

employed by the day. The people of this city are dressed with more elegance and are more courtly in their bearing than those of the other cities and provinces, and because Mutezuma and all those chieftains, his vassals, are always coming to the city, the people have more manners and politeness in all matters. Yet so as not to tire Your Highness with the description of the things of this city (although I would not complete it so briefly), I will say only that these people live almost like those in Spain, and in as much harmony and order as there, and considering that they are barbarous and so far from the knowledge of God and cut off from all civilized nations, it is truly remarkable to see what they have achieved in all things.

* * *

1522

SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

Born into a seafaring family near La Rochelle on France's Atlantic coast, Champlain (c. 1570–1635), more than any other Frenchman of his time, deepened his country's interest in North America and planted that interest solidly in American soil. He had already crossed the ocean six times by 1603, when (as "geographer royal" under the command of François Pont-Gravé) he sailed up the Saint Lawrence River as far as the future site of Montreal, where the expedition took on valuable furs before returning to France. Early in 1604, Champlain published his official report, *Des Sauvages* (Of the Indians), illustrated with his own maps, and in April returned to America under the command of the Sieur de Monts, a Protestant merchant who was a native of Champlain's own region. Champlain came back again in 1608 and founded Quebec City. From that base the following year, gathering Indian allies from several tribes in the Saint Lawrence valley and the mountains to the north, he went up the Richelieu River into the long, narrow lake to the south that bears his name today. While on this expedition, which he wrote about in his next book, *Les Voyages* (1613), he and his allies met and defeated a party of Mohawk Indians from what is now central New York. The violent encounter helped turn most Mohawk and their kin in the Iroquois Confederation against the French for the next 150 years.

*From The Voyages of the Sieur de Champlain*¹

[THE IROQUOIS]

We departed on the following day, pursuing our way up the river as far as the entrance to the lake.² * * *

1. The text is from *The Works of Samuel de Champlain in Six Volumes*, vol. 2, edited by H. P. Biggar and translated by John Squair (1925).

2. Called by Champlain "the river of the Iroquois," this is today known as the Richelieu.

On the following day we entered the lake * * * in which I saw four beautiful islands³ * * * which, like the Iroquois river, were formerly inhabited by Indians: but have been abandoned, since they have been at war with one another. There are also several rivers flowing into the lake, on whose banks are many fine trees of the same varieties we have in France, with many of the finest vines I had seen anywhere. * * *

Continuing our way along this lake in a westerly direction and viewing the country, I saw towards the east very high mountains on the tops of which there was snow. I enquired of the natives whether these parts were inhabited. They said they were, and by the Iroquois, and that in those parts there were beautiful valleys and fields rich in corn such as I have eaten in that country, along with other products in abundance. And they said that the lake went close to the mountains, which, as I judged, might be some twenty-five leagues away from us. Towards the south I saw others which were not less lofty than the first-mentioned, but there was no snow on these. The Indians told me that it was there that we were to meet their enemies, that the mountains were thickly populated, and that we had to pass a rapid which I saw afterwards. Thence they said we had to enter another lake.⁴ * * *

Now as we began to get within two or three days' journey of the home of their enemy, we proceeded only by night, and during the day we rested. Nevertheless, they kept up their usual superstitious ceremonies in order to know what was to happen to them in their undertakings, and often would come and ask me whether I had had dreams and had seen their enemies. I would tell them that I had not, but nevertheless continued to inspire them with courage and good hope. When night came on, we set off on our way until the next morning. Then we retired into the thick woods where we spent the rest of the day. Towards ten or eleven o'clock, after walking around our camp, I went to take a rest, and while asleep I dreamed that I saw in the lake near a mountain our enemies, the Iroquois, drowning before our eyes. I wanted to succour them, but our Indian allies said to me that we should let them all perish; for they were bad men. When I awoke they did not fail to ask me as usual whether I had dreamed anything. I told them what I had seen in my dream. This gave them such confidence that they no longer had any doubt as to the good fortune awaiting them.

Evening having come, we embarked in our canoes in order to proceed on our way, and as we were paddling along very quietly, and without making any noise, about ten o'clock at night on the twenty-ninth of [July], at the extremity of a cape⁵ which projects into the lake on the west side, we met the Iroquois on the war-path. Both they and we began to utter loud shouts and each got his arms ready. We drew out into the lake and the Iroquois landed and arranged all their canoes near one another. Then they began to fell trees with the poor axes which they sometimes win in war, or with stone axes; and they barricaded themselves well.

Our Indians all night long also kept their canoes close to one another and tied to poles in order not to get separated, but to fight all together in case of

3. The lake, ever since known as Lake Champlain, contains a number of large islands near where the Richelieu flows out of its north end.

4. Now known as Lake George, this body of water is connected to Lake Champlain through the

short La Chute River, site of the rapids mentioned in the previous sentence.

5. Now known as Crown Point, in the southern part of Lake Champlain.

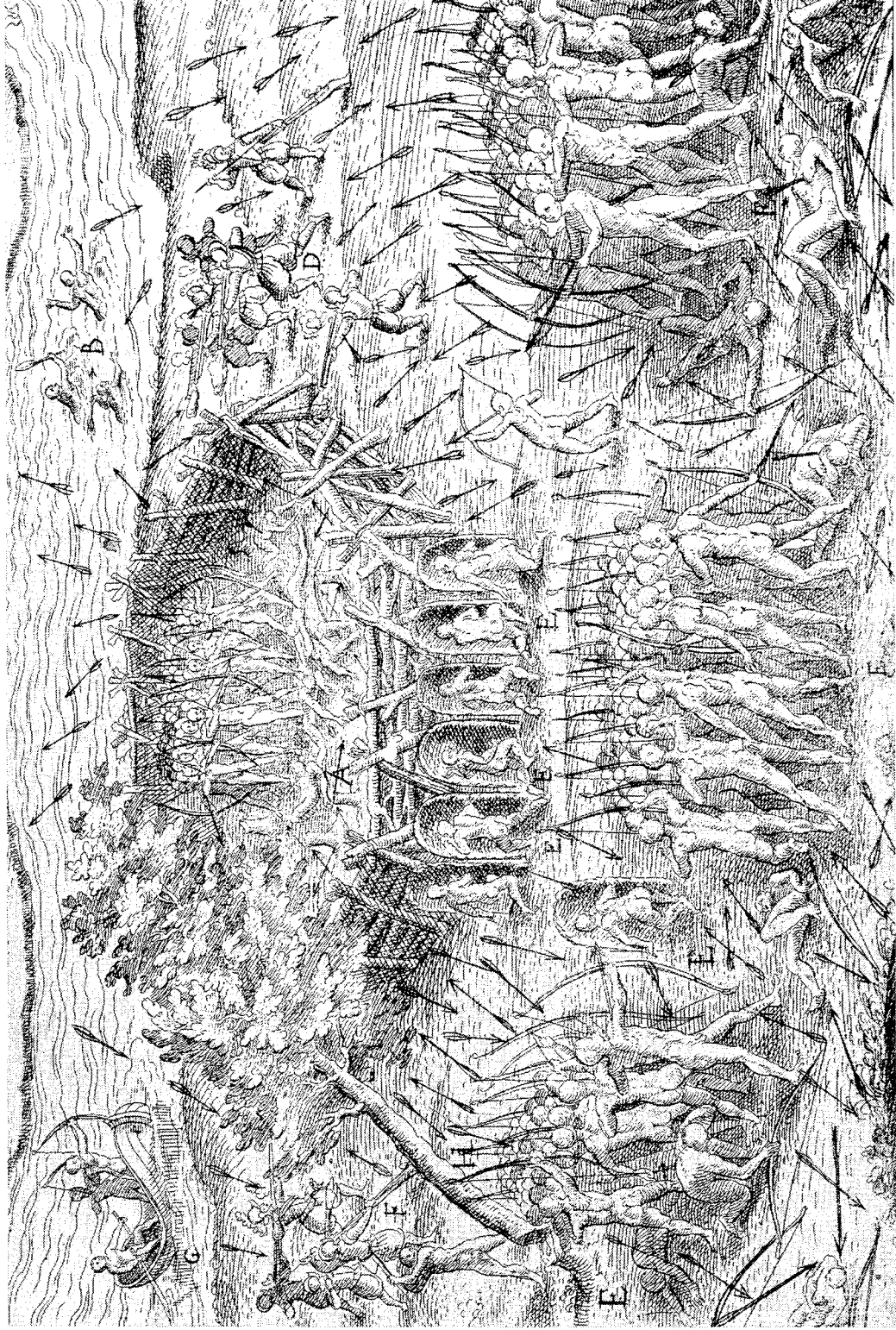
need. We were on the water within bowshot of their barricades. And when they were armed, and everything in order, they sent two canoes which they had separated from the rest, to learn from their enemies whether they wished to fight, and these replied that they had no other desire, but that for the moment nothing could be seen and that it was necessary to wait for daylight in order to distinguish one another. They said that as soon as the sun should rise, they would attack us, and to this our Indians agreed. Meanwhile the whole night was spent in dances and songs on both sides, with many insults and other remarks, such as the lack of courage of our side, how little we could resist or do against them, and that when daylight came our people would learn all this to their ruin. Our side too was not lacking in retort, telling the enemy that they would see such deeds of arms as they had never seen, and a great deal of other talk, such as is usual at the siege of a city. Having sung, danced, and flung words at one another for some time, when daylight came, my companions and I were still hidden, lest the enemy should see us, getting our fire-arms ready as best we could, being however still separated, each in a canoe of the Montagnais Indians.⁶ After we were armed with light weapons, we took, each of us, an arquebus⁷ and went ashore. I saw the enemy come out of their barricade to the number of two hundred, in appearance strong, robust men. They came slowly to meet us with a gravity and calm which I admired; and at their head were three chiefs. Our Indians likewise advanced in similar order, and told me that those who had the three big plumes were the chiefs, and that there were only these three, whom you could recognize by these plumes, which were larger than those of their companions; and I was to do what I could to kill them. I promised them to do all in my power, and told them that I was very sorry they could not understand me, so that I might direct their method of attacking the enemy, all of whom undoubtedly we should thus defeat; but that there was no help for it, and that I was very glad to show them, as soon as the engagement began, the courage and readiness which were in me.

As soon as we landed, our Indians began to run some two hundred yards towards their enemies, who stood firm and had not yet noticed my companions who went off into the woods with some Indians. Our Indians began to call to me with loud cries; and to make way for me they divided into two groups, and put me ahead some twenty yards, and I marched on until I was within some thirty yards of the enemy, who as soon as they caught sight of me halted and gazed at me and I at them. When I saw them make a move to draw their bows upon us, I took aim with my arquebus and shot straight at one of the three chiefs, and with this shot two fell to the ground and one of their companions was wounded who died thereof a little later. I had put four bullets into my arquebus. As soon as our people saw this shot so favorable for them, they began to shout so loudly that one could not have heard it thunder, and meanwhile the arrows flew thick on both sides. The Iroquois were much astonished that two men should have been killed so quickly, although they were provided with shields made of cotton thread woven together and wood, which were proof against their arrows. This frightened them greatly. As I was

6. Members of this group of peoples, from the mountainous region north of the Saint Lawrence River, accompanied Champlain in his expedition

into the territory of their ancient enemies, the Iroquois.

7. An early, relatively heavy kind of gun.



Fort des Iroquois, from *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain*, 1613. This woodcut depicts a French attack on an Iroquois fort during a second expedition undertaken in 1610. The fort (A) was a typical palisade constructed of horizontal and vertical logs but could not adequately protect the Iroquois, who (B) threw themselves into the river to escape the French (C) and what Champlain called "all our Indian allies" (E). The attackers also cut down high trees (H) "in order to demolish the Iroquois Fort."

reloading my arquebus, one of my companions fired a shot from within the woods, which astonished them again so much that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage and took to flight, abandoning the field and their fort, and fleeing into the depth of the forest, whither I pursued them and laid low still more of them. Our Indians also killed several and took ten or twelve prisoners. The remainder fled with the wounded. Of our Indians fifteen or sixteen were wounded with arrows, but these were quickly healed.

After we had gained the victory, our Indians wasted time in taking a large quantity of Indian corn and meal belonging to the enemy, as well as their shields, which they had left behind, the better to run. Having feasted, danced, and sung, we three hours later set off for home with the prisoners. The place where this attack took place is in 43° and some minutes of latitude, and was named Lake Champlain.

* * *

Having gone about eight leagues, the Indians, towards evening, took one of the prisoners to whom they made a harangue on the cruelties which he and his friends without any restraint had practiced upon them, and that similarly he should resign himself to receive as much, and they ordered him to sing, if he had the heart. He did so, but it was a very sad song to hear.

Meanwhile our Indians kindled a fire, and when it was well lighted, each took a brand and burned this poor wretch a little at a time in order to make him suffer the greater torment. Sometimes they would leave off, throwing water on his back. Then they tore out his nails and applied fire to the ends of his fingers and to his [penis]. Afterwards they scalped him and caused a certain kind of gum to drip very hot upon the crown of his head. Then they pierced his arms near the wrists and with sticks pulled and tore out his sinews by main force, and when they saw they could not get them out, they cut them off. This poor wretch uttered strange cries, and I felt pity at seeing him treated in this way. Still he bore it so firmly that sometimes one would have said he felt scarcely any pain. They begged me repeatedly to take fire and do like them. I pointed out to them that we did not commit such cruelties, but that we killed people outright, and that if they wished me to shoot him with the arquebus, I should be glad to do so. They said no; for he would not feel any pain. I went away from them as if angry at seeing them practice so much cruelty on his body. When they saw that I was not pleased, they called me back and told me to give him a shot with the arquebus. I did so, without his perceiving anything, and with one shot caused him to escape all the tortures he would have suffered rather than see him brutally treated. When he was dead, they were not satisfied; they opened his body and threw his bowels into the lake. Afterwards they cut off his head, arms and legs, which they scattered about; but they kept the scalp, which they had flayed, as they did with those of all the others whom they had killed in their attack. They did another awful thing, which was to cut his heart into several pieces and to give it to a brother of the dead man to eat and to others of his companions who were prisoners. These took it and put it into their mouths, but would not swallow it. Some of the Algonquin Indians who were guarding the prisoners made them spit it out and threw it into the water. That is how these people act with regard to those whom they capture in war. And it would be better for them to die fighting, and

be killed at once, as many do, rather than to fall into the hands of their enemies. When this execution was over, we set out upon our return with the rest of the prisoners, who went along continually singing, without other expectation than to be tortured like him of whom we have spoken. When we arrived at the rapids of the river of the Iroquois, the Algonquins returned into their own country and the [Hurons] also with some of the prisoners, all much pleased at what had taken place in the war, and because I had gone with them willingly. So we all separated with great protestations of mutual friendship, and they asked me if I would not go to their country, and aid them continually like a brother. I promised them I would.

* * *

1613

ROBERT JUET

In the same year that Champlain journeyed south into Iroquois territory, 1609, the English navigator Henry Hudson (c. 1570–1611), then working for the powerful Dutch East Indies Company, abandoned his orders to seek out a Northeast Passage leading around Russia to the Americas, and defiantly sailed west toward what is at present the coast of the northeastern United States. Eventually, he entered the large, complicated bay at the lower end of a river (now named for him), which, with its major tributary, the Mohawk, flowed south from the country of the Iroquois. Exploring the islands of the bay, including Manhattan, Hudson sailed up the river for 150 miles or so, to the vicinity of the modern city of Albany. In every part of his exploration of this river, Hudson and his crew encountered Native peoples (Lenni Lenape or Delaware, as well as Mahicanni or River Indians, among others), with whom they traded when not exchanging rank suspicions and even acts of open hostility and violence. At the northernmost extent of the expedition, the explorers also entertained one eventually befuddled Indian with brandy. Then, with the same odd mixture of curiosity, mercantile savvy, and armed intransigence, they went downriver again. Robert Juet (d. 1611), who kept the best contemporary record of the voyage but about whom little else is known, apparently was an English sailor. His penchant for violence may well have colored how he rendered what he saw and took part in. In June 1611, when accompanying Hudson on his final voyage, Juet helped foment a mutiny among his discontented fellow sailors. They overpowered Hudson and set him adrift, with his son and a handful of supporters, in a small boat and with few provisions, in what thereafter was known as Hudson's Bay. They were never seen again. Juet himself, acting as navigator for the starving mutineers, died a few days before they reached the coast of Ireland that September.