

1661.

—
Disease.
Phenomena

To this terrible scourge Heaven added another, which completed the reduction of the colony to the last extremity. The French and domiciliated Indians were attacked by a disease from which no one was exempt, and which was especially fatal to children. It was a kind of hooping-cough, which turned to a pleurisy. People imagined that there was witchcraft in it, and the physicians were the first to spread this opinion. When the popular mind is once struck, their imagination carries them pretty far, and at certain times all are swayed by public opinion. It was afterwards published that a fiery crown had been seen in the air; that piteous voices had been heard at Three Rivers; that a fiery canoe had appeared near Quebec, and at another place a man, all on fire, and surrounded by a whirlwind of flames; that on Isle Orleans a woman had heard her unborn child sobbing: and all this was followed by the apparition of a comet, which completed the terror of the masses, to whom this phenomenon is never a matter of indifference, especially in times of calamity.¹

Good news
from the
Iroquois
country.

Yet amid these alarms, and in the very height of the storm, calm suddenly appeared. Prisoners escaping from the Iroquois towns, brought tidings that there were a score of Frenchmen at Onondaga whose lives had been spared, and who enjoyed quite a degree of liberty; that in the same canton a cabin had been transformed into a chapel, where a great many Christians, French, Hurons, Iroquois, and Algonquins, met regularly to perform their devotions;² that the matrons, who are the important body in the State,³ had had no share in the plot which had forced Mr. Dupuys to retire, and that they had for a whole week mourned with their children over the departure of the missionaries; in conclusion, that in the cantons of Cayuga and Oneida, there were Christians who inviolably preserved the faith.⁴

¹ Relation de la N. F., 1661, p. 2.

² *Ib.*, pp. 8, 37.

³ As to the matrons and their in-

fluence, see Lafitau, *Mœurs des Sauvages*, i., pp. 76, 474; *Rel.*, 1671, p. 6.

⁴ Chaumonot, *Autobiog.*, p. 72.