

THE LILY OF

Fairest flower that ever



THE MOHAWKS

bloomed among true men

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MARCH

Tekakwitha — "A Witty Child"

Tekakwitha was not the only orphan to survive the smallpox plague at Ossernenon that fatal year of 1660. There were others, boys and girls, some younger and some older than she, but thanks to one of the redeeming traits of her Mohawk Indians, fondness for children, they were adopted by families of relatives or friends and brought up in true Indian fashion. Girls were an asset in any home, because when grown they would attract some brave to marriage and he would become the support of the elder people in their declining years. They were good for housework and, when old and strong enough, capable of doing the outdoor work of planting, wood cutting, meat dressing and all but hunting and fishing, which the men reserved for themselves.

First, however, the entire village must be moved from its plague-ridden spot. Its new site must be on a hill, as all the Iroquois villages were; it must not be far away and it must keep south of the Mohawk and west of the Schoharie Rivers, so that hostile Indians might not easily approach and assault it. Not quite a mile to the west was a hilltop steeper than Ossernenon, commanding even a broader view and overlooking a creek and the site of the present village named after the creek, Auriesville.

It is not hard to imagine the upheaval and removal. The old palisade fortification, the cabins, or longhouses, and all the infected belongings had to be abandoned. No doubt the sorcerers or medicine men, who could

not prevent the plague or purge the ground and air it had infected, would be the first with their incantations and various forms of devil worship to pretend to render the new locality immune from future infection. Unaccustomed to manual labor, the Mohawk braves strove in vain to have some of the white men who had come on trade from Fort Orange, now Albany, to cut and haul the timber for them so that their women folks might fashion it into palisade and fortification, but the good-natured burghers were too cunning for this and had many ready excuses for withdrawing and letting the tribesmen do their own chores. At any rate, the new village was soon ready and there Tekakwitha was to live for six years, from 1660 to 1666, when the French from Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal, exasperated by the savage incursions of the Mohawks and other Iroquois tribes, determined once for all to crush their warlike spirit, as they did so effectively under General de Tracy.

What was Tekakwitha doing those six years? Her school was in the cabin, in the field, in the wood or on the water. She would powder and bake or boil the corn, cook the meat, draw water from the well, learn to make the tribal raiment, and adorn it, moccasin, leggings, skirt with designs in beadwork and with color bands made from clay and the extract from fish skin. She would emulate her elders and vie with her companions rilling the corn rows, picking

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the wild berries, or tanning the skins of animals caught in the chase.

The day's work or outing over, the child would sit listening to the lore of her people, to stories of luck in the chase, of skill in the fishery, of the traditions of the clans in her own and in the neighboring villages, known chiefly as the Turtle, the Bear and the Wolf. Too young to comprehend the weird fancies of the elders concerning the universe, the deities and the spirits that controlled human origin and destiny, and too shy and serious to join in the frivolous amusements of others of her age, she would naturally keep to herself much of the time and acquire the habit of wondering what earth, air, sky and running water meant and what part she had in it all.

Those who are on in years seldom credit the young with the imaginings which for them interpret realities. They are not sophisticated. If let alone, they grow in wisdom as they grow in age. The wisdom is not profound, but it is simple and true. The gift of observation in the Indian, young or old, is proverbial and this gift is not confined to his senses: it quickens his intelligence and determines his will. We can imagine, therefore, this young child of nature, partly because of her disposition to be alone with her thoughts, and partly because of her sight, impaired for a while by her smallpox affliction, pondering over the mys-

teries everywhere confronting her, and forming impressions that were to remain etched on her mind for life, impressions about the variety and beauty of all she saw about her, of the order of sunrise and sunset, of day and night, of season fierce and mild, of the power which brought about all this order and change. Then she would form impressions of another kind, even more mysterious, of the contrast between the cruelties wreaked on the prisoner of war and the kindness of many of the women, especially of the Christian women, many of them captives like her mother had been, and who treated her as if she were their own. Naturally her little heart would be drawn to them and she would see that they were animated by a spirit wholly different from that of the others of the village. She would not fail to discern in them a habit altogether distinctive, nor would they fail to develop that same habit of prayer which marked off all who cultivated it and became the very name by which they were known, the Prayer Indians. In that way no doubt Tekakwitha passed beyond the knowledge of the seen to the unseen, from what was below to something altogether above it, to hear within her the voice of conscience and to realize that it was re-echoing the voice of Him to Whom the Christians prayed. In this way Tekakwitha became a wise, that is, "a witty child." (Wisdom, 8, 19.)

In the Court of Holiness — V

Our February message listed the documents on which rests the evidence of Tekakwitha's holiness. Now the value of a document may be known from its intrinsic merit, but its value is greatly enhanced by the character of the one who produced it. A brief account of a few of the principal writers about Kateri will show that they were men and women of judgment, close and even critical observers, not easily de-

ceived nor given to exaggeration, and, above all, that in their own lives they were examples of the holiness which they perceived in The Lily of the Mohawks.

Father Peter Joseph Chaumonot, despite his French name, was really an Italian, Calnonotti. Although he did not write anything about Tekakwitha, he knew her after her arrival in Canada, and his testimony to her holiness is repeated by her biographers,

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who are mentioned below. He also testified to what he considered a miraculous intervention on her part after her death. In Guilhermy's *Menology* he is recorded as a man of extraordinary holiness, and one of the authorities for this opinion is Ven. Mary of the Incarnation.

Neither did James de Lamberville write her Life, but he was the Missionary who discovered her in the Mohawk Valley, baptized her and sent her on to the refuge of the Christian Indians on the banks of the St. Lawrence, confiding her to the missionaries there as a treasure of a soul "certainly very dear to God." After her death, he also testified to the veneration with which her Indian tribesmen regarded her. He, too, was looked upon by his fellow-missionaries as a man of extraordinary sanctity.

The two missionaries who wrote classical Lives of Tekakwitha were, like Chaumonot and de Lamberville, eye-witnesses of the goodness of Tekakwitha and of the esteem which her Indian people had for her during her life and after her death. They were both extremely cautious men. They hesitated to write her Life because they thought that the singular affection of the Indians for her might be a thing of the moment and that it might pass away. They knew that she was exceptional in her piety and good behavior, but fortunately there were other Indian men and women in her reservation who were exemplary Christians. It was only after years of consideration, when the veneration of her people for her kept increasing instead of diminishing, and when

there seemed to be extraordinary proofs of the power of her intercession, that they wrote her Life, Cholenec doing it in three different forms. Again, these missionaries, after years of self-sacrifice for the Indians, died leaving a reputation for holiness.

One of the strangest and most convincing tributes to the holiness of Tekakwitha we have from Father Peter Remy, who was a curate at La Chine, just above the village in which Tekakwitha died, in 1680. Like Cholenec and Chauchetiere, he began by thinking that the veneration of the Indians for Catherine was exaggerated. It was only when he experienced in his own person what he considered undoubted evidence of her intercession that he tried to atone for his skepticism by making a record of fully a hundred reports of favors attributed to her invocation. He was a Sulpician. He spent at least twenty-six years among the Indians, spending the rather large fortune which he had inherited for the good of these people.

It would be loss of time to dwell on the holiness of the Ursulines at Quebec, and all who are acquainted with the historical literature of those days need no commendation of men like Charlevoix, de la Potherie, Chateaubriand and men of their stamp, to accept as incontestable their historical testimonies to the veneration in which she was held in their time, three and more decades after her death.

The authentication of the documents in question is so perfect that its examiners in the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites could not find the slightest flaw in it.

Whatever concerns Saint Isaac Jogues concerns also Tekakwitha. Though she was born ten years after his martyrdom, she is regarded as the finest flower that grew out of the soil bedewed with his blood. He and his companions, Goupil and Lalande, died at Ossernenon, now Auriesville, where she was

born. Thus verifying the saying: "The blood of Martyrs is the seed of Christians."

By an act of the Legislature of the State of New York, a Commission of nine was appointed last June to select a site on Lake George and suggest designs for a monument to Father Jogues. This Act has created

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great enthusiasm all through the State. Jogues was the first white man to traverse the lake. He named it Blessed Sacrament when sailing over it the Feast of Corpus Christi, 1646. Thirty years after, Tekakwitha canoed over it in her escape to

Caughnawaga, Canada. Some day the lake will reflect her monument also. The Vice-Postulator for Tekakwitha is a member of the Commission.

FAVORS ATTRIBUTED TO TEKAKWITHA

"Thanksgiving for position lost at night and returned the next evening."
—Archbald, Pa.

"Thanksgiving for protection granted to our Indian children by Catherine Tekakwitha."
—St. Albert, Alb., Canada.

"I loaned my relic to a non-Catholic girl looking for a position and she got it."
—Austin, Tex.

"One of those intentions was to find the Harris boy. He was found a few days after."
—Providence, R. I.

"I was given up for death after an operation for cancer over a year ago; relief came, and I am now well."
St. Louis, Mo.

"Thanks to Catherine for special favors granted, receiving news; prevention of sickness; financial aid and another very special favor, relief from anxiety."
—New Iberia, La.

"Please send me pictures of Tekakwitha as I promised if my son would get a scholarship I would put pictures in rooms."
—Pittsburgh, Pa.

"Thanks to Kateri Tekakwitha for obtaining a position for a dear friend of mine, also collecting a sum of money long past due."
—Crowley, La.

"Recently, our financial condition was becoming acute, we heard of Catherine, prayed to her and in a month's time we traded our property—realized a good exchange, were able to clear off our debts."
—Lima, O.

"A friend gave me a leaflet of Tekakwitha and I only had it two weeks when my husband was sent for to come back to work after five years and one month of unemployment."
—Erie, Pa.

"On the tenth day of prayer our pastor received a donation of one thousand dollars, and shortly after he received a gift of one hundred dollars. Both of these gifts were from entirely unexpected sources."
—Howard Beach, N. Y.

"Will you also record two decided answers to prayers to Catherine Tekakwitha. Old Age Pension secured within a very short time. Sore eye cured—gave trouble for three months last year. Looks like a permanent cure."
—Pittsburgh, Pa.

"My wife and I made a novena to Kateri Tekakwitha, that the 12-week strike would end so I would get back to work. Two days after the novena a settlement was made."
—Natrona, Pa.

"My husband out of work for about four years, started to say the prayer to Kateri about two months ago to ask her to help him to get back to work. He was called back December 12."
—New Jersey.

"I was unemployed and really despairing of a job. I made a novena to Tekakwitha and on the tenth day I heard of this place. Within a week I was working and at a better salary than I expected to receive."
—Youkum, Tex.

"My little boy's ear became infected following an attack of scarlet fever. The doctors thought they would have to operate. I begged Tekakwitha to help him. The following day the inflammation had subsided and he was home within four days."
—Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Some parishioners came last Saturday to ask advice concerning a funeral of a dying boy in the last stage of tuberculosis. I gave out the first of the prayer leaflets and Sunday morning the same parishioners came, asking for Catherine's relic. They had said the prayer to Catarina at home and the boy asked for food. He had not been able to eat for a week previous."
—San Antonio, Tex.

ADDITIONAL FAVORS RECEIVED THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF TEKAKWITHA

Cures	18
Positions Obtained	11
Financial Aid	10
Relief in Distress	2
Not Specified	51

Make Tekakwitha Known

The Lily of the Mohawks Monthly Message Subscribe at 60c. a year; 2 copies, 1.00
Leaflets—I, cures—II, money aid, employment, etc.—III, Novena 5c. each; 25c. a doz.
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Pictures, colored 5 x 3 in., each 5c.; 10 x 13 1/2 in., each 40c.; discount on quantities
Medals Oxidized silver, 15c.; \$1.50 a doz.; aluminum, 50c. a doz.

(Prices include postage)

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