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E. J. DEVINE, S. J.

Gabriel Lalemant

VICTIM OF THE IROQUOIS

1610-1649



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GABRIEL LALEMANT

VICTIM OF THE IROQUOIS



THE name of Lalemant is well known in the missionary annals of New France. During the second quarter of the seventeenth century three of this family, members of the Society of Jesus, came to Canada and distinguished themselves in the work of spreading the Catholic faith among the native tribes. They were pioneers in this country, men who labored and suffered for their common Master; and when they died they left behind them memories which are still precious to all students of our early history. The first of these was Charles Lalemant, who arrived at Quebec when the Recollects called the Jesuits to

A family of missionaries their aid in 1625. He heads the list of that long line of Jesuit superiors who guided the labors of their religious brethren in Canada uninterruptedly for one hundred and seventy-five years, that is, until the complete extinction of the old Order in the first year of the nineteenth century.¹ The second, Jerome Lalemant, brother of Charles, is undoubtedly one of the most illustrious figures in the history of New France. He reached Canada in 1638 and went immediately to the

¹ The Jesuits did not return to Canada until 1842.

Huron country, where he succeeded John de Brébeuf as superior. During his seven years' occupancy of that office he built Fort Ste. Marie, the foundations of which are still visible on the shore of Georgian Bay, systematized the work of evangelization among the Hurons, and extended the influence of the missionaries far and wide. In 1645 he returned to Quebec to superintend all the Jesuit missions in New France, fulfilling that duty from 1645 to 1650, and again from 1659 to 1665. We have from his pen the *Huron Relations* from 1639 to 1643 and the more elaborate *Relations of New France* from 1646 to 1649 and from 1660 to 1664.

It was reserved, however, for Gabriel Lalemant, the nephew of Charles and Jerome, to give still greater luster to the name of this excellent family by the heroic death he suffered at the hands of the savage Iroquois in March, 1649. After having spent barely three years in this portion of the Master's vineyard, he received the highest reward that God can give a servant here below, death for His sake. "Being made perfect in a short space he fulfilled a long time: for his soul pleased God; therefore He hastened to bring him out of the midst of iniquities." (Wis. iv, 13. 14.)

Gabriel was a native of Paris, where his father, a lawyer, held an office of some importance in Parliament. He was born on October 10, 1610, and was the youngest son in a family of six children. From his earliest years he aspired to the foreign apostolate, and with that end in view consecrated his life to God in the Society of Jesus. On March 14,

**Gabriel
Lalemant's
early years**

1630, though not yet twenty years of age, and delicate in health, he entered the novitiate at Paris, there to lay the foundation of his sanctity.

The young man had chosen the proper outlet for his future missionary activities; his Jesuit brethren were at the full tide of their apostolic expansion. They had already penetrated Asia, Africa and South America. France, even then the fruitful mother of missionaries, was sending her soldiers of the Cross into the foreign fields; several of them had begun their labors among the native tribes in the new colony beyond the Atlantic. Unhappily, the seizure of Quebec by the English corsair, David Kerkt, in 1629, had deprived France of her possessions on the St. Lawrence and had compelled the Jesuits living there to abandon their work and return home. But the Jesuits themselves felt that this was only a temporary interruption. The active negotiations that were actually under way between Cardinal Richelieu and Charles I. of England, buoyed up their hopes, and they made no secret of their keenness to return as soon as the colony was restored.

All these topics were familiar to the young Jesuit novice in Paris, and often helped to carry him in spirit across the Atlantic to New France. Besides, the visits he received from his uncle Charles, who had already tasted the trials of Canadian missionary life and who was then in Paris, after his escape from shipwreck on the Acadian coast, had undoubtedly given Gabriel vivid pictures of the life led among the savages and filled him with the desire of sharing in it some day.

**He asks for
the missions**

He had more than once expressed this desire formally, and asked his superiors to be considered a future missionary of New France. His holy ambition, however, brought opposition from his own family, who did not relish the departure to the ends of the earth, even in after years, of one so well loved. And yet his later life showed that considerations of this kind could have had little weight with Gabriel Lalemant; he was not one to allow the ties of flesh and blood to stand between him and duty. While his affection for his family had not cooled on entering the Jesuit Order, the religious training he was receiving in the novitiate was teaching him how to purify this natural sentiment and subordinate it to the higher love he owed to God. The following passage, found among his writings after his death, gives the true character of his love for his own. "I am indebted to my relations, to my mother," he wrote, "and to my brothers, and I must try to draw down on them the mercy of God. Never permit, O God, that any of my family, for whom Thou hast shown so much love, perish in Thy sight, or that there be one amongst them who will blaspheme Thee for eternity. Let me be a victim for them! *Quoniam ego in flagella paratus sum: hic ure, hic seca, ut in aeternum parcas!*"

These were the sentiments which animated Lalemant when he entered on his religious career; and yet one is at a loss to find a reason for the young man's ardent prayer, for the later life of Gabriel's family was a striking instance of sacrifice and religious fervor. After the death of her husband, which occurred while her children were still in minor age, Madame Lalemant

had evidently taken to heart the task of bringing them up conformably to the Divine will. With the exception of a son who remained in civil life and attained eminence at the Parisian bar, all the other members of the family consecrated themselves to God in the religious state. The oldest son, Bruno, became a Carthusian monk; two daughters entered the convent of the Assumption in Paris, while another adopted the strict rule of the Carmelite nuns shortly before Gabriel entered the Jesuit Order. And to put a fitting crown to this edifying holocaust of her family, when the news reached Paris that her son Gabriel had shed his blood for the faith, Madame Lalemant herself retired behind the cloister of the Recolletines and gave up the rest of her life to prayer and meditation.

Gabriel Lalemant completed his novitiate and pronounced his three vows in 1632. Evidently obeying a Divine inspiration he obtained from his superiors at the same time the permission to add a fourth vow to consecrate himself to the foreign missions. But while he persevered unflinchingly in this determination, Heaven desired to prepare him well for the great sacrifice he would one day be called upon to make; sixteen years were to elapse before he saw the realization of his holy wishes. During this long period the future victim of the Iroquois was employed in colleges in France exercising the various functions of his Order. Owing either to his frail health or to the thoroughness of the classical studies he had made previous to his admission, he was sent

**He prepares
for his
future work**

immediately after his noviceship to teach in the college at Moulins. In the Jesuit system of formation, if age or health be not an obstacle, members of the Order rarely pass to their higher studies and the priesthood without a preliminary halt in colleges of four or five years. The reason is evident; barring actual contact with the world and worldlings, nowhere may one study human nature to better advantage than in the din and battle of college life. The same clashing of temperaments, the same ambitions, the same craving for success, that one meets in the outside world, are active in the throbbing hearts of students on their way to manhood. A young Jesuit professor, therefore, gains experience in the class-room or on the playground that is of life-long utility; he has ample opportunities for character study which will serve him well in the ministry of after-life.

Lalemant was employed three years in this important work before he was sent to study for the priesthood at Bourges where he was ordained in 1638.

**And sets out
for New
France**

The following year he was appointed prefect of students in the famous college at La Fleche, and in 1641, professor of philosophy at Moulins. He was employed as prefect in the college at Bourges, in 1646, when the news, so anxiously looked for and so long put off, reached him that he had been chosen for the Canadian missions. His delicate health had apparently been the cause of the long delay. "He had been for several years," the *Relations* tell us, "asking God, with tears and sighs, to be sent to these far-away missions, but his body had not the strength

except that given by the Spirit of God and his desire to suffer for His name." However, the long, weary sixteen years of intense desire had at last ended, and he joyfully prepared for his journey across the ocean. He quitted France during the same summer, and after a tedious voyage of nearly three months' duration, landed at Quebec where his uncle Jerome Lalemant, the superior of all the Canadian missions, gave him a generous welcome.

Fourteen years had elapsed since the treaty of St. Germain-en-laye had restored Canada to France, in 1632. The Jesuits, who returned to these shores as soon as the treaty was signed, were passing through a period of feverish activity. Quebec had possessed a college since 1635; residences had been established at Tadousac, Three Rivers and Montreal; fresh accessions of missionaries, arriving from France every summer, had enabled the Order to spread over an immense territory and give their services to many native tribes. Jesuits were found at work on both banks of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers and along the Great Lakes. They had missions in Acadia, and were preparing to establish others in Maine and on the reserves in New York State. They were evangelizing and gathering in converts to the Christian faith among the Hurons, Montagnais, Micmacs, Abenakis, Ottawas, Algonquins, Otchipwes and Iroquois. Several of them had known what it was to suffer for Christ; Bressani, Jogues, and Goupil had already given testimony even unto blood for the faith that was in them.

These results had been accomplished when Gabriel Lalemant reached Quebec in September, 1646. Carried away by his enthusiasm, his first impulse was to start at once for some Indian tribe or other to begin the study of the language, but his superior, Jerome Lalemant, moved by the prudence which was the result of long experience, put a curb on his nephew's

**Lalemant's
first labors**

excessive zeal and found work for him to do nearer home, during two years, among the French colonists in Quebec, Sillery, Beauport and Three Rivers. The *Journal des Jésuites* recalls various incidents which help us to follow his career during those two years. On Christmas Day, 1646, he said Mass at the Ursulines, in Quebec; on the last day of the same year he was present, with other Fathers, at a representation of the *Cid* given in honor of the Governor de Montmagny; he preached every Sunday at Beauport during the Lenten season of 1647; he went to Three Rivers in September to exercise the ministry, a fact which is attested by entries in the baptismal register still carefully preserved there. He returned to Quebec later on, for we find him in the following summer, 1648, taking part in the procession on Corpus Christi.

While the young missionary was destined ultimately for some mission among the native tribes, it was apparently not the intention of his superior that he should go to the Hurons. This conclusion may be gathered from other entries in the *Journal des Jésuites*. At the date, July 16th, 1647, Jerome Lalemant writes that when Father Le Jeune returned from Montreal he consulted him on several topics;

among these were the safety of the Huron route, the sending of supplies to missionaries, and the disposal of the services of Gabriel Lalemant. Although the Huron route was infested by Iroquois marauders, it was decided that some one should risk the journey at the first favorable opportunity and carry succor to Huronia; but it was also decided that Father Gabriel should betake himself to the Montagnais, a peaceful tribe living on the Lower St. Lawrence, and too far away from the ferocious Iroquois to be molested by them. One might ask, had Lalemant gone to live with the Montagnais would the crown of martyrdom awaiting him in the Huron country ever have been his? And, besides, how would the great desire of his life have been accomplished? Among his writings, found after his death, it was learned that "before coming to Canada he had consecrated himself to our Lord for the purpose of receiving from His hand a violent death either in exposing himself among the plague-stricken in Old France or in seeking to save the souls of savages in the New"—with the added clause that he would esteem it a favor if he were allowed to die for God's glory in the flower of his age.

Providence evidently had its own designs on the career of this privileged soul.

Behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping
Watch above His own.

The favor that Gabriel Lalemant so ardently desired was to be granted him in all its fullness. The mission to the peaceful Montagnais was cancelled, and

he was allowed to leave Quebec on July 24th, 1648, for Three Rivers to join the Hurons on their return homewards. On the 6th of August, a flotilla of fifty or sixty canoes started from that trading post near the St. Maurice to begin the long journey of seven

**He goes to
the Hurons**

hundred miles to the shores of Georgian Bay. Thirty years had elapsed since the first missionary, the Recollect Joseph le Caron had gone over this route for the first time, a route which was now as familiar to the French as it had been to the savages for centuries. Every cape and rock and rapid had a local habitation and a name well known to missionary and fur-trader; but unhappily a knowledge of the topography of the route that led to the Huron country did not diminish the sufferings the Europeans had to undergo, or minimize the dangers that were always imminent.

Paddling up the St. Lawrence, Lalemant's frail bark canoe entered the River des Prairies at the foot of the Island of Montreal. After surmounting the

**Difficulties
of the route**

rapid at Sault au Recollet, the first of the thirty-five he was to meet, he floated out into the pleasant Lake of Two Mountains. A few more hours brought him to the main body of the Ottawa River, flowing through a wilderness of pine and maple trees, and easily recognized by the murky color of its waters. Skipping the Long Sault at Carillon, a spot destined a few years later, through the heroic resistance of Dollard and his seventeen companions against a legion of Iroquois, to become the Thermopylae of New France, Lalemant moved in close to the shore, not merely to avoid

the stronger currents of the mid-stream, but rather to let the panorama of water and islands, of bare rock and luxurious vegetation, pass quickly and silently before his wondering eyes. After three or four days' steady work, the sound of falling waters was heard, a sound familiar to the savage ear but strange and not unwelcome music to the young missionary. A glance to the left revealed to him a small stream tumbling over a cliff and paying the gracious tribute of its waters to the larger river beneath. This was Rideau Fall on the present site of the city of Ottawa. But a more imposing view awaited him a little further on. While passing at the foot of what is now Parliament Hill, a distant rumbling sound told him that he was approaching the famous Asticou of the savages, known even in those times, as it is today, by the name which Champlain had given it thirty years before—the "Chaudière" or "Big Kettle"—where the entire Ottawa River hurls itself with terrific force

**Its dangers
and fatigues**

over a semi-circular cliff into a seething pit below. Long before the mass of waters reaches the brink of this precipice, it is broken by rocks and islands; but then, deep and treacherously silent, it rushes onward in its mad career, carrying to destruction whatever falls in its way. Many a tragedy was enacted at this spot in those early times, and no Huron or Algonquin ever passed up or down the river without chanting his superstitious dirge or offering his sacrifice of tobacco leaves to appease the angry genius of the fall.

The course of the Ottawa thenceforward was broken by many rapids and obstructions, and must

have wasted the physical strength as well as exercised the patience of the delicate Lalemant who was forced to land and pack his burden over the trails as the wiry Hurons themselves had to do. "When these rapids and torrents are reached," wrote Brébeuf, thirteen years before, "one must land and carry on his shoulder, through the forest or over high rocks, all the baggage and the canoes. This is not accomplished without great labor, for there are portages one and two and three leagues long, and for each, several trips back and forth must be made, no matter how few our bundles may be. In some places where the current is as violent as the rapids, though easier at the outset, the savages get into the water and haul their canoes after them. This is a dangerous operation, for they sometimes sink up to the neck; they are then obliged to abandon their canoes and save themselves as best they can." The intervals of excessive work were the portaging when the canoes were usually swung over the heads of the more muscular Hurons, who let the weight rest on their shoulders, and then started off over the trails to the smoother waters above.

Portaging was undoubtedly the hardest task the missionaries had to endure on their tiresome journeys westward, and after one of those fatiguing spells both Indians and white men rested for a few hours, usually for the night. The Recollect Sagard, who wrote from experience, gives us a graphic description of a night's repose on the Ottawa route. "The savages' first care," he tells us, "was to look for a spot where they could find dry wood to make their fire and prepare

**Incidents
on the way**

supper. Once the spot was chosen, they carried up their canoes, packages and everything belonging to them, and set to work immediately to prepare for the night. One went to gather dry wood, another to cut poles for the cabins, another to strike fire, another to set over the fire the pot which was attached to a stick driven into the earth, another went to look for two flat stones to grind the corn with which to make *sagamité*. When the poles were raised rolls of birch bark were stretched over them, and the bundles of merchandise were placed around inside, while the canoes were turned upside down and left outside. Then each savage took his place within the cabin, his back leaning against the bundles, stretched himself, and indulged in a smoke with a pipe until the pot of corn began to boil. Once the *sagamité* was ready, each savage received his share in a bark dipper, which he carried with him as part of his personal baggage. After supper they lay down to sleep on the ground, usually on a skin covering a few cedar branches. At dawn they were at work again preparing for their day's journey by another meal of corn, rolling up their birch bark and replacing their bundles in the canoes."¹

It is doubtful whether Gabriel Lalemant had to use the paddle or not. After 1634 the Jesuits provided their Huron missionaries with a sail which they could attach to their canoes; but even that slight improvement did not lessen the torment of sitting at the bottom of those frail vessels for five or six weeks at a

¹ Sagard: *Histoire du Canada*, p. 183.

time. At last, in the beginning of September, 1648, after his wearying journey up the Ottawa, across Lake Nipissing and down the French River, Gabriel Lalemant reached Fort Ste. Marie, the headquarters of the Jesuits in Huronia. This residence, built by

**He reaches
Huronia**

his uncle Jerome in 1639, nine years before, was accomplishing the purpose for which it was intended. "It is a resort for the whole country," wrote Paul Ragueneau, "where the Christians find a hospital when sick, a refuge when panic-stricken, and a shelter when they come to visit us. During the past year we have counted over three thousand persons to whom we have given hospitality, and sometimes within a fortnight to from six to seven hundred Christians, which as a rule means three meals to each one. This does not include a large number who come continually and pass the whole day and to whom we give charity." "As a rule only two or three of our Fathers reside in this house," he wrote elsewhere; "the others are scattered throughout the missions, now ten in number... A single Father has at times to take charge of ten or twelve villages; some have to range much further, over eighty or a hundred leagues... We try, however, to meet together two or three times a year in order to commune with ourselves, to think of God alone in the repose of prayer, and afterwards to confer together respecting the means and light that experience and the Holy Spirit continue to give us daily to make the conversion of those peoples easier for us. After that we must hurry back to our work as soon as possible."

The Huron flotilla of 1648 brought up a large

contingent to strengthen the missionary forces. Besides Gabriel Lalemant, there were among the new arrivals, Fathers Joseph Bressani, Adrian Greslon, Daran, two coadjutor brothers, and several laymen who were to be employed in various functions. "We number forty-two Frenchmen in the midst of all these unbelieving nations," wrote Father Ragueneau in 1648; "eighteen of our Society; the remainder are picked men, most of whom have made up their minds to live and die with us." The newly arrived Fathers devoted themselves during the first months in Huronia to the study of the language and acted as assistants to the missionaries in the principal villages.

One of the chief villages with a resident missionary was St. Ignace, a village known in Huron as Taenhatentaron.¹ It had been established only about three years, and is first mentioned in the *Relation* of

He is named 1645; but during that short period it
to assist had become an important center of
F. de Brébeuf Gospel activity. Its distance, however, from Fort Ste. Marie and its exposed position made it an easy mark for the Iroquois who for over a year had been spreading terror throughout the neighborhood. The whole country was threatened in the summer of 1647 by an army of these marauders. Three hundred had attacked a village of the Neutral nation and massacred or made prisoners all who dared to resist. This onslaught intimated to the Hurons further north what was in store for them, and, in fact, the following spring, while three

¹ Situated on the east half of lot 12, concession VIII, J. Medonte township.

hundred Hurons, "nearly all Christians who had come together the better to say their prayers night and morning, who lived in innocence and spread everywhere the sweet odor of Christianity," were encamped in the woods near St. Ignace, they fell a prey to the treacherous Iroquois, who killed seven on the spot and carried off twenty-four into captivity.

Looking on this ominous visit as the prelude to others in the near future, Father de Brébeuf, who had charge of the mission of St. Ignace, decided to transfer his neophytes to a spot nearer Fort Ste. Marie, where

At St. Ignace village they would have whatever protection the French could give. The site chosen for the new residence of St. Ignace was an elevation located close to the border of a little stream emptying into Sturgeon Bay. It was fortified by nature on three sides and required artificial strengthening only on the fourth side to make it relatively impregnable. Aided by French workmen the Hurons surrounded the top of this hill with a palisade of posts fifteen or sixteen feet high, and it is presumed that, having had Brébeuf for engineer, they profited by the practical lessons gained at Ossossanë, and built their fort square with towers at the corners, thereby providing for defence even with a small garrison. This new village was called St. Ignace II,¹ and the missionary in charge had supervision of the neighboring villages of Ste. Anne,

¹ Identified by the Rev. A. E. Jones, S. J., in 1903, on the Campbell farm, east half of lot 4, concession VII of Tay township. The spot is now known as Martyrs' Hill, about a mile from the C. P. R. station of the same name. (Cf. Jones: *Old Huronia*, p. 121 et seq.)

St. Louis, St. Denis and St. John.¹ Thither the Hurons transferred their goods and chattels in the spring of 1648, and thither also went Father Gabriel Lalemant in February, 1649, as assistant to Father de Brébeuf.

Meanwhile the Iroquois had grown more aggressive. The Christians of the mission of St. John Baptist, at Cahigué,² on the outskirts of the tribe, were

Iroquois obliged to disband and betake themselves to more populous centers. The
massacres massacre of Father Daniel and his people at Teanaostaye,³ in July, 1648, served as a warning to the neophytes and catechumens of the various villages to prepare for the worst. It served also as an incentive for them to lead better lives, and, as a result, a wave of fervor swept over the land. Ragueneau tells us that between July, 1648, and the following March the Fathers baptized more than fourteen hundred Hurons.

Worried beyond measure by the uncertainties of the moment, the Jesuits took every precaution to safeguard the interests of their Christians. Regardless of their own safety they went from village to village to give spiritual strength to their wards and prepare them to die well if that crisis were reached. Missionaries, as well as savages, had a presentiment that they were on the eve of a catastrophe, and no one was

1 The sites of these Huron villages have all been located. (Cf. Jones: *Old Huronia*, p. 263.)

2 East half of lot 20, concession x, of Oro township.

3 Known also as St. Joseph II, and situated on the Flanagan farm, west half of lot 7, concession iv, Medonte township.

penetrated with this feeling more deeply than Gabriel Lalemant who had long before acquiesced, if necessary, in the sacrifice of his life. "My Jesus and my Love," he wrote, "Thy Blood, shed for barbarians as well as for us, must be efficaciously applied for their salvation. Aided by Thy grace, I offer myself to co-operate in this work and to sacrifice myself for them."

Lalemant offers his life

God was about to accept this co-operation and this sacrifice made out of pure love for Him; the supreme moment had at last arrived. During the first days of March, 1649, the Iroquois, numbering about a thousand strong and well equipped with firearms which they had obtained from the Dutch, had arrived on the frontier of Huronia. They had started from

St. Ignace is attacked

their own country along the Mohawk in the autumn of 1648; had lived by hunting on the way during the winter, and were ready for operations in the spring. At dawn on March 16, they attacked the palisade of St. Ignace on its weakest side, and so stealthily did they do their work that they were masters of the place before the inmates had time to make any defence. They worked quickly and successfully; many Hurons were massacred during the onslaught; others were made captives, the losses amounting to about four hundred souls. Three men alone escaped and hurried across the snow to give the alarm to the neighboring village, St. Louis,¹ about three miles away, where Brébeuf and Lalemant were stationed for the moment. Elated at

¹ Situated on the Newton farm, west half of lot 11, concession vi. Tay township.

their victory at St. Ignace, the Iroquois rushed to St. Louis to continue their carnage, but not before more than five hundred of the inhabitants, mostly women and children, had time to escape in the direction of Fort Ste. Marie. Eighty Huron warriors met the ferocious enemy outside the walls and killed thirty of the more daring. But the Iroquois had the advantage of numbers; they battered down the palisades with their tomahawks and opened passages for themselves to the interior of the stockade. The scene which ensued is one of the most heartrending in the history of the Huron missions. Beside themselves with rage at the opposition offered, the Iroquois aimed their blows at every Huron they met, and blood soon ran like water. During the massacre the Christians

**The Jesuits
refuse
to escape**

begged Fathers de Brébeuf and Lalemant to flee and save themselves. But these devoted pastors steadfastly refused to go away. The salvation of their flock was dearer to them than their own lives, and while the Iroquois were slaughtering and scalping their Huron children, the two Fathers stood in the midst of them, baptizing, giving them absolution and animating them to die nobly for the faith. However, in this unequal struggle the end came quickly. The few Hurons who still lived were seized and made prisoners by their cruel enemies, and with them Brébeuf and Lalemant who were specially reserved for torture. The Iroquois set fire to St. Louis, and then hurried back to St. Ignace with the Jesuits, whom they had stripped naked and bound with thongs. When the two prisoners reached the village they

were obliged to run the gauntlet under a shower of blows on their shoulders, loins, legs, breasts and faces, there being no part of their bodies which did not endure this torment. Seeing some of his flock nearby, the heroic Brébeuf exclaimed: "My children raise your eyes to heaven in this affliction; remember that God is watching your sufferings and will soon be your exceeding great reward. Let us die together in the faith, and hope from His goodness the fulfilment of his promises. I pity you more than I do myself. Keep your courage up in the few remaining torments; these will end with our lives; the glory which follows them will have no end."

These earnest words consoled the Christians in their agonies, but irritated some Huron apostates who had been incorporated into the Iroquois tribe, and to show their resentment they cut off the saintly missionary's lips. They then tore off their finger-nails and pierced the flesh of both Brébeuf and Lalemant with sharp awls; they applied red-hot hatchets under their arm-pits, and put a necklace of them around their shoulders. In derision of holy baptism they poured kettles of boiling water on their quivering flesh until their entire bodies were bathed with it. At the same time they mocked them saying: "We baptise you so that you may be blessed in your heaven." Others added in derision, "Do we not treat you as friends since we shall be the cause of your greater happiness in Heaven? Thank us, then, for our good services, for the more you suffer the more your God will reward you." The more the tortures increased, the more the two sufferers entreated God to pardon those

unfortunate renegades. While Brébeuf, impassive and lion-like, withstood the excruciating torments, his more delicate companion Lalemant raised his eyes to heaven and uttered sighs to God to come to his aid. The final episode of this awful tragedy was the tying of the two men to posts, when the Iroquois again applied flaming torches to their bodies, then gouged out their eyes and inserted burning coals in the empty sockets.

These tortures, seemingly beyond the power of human endurance, were soon to end for Brébeuf. He expired about four o'clock in the afternoon of the day of his capture; but his companion still lived. A cousin of Father Gabriel, also a missionary in Huronia, Father Poncet de la Rivière, writing two months later, to his brother in France,¹ gives a few details which are not found in the *Relation* of 1649. He tells us that owing to Brébeuf's more perfect knowledge of the Huron tongue, it was this Father who instructed and heard the confessions of the Christians during the assault on St. Louis, while to Father Lalemant fell the task of administering most of the baptisms. The baptism of boiling water, therefore, which he received, was a form of torment most appropriate to him who was occupied chiefly in this apostolic function. Lalemant did not preach to the Hurons, and the barbarians did not cut off his lips as they did to Father Brébeuf, but they split his jaws, drew his mouth wide open and drove burning brands down his throat. A hatchet blow over

**His heroic
end**

¹ *Chronique de l'Ordre du Carmel*, tom. IV.

his left ear penetrated the skull and left the brain exposed. Though he was completely charred with fire, the executioners left his body entire, so that his sufferings might be longer and more intense during the coming night.

Let this suffice; the pen refuses to enter into further details. But the reader will have remarked the strange paradox! While the powerful Brébeuf died after a few hours' agony, the frail Lalemant, he who had been a prey to physical weakness and ill health from childhood, withstood the tortures of the Iroquois for twelve hours longer. He gave up his soul to God only at nine o'clock the following morning, March 17th, 1649. When the precious remains of both victims were brought to Fort Ste. Marie, three days later, it was found that their breasts had been cut open. Their hearts had been torn out and had evidently been eaten by their captors. The two heroic Jesuits were buried on Sunday, March 21st, "with so much consolation," wrote Father Ragueneau, "and with such tender feelings of devotion in all who were present at the funeral, that I know of none who did not desire a similar fate rather than fear it... Not one of us could ever prevail upon himself to pray to God for them, as if they had any need of prayer; but our minds were at once directed towards heaven, where we had no doubt their souls had gone."

Thus ended the short but glorious career of the young French missionary. Barely seven months had elapsed since he reached Huronia and he had already borne off the crown. Although the last in the field, he had been chosen by God as one of the first victims

to be sacrificed out of hatred of the Christian name.

**Quebec hears
the news**

The news of the massacre did not reach Quebec until the following July; the *Journal des Jésuites*, at the date July 20th, 1649, has this simple entry: "The sad account of the destruction of the Hurons and of the martyrdom of three Fathers arrived tonight."¹

Father Jerome Lalemant did not leave to any one else the duty of announcing the news to the family in France. He wrote to the Carmelite sister of the victim to assure her that, far from deploring the event, she should glorify God. "What a happiness for our family!" he exclaimed... "It seems to me that the news should help you to raise you mind and heart to God. The baptisms of more than two thousand seven hundred savages—a ceremony which accompanied his

**The family
notified**

death—proves that the blood he shed had a more than ordinary efficacy; I myself have felt on different occasions the effect of invoking him... And yet, "he adds, "it is not we who make saints; the Church requires striking miracles. It is this that prevents me from listening to the demands of large numbers of devout persons [for relics]. I cannot, however, refuse his sister a portion of the scalp torn from his head by his executioners... It bears the glorious marks impressed with iron on his frail and delicate body. There is nothing more to add. It is at his feet and at those of his good Master that we must learn to live and die."²

¹ News travelled slowly in those days. The third Father was Anthony Daniel, slain the previous summer at Teanastoye.

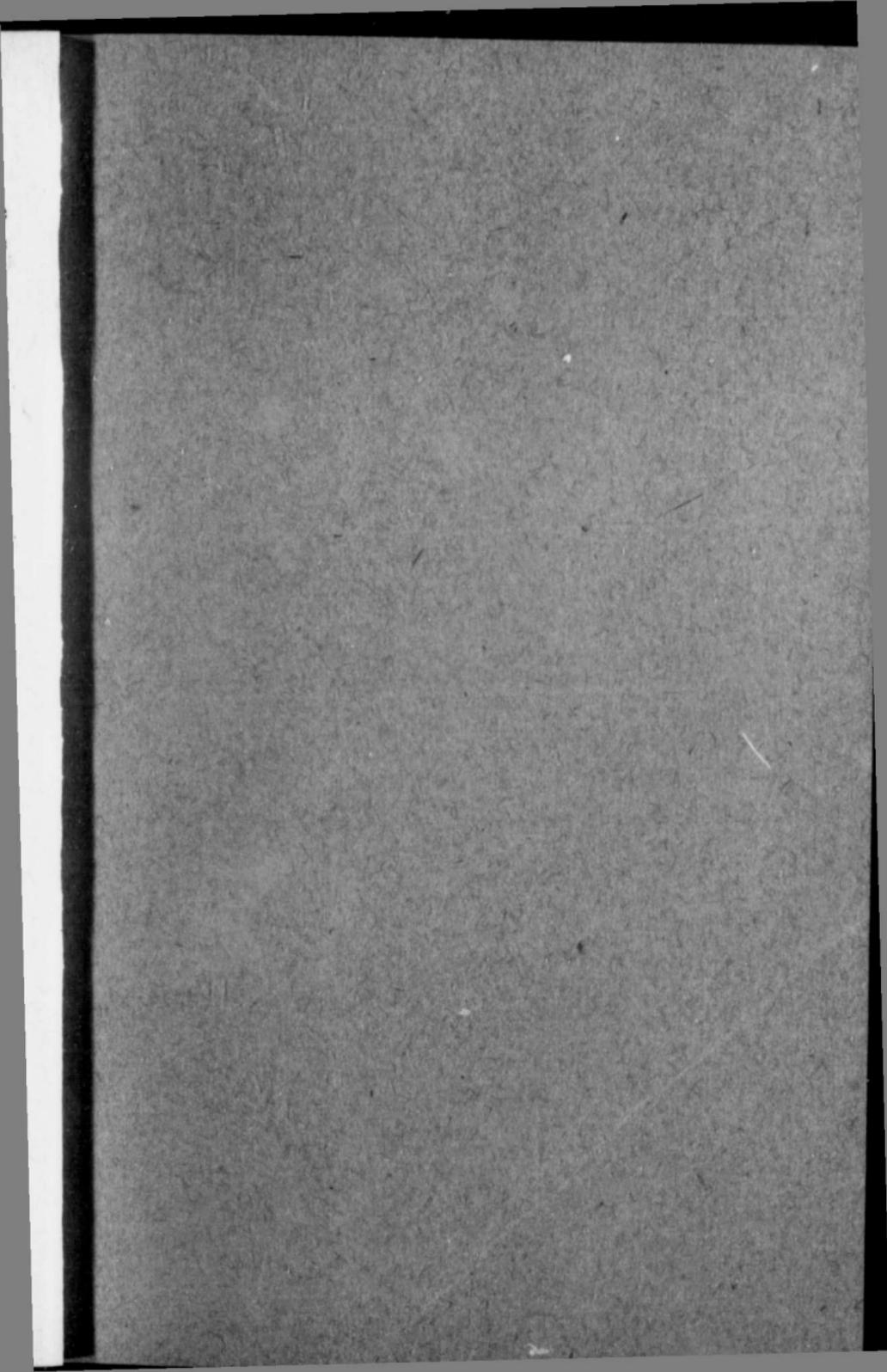
² *Chroniques de l'Ordre du Carmel*, tom. IV. A relic of Gabriel Lalemant is honorably preserved in the Jesuit college at Canterbury, England.

During the past two hundred and sixty years the name of Lalemant, a man "almost too feeble to live but strong enough to die in torture without a murmur," coupled with that of the "towering Brébeuf whose

**Reputation
for holiness**

enthusiasm would not shrink from the necklace of red-hot tomahawks that was in store for him,"¹ has become in American annals a synonym for heroism in suffering for Christ's name. To this admiration for the victim of the Iroquois, expressed by writers of all shades, should be added the element of devotion to his memory which is strong among Canadian Catholics. The Bishops of Canada assembled in council at Quebec, in 1886, sent a petition to the Holy See to permit the introduction of the Cause of his Beatification. Let us hope that the pious wish of the Church and her members in Canada may some day be gratified, that of seeing the name Gabriel Lalemant among the Beatified.

¹ Smith: *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*. New York, 1907, p. 17.



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