

the Hurons, the Tionontates, called also Petuns, or Tobacco Nation, a term having its origin in their custom of cultivating large fields of tobacco, which commodity they used in a wide-spread barter with other tribes. To the southeast of the Petuns, west of Lake Ontario and on both sides of the gorge of Niagara, were the peaceful Atiwandaronks, who, being friends alike of Iroquois, Algonkins, and Hurons, were known as the Neutral Nation. To the eastward of the Neutrals, strongly intrenched in the interlocking basins of the Genesee and the Mohawk, lay the dread confederacy of the Iroquois, who in time were to spread like a pestilence over the lands of all their neighbors.

The intelligence and mobility of the Hurons rendered the early prospects for missionary effort among them more promising than with the rude and nomadic Algonkins. But while at first the missionaries of New France were well received, the innate savagery of these people in time asserted itself. Their medicine-men, as bitterly fanatical as the howling dervishes of the Orient, plotted the destruction of the messengers of the new faith; the introduction of European diseases was attributed to the "black gowns;" the ravages of the Iroquois were thought to be brought on by the presence of the strangers; the rites of the church were looked upon as infernal incantations, and the lurid pictures of the Judgment, which were displayed in the little forest chapels, aroused unspeakable terror among this simple people; finally, an irresistible wave of superstitious frenzy led to the blotting out of the mission, accompanied by some of the most heart-rending scenes in the history of Christian evangelization.