

At this crisis a deed was performed which has justly been called the Thermopylæ of Canada and which merits a place amongst the finest records of sacrificial courage. Daulac des Ormeoux, a young French nobleman, who had sought the new world for adventure and reputation and was now in command of the little garrison at Ville Marie, volunteered to lead a small party of young men down the Ottawa and to break the force of the Iroquois wave before it reached the terrified and disheartened defenders of the town. Calling for volunteers, he obtained the aid of sixteen youthful heroes and afterwards of some friendly Hurons—who, however, deserted him when the critical time came.

HEROISM OF DAULAC

Making their wills, receiving the sacrament of their Church, and the mournful farewells which can be better imagined than described, the gallant little band passed up the St. Lawrence, crossed the Lake of the Two Mountains and took up their station in an abandoned enclosure formed of tree trunks by some Algonquin war-party of a preceding year. Here they made their stand—seventeen white men, one Algonquin chief and five gallant Hurons—and here, for days, they defended themselves against hundreds of picked Iroquois warriors who stormed around their feeble shelter without intermission and with every device of experienced forest warfare. Exhausted with fatigue, famished for food and sleep, wounded and gasping and dying, the little band fought on. Slowly their numbers diminished but steadily also the dead bodies of the enemy piled up outside the palisades until the walls of wooden stakes had almost ceased to be a shelter. Then, at last, when all the defenders were dead but five, and they helpless from innumerable wounds, the greatly re-inforced army of the enemy won admission to the enclosure. Four of the surviving heroes died at once; only one was found sufficiently alive to make torture worth the while.