Among the Illinois the only way of acquiring public esteem and regard is, as among other Savages, to gain the reputation of a skillful hunter, and, still further, of a good warrior; it is chiefly in this latter that they make their merit consist, and it is this which they call being truly a man. They are so eager for this glory that we see them undertake journeys of four hundred leagues through the midst of forests in order to capture a slave, or to take off the scalp of a man whom they have killed. They count as nothing the hardships and the long fasting that they must undergo, especially when they are drawing near the country of the enemy; for then they no longer dare to hunt, for fear that the animals, being only wounded, may escape with the arrow in the body, and warn their enemy to put himself in a posture of defense. For their manner of making war, as among all the Savages, is to surprise their enemies; therefore they send out scouts to observe the number and movements of the enemy, and to see if they are on their guard. According to the report that is brought to them, they either lie in ambush, or make a foray on the cabins, war-club in hand; and they are sure to kill some of their foes before the latter can even think of defending themselves.

The war-club is made of a deer’s horn or of wood shaped like a cutlass, with a large ball at the end. They hold the war-club in one hand, and a knife in the other. As soon as they have dealt a blow at the head of their enemy, they make on it a circular cut with a knife, and take off the scalp with surprising quickness.

When a Savage returns to his own country laden with many scalps, he is received with great honor; but he is at the height of his glory when he takes prisoners and brings them home alive. As soon as he arrives, all the people of the village meet together, and range themselves on both sides of the way where the prisoners must pass. This reception is very cruel; some tear out the prisoners’ nails, others cut off their fingers or ears; still others load them with blows from clubs.

After this first welcome, the old men assemble in order to consider whether they shall grant life to their prisoners, or give orders for their death. When there is any dead man to be resuscitated, that is to say, if any one of their warriors has been killed, and they think it a duty to replace him in his cabin, — they give to this cabin one of their prisoners, who takes the place of the deceased; and this is what they call “resuscitating the dead.”

When the prisoner has been condemned to death, they immediately set up in the ground a large stake, to which they fasten him by both hands; they cause the death song to be chanted, and — all the Savages being seated around the stake, at the distance of a few steps — there is kindled a large fire, in which they make their hatchets, gun-barrels, and other iron tools red hot. Then they come, one after another, and apply these red-hot irons to the different parts of his body; some of them burn him with live brands; some mangle the body with their knives; others cut off a piece of the flesh already roasted, and eat it in his presence; some are seen filling his wounds with powder and rubbing it over his whole body, after which they set it on fire. In fine, each one torments him according to his own caprice; and this continues for four or five hours, and sometimes even during two or three days. The more sharp and piercing are the cries which the violence of these torments make him utter, so much the more is the spectacle pleasing and diverting to these barbarians. It was the Iroquois who invented this frightful manner of death, and
it is only by the law of retaliation that the Illinois, in their turn, treat these Iroquois prisoners with an equal cruelty.