enemies.¹ The island was haunted, claimed the Indians, by the spirit of a priest who was murdered there long before. This Indian tradition was solidly unanimous, and it was verified by the location given the scene of the massacre in La Vérendrye's memoirs. In the summer following the discovery of the Aulneau letters, the Jesuits of St. Boniface, Manitoba, visited the island under the leadership of a certain Captain La Verdrière, who knew every island and cove of Lake of the Woods, and was as conversant with Indian traditions as the Indians themselves. A cross was erected bearing the inscription:

Révérend Père Aulneau, S. J.
Massacré ici, l'an 1736. ²

1. Campbell, T. J., *Pioneer Priests of North America*, vol. III, p. 243-244.
2. Prud'homme, L. A., *op. cit.* 130.

A few years later, in 1895, another exploring band visited Massacre Island. The Archbishop of St. Boniface, Mgr. Langevin O. M. I., erected on the island, a chapel dedicated to the Queen of Martyrs.

It still remained to discover the site of Fort St. Charles, and to recover the remains of Father Aulneau and his murdered companions. It was imperative that no time be lost, for the keepers of the Indian traditions were becoming fewer and fewer. In 1902, the first expedition was fitted out. One of the chiefs of the Sauteux, Powassin by name, guided them to the north shore of Angle Bay, where he told them exactly what they would find--remnants of a chimney, ashes, calcined bones.³ The spot seemed to be such as La Vérendrye had described it in his Journal. The explorers, overjoyed at their success, erected a cross with the inscription:

FORT ST. CHARLES,

Founded, 1732

Visited, 1902

Then, doubts began to arise concerning the correctness of this find. A chimney, ashes and bones were hardly sufficient remains for a stockade. Another Sauteux chief who gloried in the name of Andigomigawinini, repeated Powassin's assertion that there had been Frenchmen on the north shore of Angle Bay, but from time to time, he referred to a Fort on the opposite

3. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 131.
Campbell, T. J., op. cit. p. 261.

side of the inlet. He told the explorers that on the south shore, almost opposite the spot where they had planted their cross, there were three chimneys, in a little cove, overgrown with reeds and poplar. This scrap of information, which was carefully noted down, was, later on, to solve the whole problem.

In 1908, another expedition was organized. Archbishop Langevin was away in Europe, but the Jesuits of St. Boniface College carried on the work in his absence. A fortunate accident aided their investigations. On the very day of their arrival at Angle Bay, the leader, Father Paquin, cut his foot so seriously that he was unfit for work. His enforced idleness gave him the opportunity to study La Vérendrye's maps and notes, though he had gone over them dozens of times before. The other members of the party had been searching for several hours along the north shore of the bay, but with no result. Andigamigowinini's statement about the chimneys on the south shore came back to Father Paquin's mind and, in a flash he realized that they had been following the wrong clue. The next day the searchers travelled further up the inlet to the cove which the old chief had mentioned.⁴ There they began to dig, and their labour was soon rewarded. One of the spaders had come upon a number of flat stones, carefully laid one upon the other. It was the large chimney of the Fort. The first day they unearthed an eighteen-inch carpenter's chisel,

4. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 132-133.

all covered with rust. Later they struck a heap of bones, a pair of scissors, a shoe buckle, and several nails. The other two chimneys were also discovered, then a continuous line of stakes by means of which the explorers were able to trace the outlines of the Fort. They found the double row of palisades which both La Vérendrye and Father Aulneau mention in their description of Fort St. Charles. The search party drove new stakes just beside each of the old piles, in order to preserve the exact form of the Fort. The bones which they had found were pronounced by doctors to be human. These discoveries were interesting but not satisfying. After another three days' digging, the search party at last came upon what was to them a treasure. At a depth of eighteen inches below the surface, there were nineteen skulls arranged in rows of two deep; there was an arrow head imbedded in one of them. Further digging disclosed three skeletons; some of the bones of these skeletons were missing. Then last of all, two headless skeletons were discovered; close together, and lying on their backs. Around them could be discerned some slight remains of a wooden box, presumably a sort of coffin. The box would have measured about four feet long and two wide. The two bodies must have been in an advanced state of corruption, to be put into a box of that size. The hip bone of one of these skeletons had a deep cut, made by some sharp instrument. Close to one skeleton there were keys, a horn-handled knife, and an

awl; with the other, more keys, fourteen rosary beads, a shoe buckle, and a small hook such as Jesuits use to fasten their cassocks at the neck. The hook was entirely covered with rust, and broke in two when handled. The discoverers noticed that in the place where the skeletons and the skulls were found, the soil was much easier to dig than in the other parts of the enclosure, and that here, different soils were mixed; from which circumstances they concluded that this soil had been previously dug up. They also noted that in this spot, they found no articles except within the limits of the decayed quasi-coffin, whereas in the other parts of the Fort site, objects were found at every turn. This led them to believe that this part of the Fort had not been lived in as were the other parts. The logical conclusion is that it was the Chapel of the Fort, where as La Vérendrye states, he buried the bodies of Father Aulneau, and of his son, Jean-Baptiste, and the heads of all their companions. Of the two skeletons found in the same box, one was, according to the verdict of medical men, that of a young man about twenty-one years of age, tall and probably slender, and the other that of a man of thirty, strongly built and of medium height. The first of these skeletons therefore, is that of Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye, who at the time of his death was twenty-two years old. The other is Father Aulneau's, who died at the age of thirty-one. The identity of the other three skeletons could not be ascertained. From the facial angle, one was judged, by anatomists

to be that of an Indian. The bodies had been buried within the precincts of the Chapel; therefore it is safe to infer that they were those of Christians.⁵

All these precious relics were reverently transported to St. Boniface College,⁶ to be honoured there as became the remains of heroes. The site of Fort St. Charles now lies on the American side of the international boundary. The American government has made the place a National Park. Massacre Island is in the Canadian waters of Lake of the Woods. In 1911, it was purchased by the Archdiocese of St. Boniface. From a patriotic as well as from a religious point of view both these places are venerable. Fort St. Charles was the western base of operations for the most daring exploration attempted in Canada. It was the scene of the great labours, the great privations, the great sorrow of one of the noblest and certainly the most ill-requited of Canada's sons. Here he laid the plans which, had they been listened to by the Home Government, would have given France an empire in the New World. In that same Fort lived with him his sons, worthy of their sire, who would have been but too happy to have carried on the work which their father's death left incomplete. Intrigue and jealousy kept them from this task for which they were so eminently fitted, and they, too, died with their dream of seeing the Western Sea,

5. Prud'homme, L. A., op. cit. p. 134-148.

6. These relics were lost in the fire which destroyed the College in 1922.

still unrealized.

At Fort St. Charles, likewise, lived the first missionaries to Western Canada. From here they had hoped to carry the message of the Gospel to all the tribes of the boundless plains; who from fierce savages might be transformed by the gentle influence of religion into peaceful Christians. These missionaries too, were doomed to disappointment. They did not make the wandering tribes sedentary; they did not reach the much-talked of "white" Indians, the Mandans, who for all their favourable dispositions, were never given the opportunity of embracing Christianity; they did not succeed in forming a single Christian community. Yet they were men of vast desires whose one aim was to bring the benefits of Redemption to the Indian. For these desires, unrealized though they were, all honour is due them. As with the leader of the expedition, the non-fulfilment of their hopes must not be laid at their door. Theirs it was to desire, but in the inscrutable designs of God, it would be given to others to accomplish.

Massacre Island. is, as it were, the first altar of sacrifice for the cause of Christianity in the West. Here was shed the blood of the men who had ventured first and farthest into the unknown country, to win it to the allegiance of their God and their king. Technically, they did not lay down their lives for God and country, as the only motive which inspired the slaughter was a base revenge, but they had dedicated their lives to this two-fold service, and they would gladly have surrendered

them therein. Men who would freely exchange a life of ease and security for one of constant hardship and peril to attain an ideal, would certainly not shrink from death endured for the sake of that ideal. Here again, these first heroes of the Canadian West were men of desires. Massacre Island was, for Father Aulneau, the altar on which he sacrificed at once his life, his apostolic longings and his hope of martyrdom. Though his burning zeal might have felt a twinge of disappointment at being deprived of the much-coveted crown, yet the humility so fundamentally characteristic of him must have rejoiced to die thus obscurely by the hand of a blood-crazed Indian. The blood that he shed has been fruitful in a rich harvest of souls in the land to which he was sent to announce the Gospel of peace. If for his friends who mourned his loss, he was a powerful intercessor, must he not be such for the people whose forebear in the faith he is. In the Kingdom of Heaven Jean-Pierre Aulneau lives to make intercession for the land of his adoption that it may realize the glorious title which in his day it bore--the Mission of the Saints.

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