

Erect fifty to one hundred of these houses in an irregular group and you will have a Huron town; set up twenty of these towns in an area of about twenty-five miles square; fortify with palisades those on the east and south and you have the Huron Nation which Brebeuf estimated in 1635 to be composed of 30,000 souls.

The Jesuit Fathers came to Quebec to christianize the savages and they selected the Hurons as the special field of their mission. The question at once arises as to why they chose this people so far removed from Quebec. They were the traders who came down every year from the great upper country with their canoes packed with furs; they were a sedentary nation; Champlain had formed a sort of alliance with them against their enemies of the south; the Recollet Fathers had been back and forth from 1615 to 1628; and Lalemant in his Relation of 1639 states that the Huron Country was "one of the principal fortresses and like a donjon keep of the devils." If the evil one could be over-thrown among the terrible Hurons the way would be opened up for the conversion of the Tionnontates or Tobacco Nation, the Neutrals, the Eries, the Andastes and possibly even the Six Nations. The very dangers of the Huron Nation appealed with special attractiveness to the devoted Jesuits, who gladly went in by the one door open to them to the great Huron-Iroquois nations even if that door led to martyrdom. The history of humanity has given us many pictures of the sacrifice of man for his fellowmen, but apart from the great sacrifice of the Saviour of mankind and the sufferings of the martyrs of the early church, it is doubtful whether there is any other picture quite so thrilling and so full of human suffering as the self-sacrificing of the Jesuit missionaries for the salvation of the Huron Nation.

I need not enter into the details of the visit of Champlain to the Huron Nation. You are doubtless familiar with the main facts,—how on a tour of exploration he went up the Ottawa in the summer of 1615, crossed by Lake Nipissing and the French River to Georgian Bay and arrived at the Huron Country. He found the people living in eighteen villages divided among four tribes. A great gathering of the Indians assembled at the village of Cahiaqué and it was decided to send a band to attack the Iroquois. Champlain decided to accompany them. They left Cahiaqué, a village of about two hundred cabins, situated at or near Orillia, on the 1st of September and paddled their flotilla of canoes down the Trent to Lake Ontario. The Andastes, their southern allies were to have assisted. After five weeks' journey they had crossed Lake Ontario and had come into the enemies' country. Their allies had failed to come to their help, the Hurons were repulsed, and on the 18th of October were retreating across the eastern end of Lake Ontario. Champlain was compelled to spend the winter with the Hurons. Along