

It was mainly to Champlain himself that the destruction of this flourishing community was due. In an evil hour for the Hurons, he formed an alliance with them, and led them on a fruitless expedition against the Iroquois, from whose territories the allies retreated baffled and humiliated. The exasperated confederates retaliated by furious assaults upon the French settlements, and by continual inroads into the country of the Hurons. It was in 1615 that Champlain arrived among them. In 1649 the last of the twenty Huron towns had surrendered to the Iroquois power, and lay in heaps of ruins and ashes. Of the inhabitants who survived the conquest, some joined the conquerors and were adopted among them; others took refuge with their French allies at Quebec, near which city their descendants still reside; but the greater number retreated to the far West, and found an asylum among the Ojibways, on the shores and islands of Lakes Superior and Michigan. At one time their principal abode was on the Island of Michilimackinac, and here, apparently, they were residing at the time when the death of their great chief occurred, as related in the following legend. From this retreat they were induced, as recorded in the story, to remove southward and place themselves under the protection of the French forts at Detroit and in northern Ohio. In these new abodes they remained for more than a century, and, in spite of their reduced numbers, played a somewhat important part in the events of western history. In the peculiar Indian system of political relationships their nation ranked as the "grandfather," and head of all the surrounding tribes. Their marked intelligence and force of character gave them a predominant influence among the more loosely organized Algonkin bands. Tenaciously adhering to their French allies, even when the latter had been forced to abandon them, they took a determined part in the war of Pontiac against the English. Finally, about the middle of the present century, the greater portion of the Hurons—now known as the Wyandots—removed to the West, under the auspices of the American government, and found another respite in their wandering existence on reserves which were assigned to them in Kansas and the Indian Territory.

A few families, however, refused to join in this last migration. These families, comprising in all about seventy individuals, clung to the small reservation which had been set apart for them in Canada, on the west bank of the Detroit river, in the township of Anderdon, between Amherstburg and Sandwich. Here they still reside, the last remnant in Canada of the once powerful Indian nation; the last, at least, who speak the language of their people; for the few so-called Hurons of Lorette, near Quebec, are a mongrel community, and have entirely forgotten the speech of their forefathers.