

Iroquois ; braving famine, fatigue and danger to carry the message of the Cross to those who had never felt its gentle influence. They never gave up their aim ; their courage never forsook them. At first they were mocked and despised, or no attention was paid to their words. Gradually their simple and pious lives began to win respect. The Hurons, more docile and intelligent than the others, accepted their teachings more freely ; and soon very many of that nation, numbering, when the French came to Canada, some 20,000 souls, were baptized and became Christians. The Iroquois hated, and did not trust, the French. The few bold missionaries who, taking their lives in their hands, sought out the encampments of these fierce people, were cruelly tortured and put to death. But these zealous and patient men seemed to accept suffering as their lot. Their duty was plain. No toil or danger disheartened them, and death had no terrors for them.

The story of the French-Indian wars is woven with the story of the missions. The Iroquois never forgave Champlain and the French for making war on them ; and they hated the Hurons and Algonquins with greater hatred than ever because they were the friends and allies of the French. There is no need here to recite the terrible tales of misery and bloodshed ; how men were killed while at work in the fields ; how women and children were carried to captivity and torture ; how hundreds died from hunger and disease. The cruelty and thirst for blood of the terrible Iroquois seemed never to be satisfied. To add to the dread caused by these fierce foes, firearms had been sold to them by the Dutch settlers on Manhattan Island and at Fort Orange (Albany) ; and they began to use them with such skill that they had a great advantage over their Indian enemies. Tribe after tribe of the Hurons was destroyed, the Jesuit teachers among them killed, and in the end the Hurons, as a nation, ceased to exist. The missions which had been founded among them with such toil and suffering, left only their story and an undying example among men for all ages. Such a record would adorn the annals of any nation.

A single incident may show the heroic spirit of these times, equal to that of the Greeks at Thermopylae, or the Romans under Horatius. The colony of Montreal, which had been founded as a mission in 1642, was threatened in 1660 with an attack by the Iroquois,