

debauched to a degree it would be impossible to describe. Fire-water helped the work of their degradation, though he acquits his own garrison of guilt in this instance. Worst of all the religion of the Indians was devil worship.

This was the last letter he ever wrote. He ends with a thought that would indicate something of a premonition of death: "The issue of my project is known to God alone. Perhaps instead of hearing that I have succeeded, you may hear of my death. Let it be as God pleases; with all my heart I will make the sacrifice of my life."

The end soon came. Provisions were giving out at the fort, and three canoes with a party of men were sent down to Mackinac for supplies. Father Aulneau went with them, and to be sure of making the journey quickly, he asked for young Vérendrye as a companion. Permission was given, and on June 8, twenty men and the priest left Fort St. Charles, never to return.

The Sioux were then at war with the Cris, who were allies of the French. Aulneau and his party were only about twenty miles from the fort when a band of Sioux swooped down upon them. Was it in the early morning, or at their camp-fire in the evening, or when they were all asleep? No one can tell. There are several accounts of it, and they all differ. Not one of the party was left to tell the tale. Some, it is said, were drowned, but in view of recent discoveries, that is unlikely. In Father Du Jaunay's letter from Mackinac to Aulneau's mother, three years later, we read that the majority of the Indians were averse to killing the priest, but that a crazy savage, careless of the consequences that held the others in awe, struck the blow. "I have heard also," continues the writer, "that scarcely had the deed been perpetrated than a deafening clap of thunder struck terror into the whole band. They fled from the spot thinking that heaven was incensed at the deed. His chalice was taken by one of them and given to a widowed squaw. Soon all her sons perished, and she threw the sacred vessel into the river, ascribing to it all the calamities that had come upon her family." Of course this may be pure invention. Stories grow with the imagination of the narrators.

From de la Vérendrye's Memoirs it appears that on June 20,