

II.—*The Lake of the Woods Tragedy.*

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All students of early Canadian history are of course familiar with the general outlines of that most tragic incident in the search for the Western Sea—the murder by the Sioux of the eldest son<sup>1</sup> of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, the Sieur de Lavérendrye, with the Jesuit missionary Aulneau, or Auneau,<sup>2</sup> and a score of *voyageurs*, on an island in the Lake of the Woods. None of the English histories of French Canada, however, contain more than a passing reference to the affair, and the French-Canadian historians are not much more explicit, with the exception of Benjamin Sulte. It has, therefore, seemed worth while to bring together such evidence as is now available,—the original documents, whether in manuscript or print,—so that we may have before us, in convenient form, the fullest possible details of the occurrence.

The Sioux having done their work with characteristic thoroughness, no survivor remained of Lavérendrye's party to carry an authentic account of the matter to the nearest post; and the Indians themselves showed a perhaps natural reluctance to enter into details. Consequently, the evidence we have is more or less indirect and circumstantial.

What may be considered the official account is contained in a letter from the governor, Beauharnois, to the French Colonial Minister, dated 14th October, 1736.<sup>3</sup> This is based on the elder Lavérendrye's report, and upon a statement made by one Bourassa,<sup>4</sup> a *voyageur*, who had met the same party of Sioux on the day of the massacre.

<sup>1</sup> The Sieur Vêrendrye had four sons. The eldest, here referred to, was Jean-Baptiste, born at Sorel, in 1713. He had taken an active part, under his father's directions, in the search for the Western Sea.

<sup>2</sup> For full particulars in regard to Father Aulneau, see *The Aulneau Collection*, 1734-1745, edited by Rev. Arthur E. Jones, S.J., and published by St. Mary's College, Montreal, 1893. As to the spelling of the name, Parkman and most of the other historians spell it Anneau. Mr. Benjamin Sulte says Auneau is the preferable spelling, but that Aulneau is almost equally good. There does not appear to be any sufficient authority for spelling it Anneau.

<sup>3</sup> Lettre de Monsieur de Beauharnois, à Québec, le 14 octobre 1736. See *Canadian Archives: Postes des Pays de l'Ouest, 1679-1759*. (Vol. 16), F. 126, pp. 335-339.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to place this man. He is never referred to, except as one Bourassa. Mr. Sulte is of opinion that he was probably a grandson of the first Bourassa, who came to Canada from France in 1684. See Tanguay.