

THE LILY OF

Fairest flower that ever



THE MOHAWKS

bloomed among true men

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THE MARVELOUS MAID OF AURIESVILLE*

By RICARDO FERNANDEZ, S.J.

Their names are not recorded. Let us call them, as a poet has, Kahenta and Kenhoronka. She was a Christian Algonquin; he was a pagan Mohawk. Theirs was a true love because Kenhoronka took Kahenta to wife when he might, since she was a captive, have made her his slave.

Of this romantic union was born Tekakwitha — "who moveth all before her!"

More famous by far than Hiawatha, this little Indian girl's life-story, sworn to by reliable witnesses, makes the conventional "boy-meets-girl" formula of Pocahontas seem like a pretty drab affair.

Indian women are tender mothers. And Kenhoronka was an indulgent father on that dim day in 1656 when Tekakwitha began her life at Ossernenon-on-the-Mohawk, now the Shrine of Our Lady of Martyrs, Auriesville, N. Y. Both agreed that their daughter was marvelous, and both were right — marvelously right.

* * *

It is two hundred and eighty-six years later, June, 1942. The Sacred Congregation of Rites has assembled at the Vatican. His Holiness Pope Pius XII presides from the Papal Throne. The Most Reverend Cardinal Relator rises to propose a question: "Has it been proved in this instance and for the purpose under consideration that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, Love of God and neighbor, and the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude and their subordinates, were of heroic degree?"

The Most Reverend Cardinals, official prelates and Fathers Consultor give their votes. His Holiness weighs their discussion, defers publishing his decision until the following January, that he might seek, through repeated prayer, greater light from God.

The light came. Cardinal Salotti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, was summoned to the Pope's presence on January 3, 1943. With him was the Promoter General of the Faith. His Holiness offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And then he solemnly proclaimed:

"It has been proved in this instance and for the purpose under consideration, that the

*Note: This story is published—Courtesy of the *The Pilgrim*, The Voice of Ossernenon (now Auriesville, N. Y.), where Kateri was born.

theological virtues of Faith, Hope, Love of God and Neighbor, and the cardinal virtues, Prudence, Justice, Temperance, Fortitude and subordinate Virtues of the Venerable Servant of God, Katharine Tekakwitha, were heroic."

So the fond Kahenta and the proud Kenhoronka were not far wrong in their estimate after all. As for Tekakwitha, had she been present at the formidable citation of her virtues, she would surely have run from the room long before the Cardinals, let alone His Holiness, had finished.

Marvelous is the word for the story of the *Lily of the Mohawks*.

SACRED SOIL

Modern pilgrims to Katharine's birthplace are hard put to visualize the seventeenth century Auriesville. The wooded plain overlooking the river with its quiet walks, laced with the sunlight and gladdened with the songs of birds, bears light resemblance to the squalid village where the Servant of God was born. Carpet-like lawns have replaced baked earth and visitors walk on sod sacred because it was reddened with martyrs' blood and made holy by the tread of an Indian girl's feet.

Longfellow has given us a picture of the noble redskin, which, however well it fits Hiawatha, is simply silly when applied to the savages who dwelt along the Mohawk. Generally, they were cruel, licentious and drunken. The *Lily of the Mohawks* blossomed in soil that was in every sense physically malodorous and morally foul. But all her life she might have walked on air, so little did her surroundings touch her.

Heredity versus environment always makes good argument, because no final solution is possible. This dispute is frequently conducted without reference to the influence of God's grace. But grace was the all-important factor in Katharine's life. No other power could have insulated her against her vicious surroundings.

Kahenta made her an excellent mother. We know less about Kenhoronka than we do about the Indian on our nickel. He can have been at best neutral. And in any case, the influence of both on the Indian moppet was negligible because they died of smallpox when she was four. Katharine nearly died herself. Her brother was carried off with the parents. Katharine was disfigured, her eyesight ruined. Thus equipped, or rather handicapped, she faced life, four years old, sickly, pagan.

At this point her uncle, Onsigongo, took her into his lodge. This would seem to be an act of charity did we not know from the documents that this man, a leader among the Mohawk chiefs, was violently opposed to Christianity. He looked upon the girl as likely bait with which to snare a clever hunter for the family circle. In line with this lofty motive Katharine was taught all the housewifely arts. At these she was more than competent. For a time she used Indian cosmetics and beauty artifices although interiorly she always despised them as vain.

Most of Katharine's early trials centered around the efforts of her relatives and friends to marry her off. Among the Indians the single state for a girl was a disgrace. Virginity was unknown. The customary adolescent prelude to marriage was a sort of innocuous betrothal between children. At the age of eight Katharine found herself in such a situation with a boy of like years. In her case it was less than innocuous. It meant nothing. The boy was as indifferent as she.

(To be continued)

A QUICK RECOVERY

"On January 26 my son was rushed to the hospital for an appendix operation and while I was visiting him I visited other rooms. In one of the rooms I had noticed that a young woman kept constant watch, and was so worn out with worry that I decided to ask what she was there for. She took me in to see her small baby (I'd say about nine months old, for she was a chubby baby) whom she said had pneumonia. When I saw and heard that baby gasp for breath and heard those rasping sounds and the pitiful look she cast at her mother, I immediately was so touched that I asked her if she would put a medal of Venerable Katherine on her. She consented gladly and readily even though she was not a Catholic. I then said the prayer to Katherine and then left the room because I was too choked up with emotion. A half hour later I again went in and she said immediately after I left the baby was entirely different. She stopped gasping and moved around playfully. We really couldn't believe our eyes even though I knew Katherine would help. Later on in the day she told me when the doctor came in for his visit he said she didn't have pneumonia (which she had at first) and that the rasping would continue for a few days but there was no great worry."

—Maywood, N. J.

REMARKABLE IMPROVEMENT

"I received my relic picture from a relative when my face became paralyzed right after last New Year's Day. About three weeks after I had the stroke I went to a physician who saw my face right after it became that way. Here's what he said: 'There's nothing short of a miracle the improvement you have shown.' I knew who was helping me. I will never part with my picture of Catherine Tekakwitha."

—Milwaukee, Wis.

WORKING AGAIN

"My brother became critically ill on November 30. He was taken to St. John's Hospital where for several weeks he suffered greatly from pneumonia. The doctors had little hope for his recovery. We began a novena in honor of Kateri. A few days after we began the novena we saw a change in his condition. He continued to improve rapidly and was able to go home. Now he is well again and taking care of his farm."

—Xavier, Kan.

"Venerable Tekakwitha, you have been my lifesaver for as long as I have had faith in you. This time I wish to thank you for helping me through my childbirth. My baby is a fine healthy boy. Enclosed is a small token of my faith and love."

—San Antonio, Tex.

"I feel that through her intercession, I have been helped, in that my eyes have stayed in good condition — for which intention I have asked her help."

—Gary, Ind.

"I am a patient at the hospital since July, 1948, and my prayers to the Lily of the Mohawks have helped me many times. Thank you!"

—Pittsburgh, Pa.

"Have been ill with asthma for six years, not able to do hardly any of my housework. I promised if I was able to do my work for six months I would send you an offering in her honor. Thank God she has helped me very much."

—South Hadley, Mass.

"We would like to obtain picture-prayer leaflets and medals of the little Indian, Kateri Tekakwitha, to spread devotion to her Cause among our Sisters and students in recognition of favors received."

—Atchison, Kan.

"I promised Kateri I would help make known her Cause in thanksgiving for a favor received. I have never asked her for favors and been forgotten."

—Youngstown, O.

"Pleased to report my prayers to Tekakwitha have been answered for my husband's skin condition after doctors were unable to clear it."
—Rochester, N. Y.

"We are enclosing herewith check as a contribution toward the Cause of the beatification of Katherine Tekakwitha. We have been receiving help from her, and feel we would like to make this donation toward her worthy Cause."
—Covington, Ky.

"Am enclosing a donation which I promised Tekakwitha for her Cause, if she helped me. She certainly gave me great aid when I badly needed it, so here is her check in thanksgiving."
—Clayton, Del.

"The enclosed is toward the Cause of Tekakwitha. I hope to continue to support the Cause as I have had many favors granted through her and Father Wynne's prayers."
—Oak Park, Ill.

"I am a patient for almost six months at this hospital and have received wonderful help from Venerable Kateri Tekakwitha during my 'bad spells.'"
—Pittsburgh, Pa.

"I have received many favors from Tekakwitha for many years and have seen some of the wonderful things Catherine Tekakwitha has done for others."
—Columbus, O.

"I have been praying to her for the past thirteen years and have made her known to many. She has answered many of our prayers and we are grateful."
—Maywood, N. J.

"About this time each year, the Superiors have called on Kateri for a favor, and she has always helped us."
—St. Michaels, Ariz.

"Tekakwitha has heard our prayers in many ways; may we always remember to be grateful to her."
—Essex, Md.

"Through Kateri Tekakwitha I received the favor I asked of her and I am so grateful."
—Amite, La.

"We owe the total payment of our parish indebtedness entirely to Tekakwitha."
—Kouts, Ind.

"I feel certain that Kateri helped bring a darling baby girl to our home."
—Anchorage, Alaska.

ADDITIONAL FAVORS

Cures	5	Relief in Distress	4
Financial Aid	6	Not Specified	45

PETITIONS

Cures	25	Apartment	5
Financial Aid	10	Not Specified	22

Obituary

Rev. Richard O'Donnell, Alderbrook, N. Y.
Dr. Louis M. Mooney, New York, N. Y.
Mrs. Mary Kesselem, Youngstown, O.
Miss Margaret C. Martin, New York, N. Y.

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