

TEONTONHARSON

How encouraging and gratifying for a missionary who is sent among the infidels, if ~~Upon~~ entering into his new field of apostolate, he had the good fortune to find among the diverse tribes to evangelise individuals of clear cut character, with mental faculties naturally opened to spiritual <sup>truths</sup> ~~verities~~ and morally healthy in their habits of life; Individuals, who, at first audition of the word of God, squarely take their stand for the faith; and besides their personal fervour after embracing the Faith; they, moreover, add, with the weight of their example, the influence of their discourses to urge their compatriots to accomplish the same rational act, to adapt the same line of conduct which is to be followed by all men and women worthy of their origin, namely, the acceptance and the practice of the Religion preached by the Apostles of Christ. *this great country of ours*

Among the early Missionaries of ~~the Canadian country~~, of course commissioned to go from Quebec to preach the Gospel amongst the fierce Iroquois, after entering their wild ~~country~~ <sup>field</sup> by the way of peace, were, by no means, deprived of that consolation and helping support coming from individuals of such a high type, in their hard labors amid countless ~~and~~ handicaps they had at every <sup>moment</sup> to affront and overcome in their apostolic courses.

These were souls prepared in advance by God for such specific avocation called lay-apostolate. They were instruments thus made fit by the Creator to work on margin of the priest's action and activity in that particularly hard mission field, to enable him to achieve success in the momentous work of implanting the banner of the Faith in their country so long and systematically shut up to all evangelisation.

These persons, men or women, deserve recognition <sup>first</sup> from God ~~first~~ <sup>then</sup> from the Church, from the christian world, and especially from their own people whom they should take as model of christian conduct.



as described above

for her viril character, her devotedness to Religion and firmety in the Faith, <sup>the</sup>amid ~~worst~~ circumstances. It is under these feelings that we dedicate these few following pages ~~dedicated~~ to her blessed memory,

Teontonharson<sup>a</sup>, to begin with, signalized herself at first in the field of ~~lay~~ apostolate in choosing, like Lazarus' Sisters, the <sup>excl</sup> ~~incl~~usive honnour of ~~to our Lord;~~ giving hospitality for, on the arrival of the first two Missioners, mentioned above, she obligingly offered to them the free use of her lodge <sup>as</sup> for a chapel for any lenght of time, thus, the first mass ever said on the Iroquois soil was under her roof, November 1655, at Onondaga Village, (now, Syracuse, N. Y.) The Fathers-----Rather Our Lord, continued to be the welcome <sup>guest</sup> under ~~his~~ <sup>profered</sup> same roof until ~~X~~ a special building <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ provided them by the natives for exclusive chruch functions.

Teont<sup>ra</sup>onharson was besides a woman of means for an Indian, and of consideration ~~a women of means for an Indian, and of consideration~~ for her nobility according to Indian social code; but, according to Christian code she was, <sup>+</sup>above all, worthy of consideration for her high appreciation of the Faith. From the beginning, her dispositions relatively to the true religion were made clear by her manifest determination to become a christian. To that effect she attended all the instructions given in her lodge with a simplicity of a child; and after each instruction, she gave herself no rest until ~~X~~ she communicated what she had heard, to people who would not care so much as to hear the missioner for themselves, and the more so if such were her own relatives...

That note <sup>a</sup>worthy woman, Teontonharson, had not been stranger either to negotiations carried on for the peace, which had been wrought of late with the French. For this purpose, <sup>she</sup> ~~she~~ went also to Quebec, with her husband, who was the chief of the embassy composed of thirthy members, which embassy, beside reconciliating the two



~~Two~~ inveterate warring parties, resulted in bringing along with them, to their country the two Jesuits, Chaumonot and Dablon, to apply themselves actively to missionary work.

During the delay of this Iroquois embassy at Quebec, Teontonharason visited the Ursuline Nuns; she was so much pleased at seeing the Indians girls at <sup>the</sup> Convent so well trained by the Sisters, in diverse things, that she promised Mère de L'incarnation to send her younger sister immediately, until ~~X~~ her own daughter has grown old enough to be sent also.

In those remote years, when harvests of souls were to be made on a larger scale, in reason of the country being new and peopled with so many diversified tribes or races, all to be converted, to prevent unsincere conversion, to multiply by a too great facility of admission, God took upon Himself to test at times the virtue of the aspirants by permitting adversities to assail ~~them~~ <sup>such</sup>. Sometimes trials were sent to neopytes after their baptism sometimes before. Those ~~trials~~ <sup>evidence</sup> served to them to put forth into ~~relief~~ their purity of intention, their genuine desire to become christians, by their perseverance in asking Baptism in spite of ~~all~~ rebukes and difficulties.

The most fertile source of annoyance and intimidation for those then contemplating baptism was that hellish superstition permeating Indian souls, <sup>poison</sup> poisoning ~~it~~, which their own medecine men kept continually injecting into them, telling that Baptism or profession of Christian Doctrine was by itself a curse to Indians and liable to draw upon any new convert <sup>the</sup> worst ~~t~~ misfortunes a person can suffer on earth...

Teontonharas<sup>o</sup> has been a striking victim of that



superstitious belief on the part of her own people on account of the very calamities that beset her just in the period of her preparation to Baptism, and continuing after her becoming effectively a christian.

Our heroine as soon as she had commenced to believe and espoused the cause of our Divine religion, putting her cabin at the disposition of the Missioners for public prayers, catechism and religious service in general, the <sup>a</sup>fantical people were not slow in chanting on ~~any~~ <sup>every</sup> gamut of their anthems of prophetic woes, in the form of sickness or other calamities that were going to befall her and her own family for ranging herself so wholeheartedly on the side of the new Religion.

Then what a thunderbolt, we can easily imagine it was, for that so well started woman in the ways of devotion to God's <sup>interest,</sup> Religion when she saw herself afflicted with the very evils which seemed to give reason to pagan anathemas pronounced in anticipation against her, on account of her taking to the cause of the religion of the French against pagan worship, incurring thereby the just wrath of their irritated divinities.

In fact, a malign and undescribable malady seized upon her person, prostrating her stricken body on a mat at the very time her lodge was being used as a temporary chapel, and in the middle of the course of her preparation to Baptism.

At about the same time reached her the sad news that her mother, a good catechumen had suffered a broken leg in an accident which she met <sup>with</sup> at work, the day following <sup>her</sup> grandmother's baptism. Some days later, as an overflowing measure of misfortunes, a son of hers of about ten years of age, endowed with a lovely natural and of a candid physiognomy, most attentive to prayers, was seized with an ardent fever that seemed willing to ravish all sentiment out of him. All these severe blows befalling her in succession, as if caused by some conjuration of superior



agents, had no power to effect the bottom of her soul nor <sup>in</sup> the least deter her from her good disposition -- ~~prayers~~ <sup>given</sup> and other religious services continued to be <sup>given</sup> in her lodge. She attended all religious exercises stretched on her mat. Her young son all emaciated and weakened dragged himself painfully near the Priest to pray and hear the lessons of catechism.

In this distressing condition, her spirit of faith realising the advantage of the Sacrament to gain the whole merit of her sufferings ~~before~~ in view ~~of~~ eternity, she insisted on being baptized without further delay, which was accorded her on January the 23rd 1656.

Practically when that courageous woman exposed up her forehead to the running water of spiritual regeneration she was already having one foot in the grave. Actually by her very hopeless condition she was <sup>a</sup> stumbling block to the Faith, which Indian unbelievers were interpreting as a definitive argument in favour of paganism. They were triumphant in the anticipation of her death. They will be in position to sustain that the favours she had so lavishly accorded to the Black-Robes Religion dealt the initial blow to her health, and now her actual admittance to Baptism is going to finish her.

But God will not permit such wrong to be done to the Faith nor submit to a longer trial a virtue already sufficiently manifest. As God sent the sore ~~he~~ shall effectuate the healing; as He inflicted the trial He will send the reward. And thus make every thing turn to his own glory, to the good of the souls as to the advantage of the Faith, which He did in a wonderful way.

The miracle of God was wrought by the virtue of Baptism which, at that time operated a double cure. Teontonharson arose from <sup>the</sup> Baptismal fountain with her body free from sickness at the same time as was her soul ~~purified~~ purified of sin.



Surprise, Gratitude, were filling the heart of every new christian in presence of such a marvel. After this happy event, her sick son was taken to the same salutary Fountain for fear he should die before the end of the day. Baptism cured the boy also.

Fever left him non-committantly with the pouring of the sacred water, as if chased by a magical ~~virtue~~ <sup>virtue</sup>. A double wonderment! doubled rejoicing, for the double demonstration of the divine virtue of the Sacrament.

God had not withdrawn right then from his Sacrament its curing effect in behalf of that well deserving and faithful woman; since Heaven still continued to lavish its favours toward Teatonharson's family. This remarkable woman had two aunts who were very sick, one of them on the verge of death. Our new neophyte spoke to them of the virtues of Baptism even to cure the body, (as, she had previously experienced herself,) If only they would believe. Thereupon the Father is called. He heard their desire, and they, in turn, listened to him. He instructed them, and they believed; he made them understand that Baptism is for the benefit of the soul rather than the body. They accepted.

Their good disposition being warranted, Baptism was conferred to them. The women were immediately cured to the great astonishment of the people. In recognition of their two simultaneous cures, together with that of their souls, they preached the wonders of God, and the benefienciency of the Faith. Defending it against those who would attack that great Religion by accusing the pagans for believing it to be the cause of many evils.

*J. Adhemar Chapdelaine 51*