

A great Indian Chief:

Garakontie by his name.

That great Chief has been among the old Iroquois in general a life-copy of Saint Etienne of Hungary among his people, or another Witikind for the old Saxons, in England.

Garakontie, by his religious bent, even while still a pagan, was always in all his public acts taking Christ's Religion preached by the Blackrobes into great account...but especially so after his formal acception of the Faith. Then, his fidelity to God's service, the courage and decision of purpose he put up in professing constantly and openly his faith before the large pagan public imbued with a hereditary stupid idolat-ric Belief...~~were~~ ^{our worthy} such ~~in~~ Personages as to make of him a real champion and a Confessor of the Faith, with but less the ~~title~~ of Martyr to be a Saint....

Now what we desire to tell of him in particular is comprized in those two momentous dates of his life, namely his baptism and saintly death....

Garakontie's Baptism

Garakontie's Baptism took place in 1670, at Quebec, where he had come in quality of chief of the five Iroquois Nations to settle a serious difficulty between one Iroquois tribe and the Algonquins arising from grievous reciprocal acts of hostility toward each other...By his efficacious influence and politics of peace, the difficulty was ^{By his ef-} settled in a solemn council under the presidency of the Governor of New-France--a settlement by which war was averted and peace restored.

Now, after working as peace-maker for his fellow-men, Garakontie thought he should now definitively act as peace-maker for himself in achieving his peace with God by being baptized.

For years already that important affair of his soul had been the great concern of his life, and along with that fixed purpose of his, it had been Garakontie's.....

constant effort to prepare himself in view to that momentous step that gives a man's life its true orientation...His lengthy preparation together with the eagerness with which the great Iroquois Chief set himself to it, was a ^{guarantee} ~~guarantee~~ as to his information on things of the Faith being in every point as could be desired--as also it proved good on test. As to his dispositions of Soul, his conduct being for a long time already that of a true Christian animated with an ardent and militant faith, constituted a loud testimony in favour of our aspirant...

Mgr de Laval the first Bishop of Quebec, informed of all these qualifications and achievements, not only granted him the favor, but desired to be himself the performer of the ceremony in token of his esteem for this great and remarkable Indian...The French Governor for his part volunteered to be sponsor unto him in recognition of the many signal services he had rendered to the French by his politics of peace and beneficent diplomacy resulting in the deliverance of many a French captive whom he sent back to liberty after after rescuing them from the fire test at the hands of the Iroquois, their captors....

On the occasion of his baptism the Cathedral of Quebec was thronged with people like on great religious solemnities. Beside the French, most of the Indian Nations of Canada were represented...Hurons, Algonquins, Ottawais, Mohicans etc, and numbers of Iroquois of the five Nations,...

Let us revive mentally the imposing religious scene unfolding itself like a film of our Modern Cinemas before the eyes of the large public in attendance...

Garakontie, vested with all the marks of his dignity, now stands in the porch of the church where the initial ceremony takes place. As the officiating Pontiff invited him in by pronouncing the latin words of the Ritual:--"Intra in Templum Domini..." Enter in the Temple of the Lord, that thou mayest have thy share with Christ into Life Eternal--Our future Christian crossed ^{bravely} the threshold of the Sacred Edifice, and started

following the Bishop and cortege--the accompanying Clergy and acolytes. The large throng of people attending in the front of the Church entered behind him, and pouring in filled the pews. Meanwhile the rubrical cortege proceeded on through the central aisle, moving along slowly to give the Cathecumen enough time to make his profession of Faith by reciting the the Apostles' Creed, which ^{he} did in pronouncing every Article in a clear and distinct voice.

Having arrived at the altar rail, where the Ceremony continued its development, there, Garakontie now on his knees ^{at} the feet of the Pontiff follows with a marked attention all the points of the Sacred Rites, answering ^{time} on ~~the~~ required the rubrical questions with a presence of mind and good sense worthy of one in possession of best education and mental discipline. After the ordinary unctions were made--one ~~one~~ upon his ruddy chest preliminary let bare, the other between shoulders, with the Holy Oil of Cathecumens, the time had arrived for the last question imposed by the Ritual to the Aspirant: "Willest thou be baptized...?" The single word: "I will" was not sufficient for him to express his eagerness, he wanted to emphasize it by adding: "It is over three years already since I am imploring Heaven for that Grace". presently the Iroquois Chief ~~presently~~ threw back his rugged featured head and the Waters of Grace flowing on his forehead effectively ranked him among the Children of God...

In presence of this graceful scene one would readily recall to memory that half barbarian Hero, --the great Clovis, the powerful king of the antique Franks, bowing in like manner his elate head at the feet of the Great Pontiff--St Remi--undergoing the same Rites in the Cathedral of Reims, France...

On rising from his knees, Garakontie's first act as a Christian was to thank with deep-felt accents, ~~the~~ the Lord Bishop for having, through the medium of the Sacrament just conferred, opened onto him the door of the Church and at the same time ~~with~~ God's Paradise. Then turning toward the altar, he made a prostration to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, protesting to

of his firm purpose to serve Him all his life with the fidelity of a perfect Christian.

On quitting the Cathedral, the New-Christian was led to the Governor's^s Residence. There, ~~he~~ also thanked Monsieur de Courcelles for the honor he had done him in fulfilling the office of Godfather in his behalf, and for giving him his own name by which^a to be called as^a Christian in remembrance of him...

Our Hero's arrival at the Chateau was marked^{by} a discharge of the cannons of the Fort, accompanied with the ~~fixing~~ of the soldiers' musquetry, disposed in two lines between which he walked to arrive at the door of the Governor's Palace.

For a conclusion of the memorable day, a MENU was served at a splendid banquet sufficient to recomfort all the indian^{empty} stomachs assembled around^m the Hero of the day as an escort of honor. During the repast, a Huron Chief well known to Garakontie, and appointed by him, ~~stood~~ up and with a solemn^a voice proclaimed the Chief's new given name, as a Christian,

in this manner; It is DANIEL who is treating us, whom we have known up to now by the designation of Garakontie. He has co^voked us to this banquet to affirm and take us as witnesses that he has embraced the Christian Faith and that he is not a child to ever change his mind; he shall make openly a constantt^t profession of it before the Tribes of his Nation. You shall never hear the Danial garakontie has ever fail^d to his word which he has just sworn to God."

This proclamation was followed by an acclamation of joy, of applauses and thanksgivings coming forth from all the guests

--Garakontie's Death--

Garakontie's death was a worthy termination of a life such as his-- marked with the stamp of religion and piety... of one truly dying in the Lord. The following account stands in testimony of it.

"As soon as stricken by the sickness of which he died, the old Chief came to me," wrote Father De Lamberville, and after praying said to me. 'I am a dead man' and then asked to make his confession, which he did with all the marks of a veritable Christian. The Father

procured him by the assiduity of his visits, all the succours emanating from his priesthood. At each visit, the sick old man never failed to invite the Father to pray with him...saying: "Prions ensemble", which he oftentimes did while alone. He soon requested that the prayers of the agonizing be recited. "I felt sorry", wrote Father de Lamberville, "I couldn't give him Holy Communion in the extremity of his life, on account of his stomach being so upset."

A good man as he was, Garakontie also wanted others good; in this spirit he encouraged his wife to live always a good Christian life, exhorted his kindred still infidels to become converted to the true Faith. He would not hear of any suggestion from the Pagans trying to induce him to have the "Jongleurs" (Indian Magicians) perform their incantation over him in an attempt to operate his cure. To all importunities done him to that effect, he had no other answer but this: "My life is in the hands of God; if He deems ~~deems~~ good that I should now be withdrawn from this world, I am satisfied to go."

Before being too far gone in his sickness, the good old Chief wanted to celebrate, by anticipation, his final parting from this world, in a solemn banquet, to declare on the threshold of Eternity his last wishes to the people assembled around him: it was what they used to call a "festin d'adieu" (farewell banquet) much in usage among Indians of old. This banquet happened also to be ~~his~~ the last meal on earth. The feeble old man made choice of ^{two} Indians, the best eligible in the assembly, to be his spokesmen; their officious function^s were to tell the old and the young folks in his name, how he exhorted them all to honor the Governor of New-France, Monsieur de Frontenac, as they would a Father and how he wanted them to remember that the best counsel he left them was to ^{be} in perpetual good intelligence with the Missionaries...At last he conjured them all to become good Christians and quit all Pagan superstition as he did himself. Then turning to the Missionary, Father de La Lamberville, he added, "Write to Monsieur le Gouverneur of Quebec, after my death, that he has lost his best ^{friend} among the Iroquois; moreovert^s supplicate

Mgr. de Laval ~~and~~ and all the Missionaries at Quebec to pray to God for me that my retention in Purgatory may be abbreviated..."

The last of the guests having left the cabin, the dying Chief called the Father close to him, "We must separate from each other," he said; "I am willing since I hope to go to Heaven..." He then requested the Father to recite the Beads with him, which the Priest did with some other Christians..After the Prayers for the recommandation of departing souls, he again called the Priest to hear from his lips his last word, "Onen wakiheie." (Lo! i am dying.) he presently breathed his last.

At the moment of expiring, a brother of his supporting his head, ^{he} whispered to his ear: "Courage! my dear, you are going to Heaven, you are a good Christian, Jesus loves you. He will treat you with great mercy..."

The embrace of honesty of life and personal celebrity in death; the association of faithfulness in the service of God and the merit of a useful life in behalf of humanity in one passing away from this world, are by themselves originators of deep and salutary impressions, as they are also, by touching the hearts, apt to provoke regrets, sympathy and sorrow...The death of Garakontie, on this account, has been deeply felt by all sensitive people among the Iroquois. The religious trend of his last discourse, allied with the great piety of his personal life, all that joined to the serenity of his face reflecting a blessed taint of Heaven, did not fail to go to the hearts, swelling them to overflow. Under the touch of these inner sentiments, the eyes being ready for tears, no wonder, that if immediately after his passing, his vast lodge invaded by mourners, resounded with weepings and wailings...

The old Indians were known for being great weepers over the mortal remains of their departed, if not always through genuine sorrow, they were however doing so at least for an exterior manifestation

of sympathy, and accomplish a traditional duty of mere civility toward the relatives of the dead person: but in the case of Garakontie, tears were starting from a genuine source and were self mounting to the eyes to take their needed issue.

Among all the mourners, the most affected and deeply sorrowful was the Missionary who knew better than anyone the value and the merit of the man; he realized more keenly the immense loss was his disappearance from the scene, ^{not only} for the Onondaga Mission, Garakontie's proper town, but also for all the Missions scattered in the Iroquois Cantons.

Some day not so very long before his saintly death, Garakontie was at the Priest's cabin, purposely to talk about certain dispositions which he wanted observed after his death concerning his body. The first thing was that he be given a burial after the manner of the French, without allowance for anything deposited in his grave--such as extra-clothes, utensils, or whatever article put to his use during ^{his} last sickness ^{as} the Indians were wont to do in compliance with their superstitious traditions. Then followed the request to have a coffin made of four wooden pieces shaped into boards to lay his body in. His final request was that a cross be erected at the head of his grave, the size of which such as to be ^{seen from a certain} distance so that the people viewing it may remember that Garakontie was a christian... Each point as set ~~above~~ was scrupulously executed according to his desire after his death.

Many things still remain to be said for a complete information as to the character of this remarkable Indian. There are some particular deeds which he accomplished that deserve a special mention as a typical exemplification of his real Catholic sense...

At a banquet which he gave on Chrismass, the last he spent on earth, our Hero requested that a large picture of Our Divine Lord be brought to him, which he took and pinned up before the assembled guests. After bowing before it three or four times, as the French used to do before their earthy^l Sovereigns, he then said: "Behold the unique Master of our life. He alone, and not Agriskoe (the pagan god of the Iroquois) must we adore and invoke. He is the dispenser of every man's life. Our dreams have nothing to do with duration of our life and the number of our days.." Afterward, adresssing directly to Jesus, he added: "Jesus! Son of the Virgin, thine beauty has nonequal on earth, make us sit around thee in Heaven..." Then, ~~add-~~ressing the assembly: "We, who are Christians, let us always remember what we have promised Him when we were baptized..."

The Chief was never shy of his title as a Catholic in any circumstance, in any surroundings whatsoever; making his devotion^{and} and showing the distinctive Catholic marks without false shame, going around, even traveling with the Prayer-Beads around his neck...

Once in a trip to New-amsterdam, he caused quite a stir; happening to enter a Protestant house of prayer during the service, unaware of his mistake he walked to the front where he knelt down, and taking his Beads he began to pray. Annoyed by the straightforwardness of the strange fellow and the disturbance he caused among the hearers, the Minister signified to him that he had to retire.

"I have not finished my prayer," he said: are you not all Christians here? I wonder why you would not kneel down for prayer! "

The way he wanted to repair a little mishap which happened to him toward the end of his life, illustrates more his virtue than it did harm to his soul or damages his reputation. Once, a few months previous to his death, while at the Hollenders' Settlement for trading purposes, he was caught short of equilibrium in his walk, caused by some wine offered by the officious trader, which he drank, thinking that wine had not the

treacherous virtue^o enebriate, but that it was the property of the whisky only... The Chief was so contrite of this undeliberate act of his that as soon as he returned he made his confession and asked publicly pardon for the misedification he had caused thereby...as if he had been guilty of a formal breach to sobriety...

Apart from being a distinguished diplomat and great christian, Garakontie was also an intellectual and a remarkable orator; as such he elevated himself, in various councils which he presided at^{at} Quebec, to the height of our best modern^{orators}—and that from the unique resource of his wild nature, without culture nor any learning; that makes quite a difference as to the Merit...

As a specimen of the great Iroquois' Chief's eloquence we produce the following piece extracted from the old French Records—(Relations year-1666p.7). It is an eulogy of the great Jesuit Missionary— Simon Lemoine, pronounced by our Heron on the occasion of a diplomatic trip he made to Quebec, the year mentioned above, when on his arrival the news of Father Lemoine's death was communicated to him. Right then, under the sorrowful emotion of his soul. and after expressing with well adapted terms his condolence to Monsieur de Tracy,—Governor of Quebec, Garakontie began his famous eulogy of the great Jesuit whose merit and fearlessness he had so often witnessed on different trips the Father made as an ambassador to the Iroquois, when these were still far from being remiss in their hostilities against the French... "Ondesonk, (such was the Indian name of the Jesuit)—Odesonk, hearest thou me?" he broke forth, from the dark regions of death where thou hast been transported! Is it not thou who hast so often been going over ^{amid} over (to) the terrible Mohawks, so fearlessly exposing thine head to the murd-

erous strokes of their tomahawks, and hast made so bold there as to step over blazing pyres to the very foot of execution-stages to rescue French captives from the stake...? Hast thou

not carried peace and tranquility along thy path wherever thou hast passed, and hadst made followers of Christ the peoples among whom thou hast established thy dwelling. We have seen thee seated on our mats and decide on peace and war in our councils; our lodges were found too narrow whenever thou hadst entered them, and our villages lacked of space so great was the multitude thy presence and thy discourses attracted within their walls----- But I am disturbing thy rest by my untimely address. Thou hadst taught us so often that our short existance on earth is followed by an eternal life of happiness. Since thou possessest it now what reason have we to take sorrow for our missing thee? But we weep because by thy departure we have lost a Father and a Protector; nevertheless we shall console ourselves since thou continuest still to be such to us from the heights of heaven and that thou hast found in this dwelling of rest, the infinite joy of which thou hast so often spoken to us".

This great Indian chief. garakontie, by his life full of good deeds and words, on account of his prestige over his people, and of his high standing as foremost Chief of the five Nations, has been doing more for the implanting and the propagating of the Faith than any Missionary has been capable to individually do among the early Iroquois.

On this score Garakontie is worthy of our respect as well as our admiration and his memory certainly deserves to be kept alive for an inspiration to all.

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