

The view of dark, unbroken forest, winding river, and purple hills, was a charming one even then; and, here in the shadow of the great rock, Champlain determined to found his settlement. The place was called, by the wandering Algonquins, Quebec or Kebec—a word meaning a strait—and Champlain kept the old name. In a short time he had built a sort of wooden fortress, surrounded by a loopholed gallery, and enclosing three buildings. A tall dove-cote, like a belfry, rose from the courtyard, and a moat, with two or three primitive cannon, completed its defenses; a magazine being built close by. Champlain had his garden too, and enjoyed cultivating his roses as well as his vegetables.

In September, Pontgravé went to France leaving Champlain with twenty-eight men to brave the terrors of the winter, so fatal to the parties of Cartier. The cold did not seem quite so severe, possibly because Champlain and his men were better housed and fed. Yet nevertheless, out of the twenty-eight, eight only survived till spring, the rest having fallen victims to the inevitable scurvy which had broken out towards the close of the winter.

At last the dreary winter was over, and it was a welcome sight when a sail rounded the Isle of Orleans, bringing Pontgravé's son-in-law, with the news that he himself was at Tadousac. Thither Champlain hastened to meet him and discuss an intended voyage of discovery. It was his cherished hope to realize the dream of a short passage to India and China, and he desired as ardently to gain influence over the Indians and convert them to the true faith. To these aims his life was devoted.

But to his exploring zeal there was a formidable barrier. These vast forests were infested by a ferocious Indian tribe called the Five Nations or Iroquois, warlike and powerful, whose tomahawks were ever ready for action, and to whom an explorer must almost certainly fall a victim, sooner or later. The Huron and Algonquin tribes pleaded with him, not in vain, to help them to overcome these strong foes. And he naturally believed that if he could do them this service he would gain over them great influence which he could use to promote both his cherished projects. He had little idea, however, of the power and numbers of the savages whose enmity he so rashly provoked.

It was about the middle of May, 1609, that Champlain set out