

The Life and Times of Kateri Tekakwitha -Ellen Walworth (1891)

Excerpts

Preface

The thought of a mere Indian girl reared in the forest among barbarians, yet winning for herself such titles as "The Lily of the Mohawks" and "The Genevieve of New France," recurred to my mind again and again, until it led me to a fixed determination to explore so tempting a field of romance and archeology. The fact that it lay amongst the hills and valleys of my native State, and was little known except to solitary scholars and laborious historians, incited me still more to the task.

My first visit to the Iroquois Village at Caughnawaga, P. Q., occurred at this time. Here my uncle and I found hospitable entertainment for several days at the Presbytery of the church, presided over by the Rev. Père Burtin, O. M. I. Besides the valuable information acquired from the library of books and manuscripts in his possession, I gathered much from the acquaintance then established with the Iroquois of the "Sault" and in particular with their grand chief, Joseph Williams.

I have reserved for a most especial and grateful acknowledgment the name of Gen. John S. Clark, of Auburn, N. Y. My work is indebted to him for a treasure of information which he alone could give. In the knowledge of Iroquois localities in New York State, particularly those of two centuries ago, and the trails over which missionaries from Canada travelled so painfully to villages where they labored so hard and yet successfully, —he is the undoubted pioneer. Almost all we know in this branch of archeology is owing to him.

Guided by the wise advice of General Clark, I was able afterwards to make other independent journeys, and familiarize myself with Indian trails passing near my native town, above all those followed by Tekakwitha in her escape to the "Sault." I owe to Gen. Clark's kindness the valuable map of Mohawk Castle Sites, to be found in this book and drawn expressly for it by his hand.

Lastly, I recall with pleasure a conversation with the Rev. Felix Martin, S. J., a well-known authority in Canadian and Indian archeology. To this venerable author, the editor of the famous "Jesuit Relations," the biographer of Isaac Jogues, of Chomonot and of Tekakwitha, I owe a large debt of gratitude. His biography of her, entitled "Une Vierge Iroquoise," is still in manuscript, never having been published. He was the first to gather and keep together all the manuscripts extant giving contemporary accounts of the Iroquois maiden. He laid a foundation of accumulated facts for others to build upon.

Chapter 1 (Tekakwitha's Spring)

A spring is close at hand in a clump of trees. The castle at that spot was known as "Caughnawaga," meaning "At the Rapids,"—a name still applied to the eastern part of the present town of Fonda. The Mohawk River runs swiftly as it passes this spot, and large stones obstruct its course. The spring at the castle site on the west side of the creek is Tekakwitha's spring; for there beside it she grew to maidenhood, behind the shelter of the palisades, and beneath the shadow of the overarching forest.

Tekakwitha was the Lily of the Mohawks, and afterwards known as "La Bonne Catherine."

In the Mohawk Valley, the great artery of our nation's life, the tide of human travel now ebbs and flows with ever-swelling force; here the New York Central Railway levels out its course of four broad tracks; here the great canal bears heavy burdens east and west; here the West Shore Railway skirts the southern terrace; here the Mohawk River winds and ripples, smiling in an old-time, quiet way at these hurrying, crowded highways. They have well-nigh filled the generous roadway, cut through high plateaus and mountain spurs in ages past by this same placid river. That was in its younger, busier days. Now it idles on its way from side to side, among the flats or bottoms, with here and there a rapid, till at last it gathers force at far Cohoes for one great plunge before it joins the Hudson.

Let us follow up the windings of the Mohawk River westward. At Schenectady it lingers among islands in pretty, narrow ways, where college boys can take their sweethearts rowing. Right playfully it kisses the feet of the old Dutch town in summer, and in winter its frozen bosom sounds with the merry thud of the skater's steel. Farther west the valley narrows, and on a height near Hoffman's Ferry, Mohawk and Mohegan fought their last fierce battle. Tekakwitha heard their war-whoop at the castle of Caughnawaga, just before the final conflict came; but she never saw Fort Johnson, which is higher up the river.

Westward still, and up the valley from Fort Johnson, a broader gleam of water comes in sight. It is where the Schoharie River creeps in from the south between the dripping archways of a bridge, over which canal-boats pass. Here the Mohawk shows its teeth in a ridge of angry rapids; and here we enter what was once the home country of its people, the fierce Mohawks.

One of these—a bright soul in a dusky setting, and a flower that sprang from martyr's blood—was Tekakwitha. She grew up, says one who knew her, "like a lily among thorns." Ten years after Ondessonk had shed the last drop of his blood to make these Mohawks Christians, she was born among the people who had seen the blackgown die, in the Village of the Turtles,—some say in the "cabin at the door of which the tomahawked priest had fallen."

Near Ossernenon, the earliest known site of the Turtle Castle, there is a great bend or loop in the Mohawk River and Valley. It extends from the mouth of the Schoharie River on the east to the "Nose" near Yost's and Spraker's Basin on the west. The Nose is at a point where river, railways, and canal are crowded in a narrow pass between two overlapping ridges of high land. "Two Mountains approaching," or Tionnontogen, the Indians called it; and there behind the shelter of the hills, they built their largest and best fortified town, the Mohawk capital or Castle of the Wolves.

The scene about to be described and others which follow depicting the early life of Tekakwitha are not to be found actually recorded in so many words in the history of her life and times, yet they must have occurred; for they are based on the known facts of her life as related in various official and private documents, together with such inferences only as may fairly and reasonably be drawn from those facts when brought under the strong light of contemporaneous records.

"A manuscript of the time," says Shea, "describes the Indian maiden with her well-oiled and neatly parted hair descending in a long plait behind, while a fine chemise was met at the waist by a neat and well-trimmed petticoat reaching to the knee; below this was the rich legging and then the well-

fitted moccasin, the glory of an Iroquois belle. The neck was loaded with beads, while the crimson blanket enveloped the whole form."

Of all the people in the ancient Caughnawaga village, the only story that has been written out in full and handed down in precious manuscript, brown with age, is the story of her who bounded up the hill and left her comrades at the spring. In a double sense she left them. She was far above them. She stands to-day upon a mystic height; and many, both of her race and our own in these our days, do homage to her memory. May her home at Caughnawaga, high above the stones that lie imbedded in the Mohawk River, and close beside the spring that trickles downward to the Cayudutta, soon become familiar ground to all who honor Tekakwitha!

(Footnotes)

[...] in a letter dated March 3, 1885, Gen. John S. Clark, of Auburn, N. Y., the well-known archeologist, mentions this spring as marking the site of Gandawague (or Caughnawaga) on the Cayudutta Creek, northwest of Fonda, N. Y.

Chapter 2 (The Mohawk Valley and the Mohawks at the time of Tekakwitha's birth)

Father Jogues was put to death in the year 1646, on the south side of the Mohawk River, a few miles to the eastward of Fonda, and not far from the mouth of the Schoharie River. Close to the shrine which has been erected at Auriesville in his memory, is the very ravine in which, during his captivity there, he buried his friend and only companion, René Goupil.

There, too, or very near there, ten years after his death, Tekakwitha was born. The exact location of her birthplace has not been determined. It was either at the Turtle Castle of Ossernenon described by Jogues, the name of which was afterwards changed, or at a later village site near Auries Creek, to which the people of that castle moved, and to which they gave the name of Gandawague. In either case her birthplace was less than a mile from the present hamlet of Auriesville.

There they must have occupied one section of an Iroquois long-house, other kindred families filling up its entire length on both sides of an open space and passage-way through the center. The occupants of every four sections or alcoves in these houses, two families being on each side of the passage, shared a common hearth fire, with a hole above it in the roof to let in the daylight and let out the smoke. There were usually five of these fires and twenty families in a house about a hundred feet in length. These united households gave name and meaning to the Iroquois League of Kanonsionni, or People of the Long House.

There is reason to believe that Tekakwitha's father took an active part in the affairs both of the Mohawk nation and the Iroquois League. We are told, indeed, that after his death her uncle, who seems to have taken her father's place and responsibilities, was one of the chief men of the Turtle Castle, whose deputies ranked higher in council than those of the Bear and Wolf Castles, Andagoron and Tionnontogen. This was because the turtle was created first, according to their genesis of things.

The proud Senecas, whose portion of the house extended from Seneca Lake to Niagara, were the western doorkeepers of this household of nations, waging fierce war on their neighbors near Lake

Erie. The wily Onondagas, wise old politicians, in the middle of the Long House, at Onondaga Lake, led in council. Their leading chief, the elected president of this first American republic, lit the central council-fire and sat in state among the fifty oyanders (sachems) who formed the Iroquois senate. Ten of these were always Caniengas (or Mohawks), and fourteen were Onondagas.

The very same year that the little Mohawk-Algonquin was born in their land, they swept like a tornado over Isle Orleans, near Quebec. They carried off to their castles the last remnant of the Huron people, who, far from their own land, had gathered near the French guns for protection. These Hurons from the shores of Lake Huron belonged to the Iroquois stock, as distinguished from the Algonquin races. In very early times they had come down to the settlements on the St. Lawrence to trade with the French, and zealous Jesuit missionaries had accompanied them on their return to their own country.

This last-mentioned blackgown, John de Brebeuf, called Echon by the Hurons, was a writer of valuable works on the Indian language and customs. He belonged to a noble family of Normandy; and on account of his great natural courage and soldierly bearing, his agony was prolonged by the savages with fiendish ingenuity, till finally, failing to wring a sigh of pain from his lips, they "clove open his chest, took out his noble heart, and devoured it," as a medicine to make them fearless-hearted.

The fortitude of a brave man under torture was a spectacle as keenly appreciated by the Iroquois as were the gladiator fights and martyrdoms of old by the Romans. The women in this case, however, instead of decreeing death by turning down their own thumbs, were granted the less fatal and less dainty privilege of sawing off the thumb of the victim, as in the case of Jogues at Ossernenon. The human torches of Nero, who had the early Christians wrapped in straw and placed in his garden on the Palatine Hill, then set on fire to illuminate his evening revels, are vividly recalled by the death of Brebeuf's companion, the delicate and gentle Gabriel Lalemant.

Once victorious, it was the policy of the Five Nations of the League to quit all enmity, and to give the vanquished a home in their midst. Though the Hurons lost their national existence when thus adopted into the League, they did not lose their Christian faith. They clung to it in the midst of all the wild superstitions of their conquerors.

This, of course, was little to the taste of Tekakwitha's pagan father, who took care, no doubt, that the blackgown should have no intercourse with his Algonquin wife, for in his opinion she was already too fond of the French Christians. He did not wish her to have his tiny, new-born daughter signed with the ill-omened cross, and to have the water of baptism poured on her head.

For there, where the city of Syracuse now sits among the hills, a crowd of Iroquois were gathered at that very time into the rough bark chapel of St. Mary's of Ganentaha, listening to the Christian law of marriage preached then for the first time in their land. Quick to understand the new dignity it gave them, the Onondaga women silently made up their minds to learn "the prayer," by which they meant Christianity.

The darkness of night has closed over them. It is the hour for dreams, and dreams are the religion of the red-man. They are treasured up and told to the medicine-man or sorcerer, the influential being who is both priest and doctor in the village. When the excitement of the war-dance has subsided and

the people are all sleeping soundly, this mysterious personage with stealthy tread may be seen to issue from the silent cluster of houses, and by the light of the moon he gathers his herbs and catches the uncanny creatures of the night with which to weave his spells.

(Footnotes)

Chauchetière's manuscript, "La Vie de la B. Catherine Tegakouita, dite a present La Sainte Sauuagesse," is still extant. It was copied by the author of this volume at Montreal in 1884, and was first printed in 1887: "Manate, De la Presse Cramoisy de Jean-Marie Shea."

Chapter 3 (A Cradle-song.— Captives tortured.— Flight of the French from Onondaga.— Death in the Mohawk lodges.)

Let the reader, in imagination, look into Tekakwitha's home at Gandawague on the Mohawk, as it appeared in the month of April, 1658, and learn if the news that is spreading from nation to nation has yet reached there. To find the lodge he wishes to enter, he will follow a woman who is passing along the principal street of the village with an energetic step. The corners of a long blanket, that envelops her head and whole form, flap as if in a breeze from her own quick motion, for the air is quite still.

Tegonhatsihongo, who will be better known by and by under the name of Anastasia, gathers her blanket about her, and with the usual greeting, "Sago!" she passes a matron at a neighboring doorway, who withdraws the heavy bear-skin curtain she has placed there for keeping out the cold, in order that she may see where to put away the snow-shoes, now no longer needed.

Ondessonk or Lemoyne, the namesake of Jogues, who made a third visit to the Mohawk Valley in the fall of 1657, was no longer even tolerated by its people. He was held half a hostage, half a prisoner, at Tionnontogen, during the time that the French colony were in peril at Onondaga, and was finally sent back to Canada. He left the Mohawk country for the last time, just after Onondaga was abandoned by the French.

Chapter 4 (Tekakwitha with her aunts at Gandawague)

The word "Tekakwitha," as M. Cuoq, the philologist, translates it, means "One who approaches moving something before her." Marcoux, the author of a complete Iroquois dictionary, renders it, "One who puts things in order." It has been suggested in reference to M. Cuoq's interpretation, that the name may have been given to her on account of a peculiar manner of walking caused by her imperfect sight; for it is related that the small-pox so injured her eyes that for a long time she was obliged to shade them from a strong light. It is possible that in groping or feeling her way while a child, she may have held out her hands in a way that suggested the pushing of something in front of her, and thus have received her name. On the other hand, the interpretation of M. Marcoux, as given by Shea, is thoroughly in keeping with her character. She indeed spent a great part of her life, as the record shows, in putting things in order.

A chief is expected to dispense freely, and is generally poor despite his honors. But daughters were always highly prized by the Iroquois; as they grew up they were expected to do a large part of the

household work; and later, when wedded to some sturdy hunter, the lodge to which a young woman belonged, claimed and received whatever her husband brought from the chase. So the aunts and the uncle of Tekakwitha acted quite as much from worldly wisdom as from humanity when they decided to give the young orphan a home. Forethought was mixed with their kindness, and perhaps also a bit of selfishness. They had no children of their own, but they adopted another young girl besides Tekakwitha, thus giving to their niece a sister somewhat older than herself.

The old Dutch records of the time relate that the Turtles, or people of the lower castle, were building a new palisade, in the latter part of the year 1659,—a task which would necessarily accompany a removal from Ossernenon; and they asked the Dutchmen, their neighbors, to help them.

Tekakwitha lived in the greatest seclusion. She was cared for and taught by her aunts, in one of the cabins closed in by the palisade. She was learning the arts of the Indians, doing the daily work, and shrinking from all observation. This unsociable habit of hers (for so it must have seemed to her neighbors) was due in part to her own disposition, —modest, shy, and reserved,—but more than all, perhaps, to the fact that the small-pox had injured her eyesight. As she could not endure much light, she remained indoors, and when forced to go out, her eyes were shaded by her blanket.

Much to her aunts' satisfaction, she had an industrious spirit. This they took care to encourage, as it made her very useful. These aunts were exceedingly vain; and a child of less sense than the young Tekakwitha would soon have been spoiled by their foolishness.

She was like a tree without flowers and without fruit; but this little wild olive was budding so well into leaf that it promised someday to bear beautiful fruit; or a heaven covered with the darkness of paganism, but a heaven indeed, for she was far removed from the corruption of the savages,—she was sweet, patient, chaste, and innocent. *Sage comme une fille française bien élevée*,—As good as a French girl well brought up,—this is the testimony that has been given by those who knew her from a very young age, and who in using this expression gave in a few words a beautiful panegyric of Catherine Tegakoüita. Anastasia Tegonhatsihongo said of her that 'she had no faults.'

“There was a sort of child-marriage in vogue among the Iroquois. Certain agreements of theirs were called marriage, which amounted to nothing more than a bond of friendship between the parents, rendered more firm by giving away a child, who was often still in the cradle; thus, they married a girl to a little boy. This was done at a time when Tegakoüita was still very small; she was given to a child. The little girl was only about eight years old; the boy was hardly older than herself. They were both of the same humor, both very good children; and the little boy troubled himself no more about the marriage than did the girl.”

(Footnotes)

Among the Iroquois descent was never reckoned through the male line, the stirps being always a woman. A chief, therefore, derived his title from his mother.

The castle of Caughnawaga at Fonda was also called Gandawague, long after its removal from Auries Creek. But it prevents confusion to give it always its more distinctive name of Caughnawaga.

Chapter 5 (Tekakwitha's Uncle and Fort Orange; Or the beginnings of Albany)

"She found herself an orphan under the care of her aunts, and in the power of an uncle who was the leading man in the settlement." This brief expression gives us an intimation both of the character and the rank of Tekakwitha's formidable Mohawk uncle. He was stern, unbending, fierce; and like many another chief reared in the Long House, was proudly tenacious of the customs of his race.

The influx of liquor to the Iroquois castles led to reckless debauches, fast following in the track of the small-pox, which stalked with unchecked violence through the Long House in 1660.

This founding of Schenectady was an event of deep interest to the Mohawks of Gandawague. It brought the dwellings of the white race closer than ever before to their own stronghold, almost in fact to the very door of the Kanonsionni, or People of the Long House.

They make no offerings to their good genius or national god, Tharonyawagon; but they worship the demon Otkon or Aireskoi, praying in this way, "Forgive us for not eating our enemies!" and in hot weather, "I thank thee, Devil, I thank thee, Oomke, for the cool breeze." They laugh at the Dutch prayers, the dominie tells us, and also at the sermon.

"The Great Spirit, who has withheld from you strength and ability to provide food and clothing for yourselves, has given you cunning and art to make guns and provide scaura (rum), and by speaking smooth words to simple men, when they have swallowed madness, you have by little and little purchased their hunting-grounds and made them corn-lands..."

A year later, in 1664, at the time when the juvenile betrothal of Tekakwitha, already mentioned, took place at Gandawague,—that having occurred, as we are told, when she was eight years old,—an entirely new order of things was brought about in the Dutch colony. The new settlement of Arent van Corlaer at Schenectady, the house where her uncle traded at Fort Orange, and the hamlet of Beverwyck, together with the whole of the New Netherlands, passed over into the hands of the English. Henceforth, instead of appealing to their High Mightinesses the Lords States General of Holland for redress of grievances, the settlers of the State of New York were to bow to the decisions of his Majesty King Charles II.

So, in 1664, New Amsterdam, into whose harbor, said a boastful inhabitant, as many as fifteen vessels were known to have anchored in the course of one year, became New York, taking its name from the title of the king's brother, afterward James II. Beverwyck, which had grown up under the guns of Fort Orange, was henceforth to be called Albany; and an English governor took the reins of colonial government from the hands of Peter Stuyvesant.

A war-cloud was gathering in the north, soon to break with terrible effect on the three Mohawk castles, and to startle the Governor of the Province of New York into a protest against the advance of armed troops of King Louis XIV. of France into the colonial dominions of his Majesty Charles II. of England.

(Footnotes)

Corlaer, or Van Curler, a brave and worthy man, was the most influential settler at Schenectady, and on excellent terms with the Mohawk Indians. He had visited them in 1642, on purpose to secure, if possible, the ransom of Father Jogues, and had manifested great sympathy for him in his captivity.

Chapter 6 (An army on snowshoes)

The year 1666 was, indeed, an eventful one. It opened with a heavy snow-storm, and others followed until the whole Mohawk Valley was covered with a depth of feathery whiteness. At its eastern end a dark pool lay at the foot of Cohoes Falls, where the frosty spray of the roaring cataract glistened on every tiny bush, and the black cliffs on either side frowned from under their snowy caps at the silent meeting of two frozen rivers; off to the west, at the distant Mohawk castle of Tionnontogen, the "Nose" lay frost-bitten at a sudden turn of the valley, its long, stiff point thrust down into the ice, and fastened there as if held in a vice. Throughout the length of the glittering, smooth depression between these two points, the Mohawk seemed to be fast asleep beneath its thick mantle of snow.

Samuel de Champlain, the first Frenchman who set foot on New York soil, was chiefly responsible for the long-continued wars between his countrymen and the Iroquois, he having fired without provocation on a band of Iroquois warriors, probably Mohawks, when he first sailed into the lake which bears his name.

Thus, it was that on the 9th of January, 1666, a heroic army composed of three hundred regular French troops of the regiment Carignan-Salières, veterans who had seen service in Turkey in the wars of Louis XIV., together with two hundred habitants, or hardy volunteers from the Canadian colony, all under the command of M. de Courselle, Governor of Canada, were fairly started on a march from Quebec to the Mohawk castles.

Chapter 7 (De Tracy burns the Mohawk castles.— Fall of Tionnontogen)

Thence, after spreading the alarm through the outlying hamlets and holding a hurried consultation, they all retired to Tionnontogen, the third, or Castle of the Wolves, hidden behind the Nose. There they stored an abundant supply of grain, and prepared to defend themselves. This castle of Tionnontogen was the strongest of their fortifications. It had a triple palisade. The spot where it stood can easily be found at the present day.

The name of the castle was significant,—Tionnontogen, or "Two Mountains approaching." Where else could it possibly have been in the whole valley but right there by the Nose? Their friends, the Oneidas, lay to the westward of them, and their enemies mostly to the eastward; it was but natural, then, that they should build their principal fort far enough up the river to bring it behind the overlapping mountains.

It was just at this time that several Indian captives of other tribes held by these Mohawks were brought out to be tortured and burned with solemn rites in the public square of Tionnontogen; thus, they hoped to propitiate their war-god, Aireskoi. Tekakwitha would not on any account show herself during this ceremony, as she never had the cruel spirit which the savage women often showed. Chauchetière tells us that she could not endure to see harm done to any one, and that she thought

it a sin to go to see a man burned.

Without waiting to receive the opening fire of the French cannon, they quickly deserted their primitive fortifications, leaving behind them a few helpless old men who did not wish to move and the half-roasted victims of the demon's sacrifice. De Tracy lost no time in taking possession of this last stronghold of the Canienga nation; without loss of life he and his army entered Tionnontogen Castle in triumph.

The Mohawk Valley had often echoed with the war-whoop and the shriek of the tortured captive; it had rung at times with the harvest-song, and had caught up the wailing chant of the League over many a dead chief's body. But the solemn music of the *Te Deum* which now reached her ears was unlike any of these [...] Father Raffeix, the chaplain, said Mass there, thinking perhaps of Isaac Jogues, and praying for the heathen Indians who were hiding in the forest [...] the Mohawk warriors, moody and sullen, were gathered near their families. A low and mournful wail from the women called the attention of all to the blazing palisades of Tionnontogen.

At the "Fort of Andaraque,"—to use the words of an old document (probably meaning Gandawague),—De Tracy paused on the 17th of October to take solemn possession of the conquered country in the name of the King of France.

De Tracy, the gray-haired conqueror, now returned to Canada; and the unhappy Mohawks, in straggling bands, sought out their desolated homes,—secure in life and limb, to be sure, but bereft of all provisions for the winter. No golden ears of corn hung, as usual, from their lodge-poles. They had no furs, no beans, no nut-oil. They were forced to live in temporary huts, and to wait in hunger and cold for the coming of the spring-time. Thus, in sorrow and destitution, Tekakwitha passed a dreary winter among the ruins of Gandawague, doing her best as usual to put things in order. During this time she lived on what roots and berries could be found, and a scant allowance of the game her uncle caught. Spring came at last; and a busy one it was for the houseless Mohawks. With the genial warmth that quickly followed, there came also a strange, new gleam of light to the young Tekakwitha.

Chapter 8 (Tekakwitha's Christian guests.— Rawenniio)

Wherever the red man plays an important part, there close at hand is the blackgown with his crucifix and his works on the Indian language,—becoming a linguist that he may make known to the Indian, whatever his tribe, the "good tidings of great joy;" using the artist's brush that he may in some way represent to his neophytes the Christ; even taxing his ingenuity in the invention of games by means of which to hold the attention of the savages and teach them the simplest laws of morality; striving always to lead them step by step to a better understanding of the duties of a Christian life.

Earnest, zealous, with a firm determination to overcome all the obstacles before them in their spiritual combat with the demons of paganism, came the three Fathers, Fremin, Bruyas, and Pierron, with the Mohawk deputies. They had been chosen by the French authorities from the ever ready ranks of Jesuit volunteers, who never lost an opportunity to gain the ear of the red man.

Chauchetière and Cholenec, and all who have written of Tekakwitha find in this seemingly simple

incident only one of many mystic links that make up the chain of her Christian life,—a sure effect of a potent cause,—the all-conquering love of the Spirit of God reaching toward its spirit-child, though clothed in the humble form of an Indian girl. Unknown, and therefore as yet unloved by her, the Great Father and Source of our spirit natures saw "His own image and likeness" expanding pure and fair in the untaught soul of Tekakwitha. All-knowing, all-powerful, planning the course of events without effort, He chose the surest way and the aptest time to make Himself known, thus securing at once the answer of love that was destined to lift and shield from all blemish this wondrous opening "Lily."

Just enough of its original spirit remained to cause the Iroquois thoroughly to incorporate and make one with themselves the captives of all those peoples whose separate existence they destroyed. Tharonyawagon, Aireskoi, and Hiawatha were all familiar words in the ears of the Mohawk girl. But Rawenniio, the true God was still unknown to her.

Charlevoix, the learned author of the "History of New France," who wrote an account of Kateri Tekakwitha about the year 1732 [...]

There are those, as we have said, who believe that the prayer of Tekakwitha's dying mother had guided the steps of these missionaries straight to the lodge of her child, and left them there three days to be waited on and cared for by the shy but capable little Mohawk housekeeper, the niece of the chief at Gandawague.

The Mohawks must have been hard pushed indeed when they handed over the envoys of the Canadian Governor whom they were anxious just then to conciliate, to the care of a mere child, even though she were high in rank; but Tekakwitha's uncle knew she could be trusted to do her part well.

She did not shrink from this ordeal, but still her baptism was deferred till the missionaries should finish their embassy and return again to the town. In the meantime, she wearied of their prolonged delay, and followed them to Tionnontogen, gaining from them there the necessary instruction for receiving the sacrament. The young Tekakwitha, on the contrary, either through natural timidity or by the express command of her uncle (we know not which, most likely both), waited with sealed lips for eight long years.

(Footnotes)

This word "Rawenniio," also written "Hawennyiu," came into use when Christianity was first preached among the Iroquois. It is still used by them to designate the "Great Spirit," or "Father of all Men." The last part of the word, "niio" or "nyiu" (God), is said to be derived from the French word "Dieu."

Chapter 9 (Caughnawaga on the Mohawk.— Fathers Fremin and Pierron)

The people of all the Mohawk villages were assembled for the occasion, Tekakwitha probably among them. In due time, after a most ceremonious welcome, Frémin rose to address them.

He was left quite alone among the Mohawks for nearly a year, at the mission of St. Mary's as it was henceforth called. He struggled earnestly during that time to maintain peace and establish Christianity.

On the 7th of October, 1668, Pierron returned from his journey to Quebec, and again passed through the lower Mohawk villages on his way to the bark chapel of St. Mary's, which had been erected at Tionnontogen during his absence.

He was something of an artist. Before he succeeded in mastering the language, he spent much of his time in painting. He found that his pictures stimulated the curiosity of the Mohawks.

"Among these representations I have made," he says, "there is one contrasting a good with a miserable death. What led me to make this was that I saw the old men and the old women would stop their ears with their fingers the moment I began to speak to them of God, and would say to me, 'I do not hear.' I have therefore represented on one side of my picture a Christian who dies a saintly death, with the hands joined as of one holding the cross and his rosary; then his soul is carried by an angel to heaven and the blessed spirits appear awaiting it. On the other side, I have put, lower down, a woman broken with age, who is dying, and unwilling to listen to a missionary Father who points her to paradise; she holds both ears closed with her fingers; but a demon from hell seizes her arms and hands, and himself puts his fingers in the ears of the dying woman.

As they seem to have had seven villages at this time, which is an unusual number, it is probable that they either had not entirely abandoned their old sites, or else had recently added several villages of captives.

The French writers continued for some time after this to call the new castle of the Turtles on the north bank by its old name of Gandawague; to prevent confusion, however, we will henceforth call it Caughnawaga, meaning "At the Rapids."

But there it is still a living name, and is passed from mouth to mouth as the well-known home of half the Canienga race; for Caughnawaga in Canada holds to-day that part of the Mohawk nation which in the wranglings of the white men—that is to say, the old French and Indian wars—sided with the French. Brantford, also in Canada, contains the other half of the same nation,—the descendants of Sir William Johnson's Mohawk followers, who were stanch friends of the English. To us Americans, falling heir to their lands, these Mohawks have left no living trace of themselves, though some of their brothers, the Onondagas and Senecas, still dwell in our midst. The Mohawks have gone from us, indeed, leaving us only a memory, all inwrought in a thick array of Indian names.

And I am delighted to see such virtuous thoughts proceed from heathens, to the shame of many Christians; but this must be attributed to your pious instructions, for, well versed in strict discipline, you have shown them the way of mortification both by your precepts and practice.

[...] 'The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.'"

Chapter 10 (The Mohegans attack the new castle.— Battles of Kinaquariones.— The Feast of the Dead)

Before them are hundreds of the foe in war-paint and feathers, led by a stout man of middle age, —the wise and gallant Chickatabutt, the great sachem of the Massachusetts.

His bearing makes him conspicuous among a score of famous sagamores who are leading the assault [...] There are also Narragansett braves and other New England Indians,—all united in a desperate attempt to crush the Mohawks, and thus break in through the eastern door of the Long House of the Five Nations.

The Puritans had tried in vain to dissuade their Indian neighbors from accompanying this chief on his adventurous march to the Mohawk Valley. In spite of every drawback, however, Chickatabutt, whose name means "A-house-afire," had succeeded in bringing his army all the way from the vicinity of Boston to the castle of Caughnawaga.

Tekakwitha, ever helpful and ready to assist others, would probably be where she was most needed at that time,—with the bereaved women who were seeking their dead, and with those who ministered to the wounded. No heart so quick as hers to turn with loathing from the hideous human sacrifice that was being prepared outside the castle walls. With the good deeds of the blackgown Pierron hourly before her, and the sound of his voice often in her ears,—for this missionary could doctor as well as preach,—she must have had constantly in her mind the thought of Rawenniio during this time of peril and anxiety, and would not fail to call in spirit on the God of the Christians for assistance against the foe.

The warriors of the Mohawk nation were now all assembled to go in pursuit of the Mohegans. Every man was fully armed and equipped, and their deerskin pockets were well filled with the crushed corn. They put themselves under the leadership of the brave warrior Kryn, surnamed the "Great Mohawk." His home was at Caughnawaga, and his valor and good management on this expedition won for him a new title, that of "Conqueror of the Mohegans."

Must the Lily droop her head and thirst and die, like the rest of Rawenniio's flowers? Alas! it must be so. But let us not forget that this Lily of the Mohawks has a soul, though it is still like a little bird that breathes and just begins to move, but has not tried its strength. In sorrow the wings of the soul are developed. When once they have grown strong, it will be easy for Tekakwitha to fly away through the door of death to Rawenniio.

Chapter 11 (Will Tekakwitha marry?)

Although she was the youngest in her uncle's family, and was delicate from the time her mother died, she was always the first one at work and the last to take a holiday. It was quite a trial to her, then, when she found—the first symptom of trouble to come—that she would no longer be allowed to spend her time as best pleased herself. Her aunts now insisted that she should wear her prettiest moccasins and all her ornaments, and that she should go with them to dances and feasts, for which she had a distaste and some features of which were loathsome to her. She was so accustomed, from an inborn sense of duty, to obey those who stood to her in the place of father and mother, that she went as far toward fulfilling their wishes regarding her costume and her attendance at popular amusements as her extreme timidity and acute sense of modesty would allow. [...] Although it could scarcely have cast the faintest shadow of a mist across the whiteness

of her soul, she was known long afterwards to regret and to grieve bitterly for this indulgence in little vanities.

When they stated plainly the object they had in view in thus bringing her forward,—which was that she should marry,—Tekakwitha's whole nature was roused to resistance at the mere mention of such a thing, and every power of her soul was brought into action to thwart their plan. Though long accustomed to be docile and obey, she showed at this time a sudden development of will, with inherent force to mold its own fate, and a strength of character that had not before asserted itself. This must have proved to her aunts that after all there was something of the Mohawk in her nature. Sure of her own natural and inalienable right to decide for herself in this important question, she was unconquerable. This is clearly shown in the struggle of will against will, in which she was now enlisted and in which the odds were decidedly against her. But though her whole nature was roused at the well-meant, though in this case unwelcome and premature proposition of her aunts, Tekakwitha was too wise and too self-poised to break at once into open rebellion. She did not announce her secret determination to go through fire and water, if necessary, rather than submit to the plan of her relatives. Why she did not wish to marry was perhaps at that time as much a mystery to herself as to others; but the fact remained.

Tekakwitha's relations, not knowing the force of the young girl's will, decided among themselves that the shortest and easiest way to overcome her unaccountable opposition would be to take her by surprise. They did not even allow her to choose the person to whom she was to be united.

Tekakwitha, utterly taken by surprise, is for a moment bewildered, disconcerted. Her aunts now bid her present the young man with some sagamite. In a moment she realizes what they are doing,—that in spite of herself she is taking part in her own wedding. The hot blood rushes to her face. She blushes, but gives no other sign of what is in her mind. What can she do? For an instant, she is in an agony of suspense. Then, with quick determination, she rises abruptly, and all aflame with indignation, passes, quick as thought, out of the long-house.

Chapter 12 (The new colony of Christian Indians on the St. Lawrence.— The “Great Mohawk” goes to Canada)

Father Bruyas, who on first coming among the People of the Long House had been lodged three days in the cabin of Tekakwitha's uncle, came back from the Oneida country in 1671. He was made superior of the Mohawk mission in place of Pierron. This missionary, the painter of pictures and the inventor of games, received orders to return to Canada to take charge of a new village of Christian Indians which was then being formed on the south bank of the St. Lawrence.

The site first chosen was at La Prairie de la Madeleine just across a broad swell of the river from Montreal on a tract of land belonging to the Jesuits and hitherto untenanted. The Canadians called this Indian settlement St. François Xavier *des Prés*; and a little later, when that same mission was moved up close to the great Lachine Rapids in the St.

Lawrence River, it was known as St. François Xavier *du Sault*, which last is in reality nothing more than the Indian name of Caughnawaga put into French and still meaning "At the Rapids."

They were attracted to the spot by Father Raffeix, who built a little chapel there. It grew by accessions from among the Five Nations, and was encouraged by the French government, in the hope of thus gaining useful allies.

All who went to live at St. François Xavier *du Sault* were obliged to renounce, with solemn promises, these three things,—first, the idolatry of dreams; second, the changing of wives, a practice in vogue at Iroquois feasts; and third, drunkenness. Any one among them known to have relapsed into any of these practices was expelled at once from the settlement by the ruling chiefs.

Kryn, the "great Mohawk," has already been mentioned in connection with the battle of Kinauarones. His Christian name was Joseph, and his Indian name Togouiroui. He was also called the conqueror of the Mohegans.

Tekakwitha saw and heard all that was going on at the chapel, but said nothing; her aunts were there also, and her adopted sister. Tegonhatsihongo, whose Christian name was Anastasia, would of course be present on such an occasion, and also the family of Kryn.

Some time before this, the Albanians had succeeded in bringing about a treaty of peace between the Mohegans and the Mohawks. Thereupon these last had begun to indulge very freely in the purchase of liquor at Fort Orange; they even carried kegs of it with them to their fishing-villages. This filled the pockets of the Dutch settlers, but it also brought on a severe form of illness among the Mohawks,—a quick and fatal fever,—which gave much occupation to the blackgowns, especially as the services of the medicine men were at this time often rejected; thus the influence of the missionaries was still further increased.

In 1675 Assendasé died at Tionnontogen, to the great grief of Father Bruyas. About the same time Father James de Lamberville arrived to take charge of St. Peter's chapel and the mission of Boniface; it included both the Turtle Castle of Caughnawaga on the Cayudutta and the adjacent Castle of the Bears called Andagoron.

Chapter 13 (Tekakwitha meets de Lamberville.— Imposing ceremony in the Bark Chapel)

The shadow of De Lamberville falling across the open doorway caused Tekakwitha to look up, and she saw him moving calmly on outside in the sunlight. Darkness brooded over the Mohawk girl where she sat, far back in the depths of the dreary cabin. Her heart was weary with waiting. It may have been that her mother's spirit hovered about just then, and renewed its prayer; or, whatever may have caused it, the blackgown's train of thought was disturbed. He raised his eyes; he stood a moment at the doorway, and "il fut poussé a y entrer," says the old manuscript,—a sudden irresistible impulse caused him to enter. Lo! at the blackgown's approach the petals of this Lily of Caughnawaga opened wider

than ever before. Those who were present on that eventful day saw for the first time to the innermost depths of Tekakwitha's soul, far down to its golden centre, enfolded so long in shadowy whiteness that no one suspected its hidden growth of beauty.

Father de Lamberville, whom I well knew," continues Charlevoix, "was one of the holiest missionaries of Canada, or New France, as it was then called, where he died at Sault St. Louis, as it were in the arms of Charity, worn out with toils, sufferings, and penance. He has often told me that from the first interview he had with Tegahkouita, he thought he perceived that God had great designs upon her soul [...]

The missionary found no one who did not give a high encomium to the young catechumen. He hesitated no longer to grant what she so ardently asked. Easter Sunday, 1676, was appointed for the day of her baptism. The Christians of Caughnawaga Castle were pleased to learn that at last the blackgown had resolved to baptize Tekakwitha. Nearly a year had passed since she first asked to be made a Christian. All knew her worth. When the glad news of Father de Lamberville's decision was made known to Tekakwitha, her countenance became radiant with joy.

The blackgown took care to render the baptism of an adult, and especially of such a noteworthy one as the niece of the chief, as impressive as possible; it was conducted with all due solemnity.

Chapter 14 (Persecutions.— Heriote calmness in a moment of peril.— Malice of Tekakwitha's Aunt)

The rule of life that the Father prescribed for his other Christians to keep them from the superstitious, impure feasts and drunken debaucheries common among the Indians, was too general and not advanced enough for Tekakwitha.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the blessing of the statue of Notre Dame de Foye took place at Tionnontogen, or the Mission of St. Mary's.

She was baptized, it will be remembered, at Easter time; and the blessing of the statue of Notre Dame de Foye took place on the 8th day of the following December.

She did not hesitate to say, when there was occasion for it, that she would die rather than give up the practice of the Christian religion. Her resolution was put to severe tests, but she never wavered.

They called her a sorceress. Whenever she went to the chapel they caused her to be followed by showers of stones, so that to avoid those who lay in wait for her, she was often obliged to take the most circuitous routes. Was it not strange that one so shy by nature as Tekakwitha should have had the strength of will to undergo all this without flinching? She seemed to be utterly devoid of fear; though timid as a deer, she had the courage of a panther at bay, and was no less quick to act when the time for action came.

One day when she was employed as usual in her uncle's lodge, a young Indian suddenly rushed in upon her, his features distorted with rage, his eyes flashing fire, his tomahawk raised above his head as if to strike her dead at the least opposition. [...] With all the eloquent silence of the Indian sign language, her gesture and attitude spoke to the youth and said: "I am here, I am ready. My life you can take; my faith is my own in life or in death. I fear you not!" The rage in the Indian's eye died out, and gave place to wonder, then awe. He gazed as if spellbound. The uplifted tomahawk dropped to his side. [...] Cowed and abashed, he slunk away, as if from a superior being; or rather, in the words of Charlevoix, "he turned and fled with as much precipitation as if pursued by a band of warriors."

They might as well have tried to frighten the stars from their accustomed course through the heavens as to turn this quiet Mohawk girl from the path her conscience marked out. Her hold on faith and virtue was stronger than torture or death.

To this place, called "Serachtague" in his report of the colony, Governor Dongan tried in vain to recall the Iroquois Christians of Canada, by promising them English blackgowns, and undisturbed possession of their favorite hunting-ground.

Chapter 15 (Hot Ashes plans Tekakwitha's escape)

The Indian chief Louis Garonhiagué, known to the English as Hot Ashes, and called by the French La Poudre Chaude or La Cendre Chaude, was, as his name implies, a quick-tempered, impulsive, and fiery man. He was an Oneida by birth, and was known to have been one of the executioners of the heroic missionary Brebeuf, who, with his companion Lalemant, was tortured and slain in the Huron country by Iroquois warriors.

There were soon so many Oneidas dwelling at the Sault that they needed a ruler of their own nation, and Hot Ashes was chosen to preside over them. He thus became the fourth dogique, or captain of the Praying Castle. He soon ranked first of all in importance, notwithstanding the ability of his stanch friend Kryn, the "great Mohawk."

He outlived Tekakwitha, and was finally killed in battle. Many incidents are told of his courage, piety, and zeal, his devotion to his religion and the good of the settlement, and of his tenderness to his wife while suffering from grievous ailments which afflicted the later years of her life. He had a natural talent for exhorting and teaching.

He it was, more than all others, who opposed and prevented the introduction of the liquor traffic into the settlement at the Sault.

This Indian of Lorette and the brother-in-law of Tekakwitha consulted with Hot Ashes, and the three together planned their journey as best they could beforehand. Then they stepped lightly into a canoe, just large enough to hold them, and soon were speeding southward over Lake Champlain, and thence through Lake George on their way to the Mohawk Valley.

He said that he intended to go on to Oneida and to pass through all the Iroquois nations, preaching the faith. Her brother-in-law, therefore, and the Indian from Lorette, could take the canoe and return with Tekakwitha to the Praying Castle. God had provided a means of escape for her most unexpectedly.

Tekakwitha was never known to falter when the moment came for prompt decision and instant action.

Chapter 16 (From the old to the new Caughnawaga)

But Tekakwitha and her companions had renounced these superstitions of their race. They knew that God alone was ruler of wind and wave. On no account, could they be induced to pay homage to any such mischievous sprites of the lake. They asked Rawennio instead to forgive the people, and to turn their thoughts away from all such foolish worship.

Behold the Genevieve of Canada, behold the treasure of the Sault, who is at hand, and who has sanctified the path from Montreal to the Mohawk, by which other predestined souls have passed after her!" When she found herself far from her own country, and realized that she had nothing more to fear on the part of her uncle, she gave herself entirely to God, to do in the future whatever would please him best. She arrived in the autumn of the year 1677 [...] On her arrival, she put the letters that Father de Lamberville had written into the hands of the Fathers, who, having read them, were delighted to have acquired a treasure; for these were the words of the letter: "I send you a treasure; guard it well."

She was lifted with marvelous rapidity to a height of holiness that drew all eyes in Canada towards her. It was there in the land of her adoption that she won the title of "La Bonne Catherine."

"Catherine Tegakouita va demeurer au Sault. Veuillez-vous charger, je vous en prie, de sa direction. Vous connaîtrez bientôt le trésor que nous vous donnons. Gardez le donc bien! Qu'entre vos mains il profite à la gloire de Dieu, et au salut d'une âme qui lui est assurément bien chère."

Chapter 17 (At the Sault St. Louis)

St. François Xavier du Sault (in 1677) is close to the mouth of the river Portage, a small but deep-bedded stream, which protects the village on its western side. This high ground in the angle of the Portage and St. Lawrence rivers was chosen for the people of the mission when they removed from the meadow-lands at La Prairie. A score or more of Indian cabins have been built on the new site [...] there are twenty-two of these cabins.

So far the only places of worship at Ville Marie are the chapels of the Hôtel Dieu and the fort, and the small stone church of Our Lady of Bon Secours, just erected.

Give the Indian a sufficient motive for hard work, and how completely the charge of idleness against his race falls to the ground!

Of one of these, Hot Ashes, we already know something. This friend of Kateri Tekakwitha is not only a governing chief, but famous also as a dogique, or catechist.

"She has her father's courage and endurance; she will make a noble Christian," is the matron's thought; and she spares no pains to give Kateri the benefit of her carefully garnered little store of Christian knowledge.

Anastasia is accustomed to dwell so much and at such length on the heinousness of sin and its terrible consequences, here and hereafter, that Kateri from being constantly near her, though more spiritual and pure-hearted already than any of her companions, soon begins to inflict upon herself severe penances to atone for what she considers great wickedness on her part.

Her only motto henceforward was, "Who will teach me what is most pleasing to God, that I may do it?"

She was like a holy bee, seeking to gather honey from all sorts of flowers.

She became the most fervent spirit in that devout community; indeed, the lives of the Indian converts at the Sault seem to have been more like the lives of the early Christians and martyrs, in fervor and heroic devotion, than any that history has elsewhere recorded.

Instead of referring to books, which the Indians could not read or understand, sets of pictures were shown to them, such as had been used successfully in France to instruct the ignorant peasantry of Bas Breton.

Besides this, there was a zealous young Indian in the village, named Joseph Rontagorha, who gathered the children about him in the evenings to catechize them and to teach them singing.

Only two of the old national festivals were retained at the Sault. These were the Planting Festival and the joyous Harvest Festival, at the gathering and husking of the corn.

Whenever there was a general communion among the Indians at the Sault, the most virtuous neophytes endeavored with emulation to be near her, because, said they, the sight alone of Kateri served them as an excellent preparation for communing worthily. She was allowed to make her second communion at Easter time.

Chapter 18 (The Hunting-camp)

As for her, if they could convince her that marriage was necessary to salvation, she would embrace it, but she doubted much if there were not something more perfect. She did not see the necessity of it in her case, as she could provide for her own wants by the labor of

her hands.

But having no fear of poverty, she worked freely for all, and so was always poor. She kept only what was necessary for her own support. She was never a burden to those with whom she dwelt. On the contrary, she helped to enrich them while denying herself everything but a bare subsistence.

She knows that the moment has come for Mass to begin in the village chapel at the great rapid of the St. Lawrence. In spirit, she kneels with the few who are gathered there, and follows the Mass from beginning to end with appropriate prayers. She begs her guardian angel to fly away to the chapel and bring her back the fruits of the sacrifice there being offered.

...the Lily of the Mohawks, "the fairest flower that ever bloomed among the redmen,"...

Chapter 19 (Kateri's friend,— Thérèse Tegaiguenta)

Thérèse has the dress and the look of an Oneida. Her glance is freer and bolder than Kateri's. She is older and not so shy, and has seen the sunshine and shadow of twenty-eight summers.

"Alas! it is not in this building of wood and stone that God most loves to dwell. Our hearts are the lodge that is most pleasing to him. But, miserable creature that I am, how many times have I forced him to leave this heart in which he should reign alone! Do I not deserve that to punish me for my ingratitude, they should forever exclude me from this church, which they are raising to his glory?"

But what was the life of Thérèse Tegaiguenta before she met her guiding spirit, and linked her soul to the soul of the Lily? What were the sins for which she resolved to do penance together with Kateri?

She had sufficient time, by drawing back, to shun the body of the tree, which would have crushed her by its fall; but she was not able to escape from one of the branches, which struck her violently on the head, and threw her senseless to the ground. They thought she was dead; but she shortly afterward recovered from her swoon, and those around her heard her softly ejaculating, "I thank thee, O good Jesus, for having saved me in this danger." She rose as soon as she had said these words, and taking her hatchet in her hand would have gone immediately to work again, if they had not stopped her and bade her rest.

Chapter 20 (Montreal and the Isle-aux-Hérons, 1678)

Finally, after rounding the Isle St. Paul, they approached near enough to the northern bank to see where the first French fort had been built by the Sieur de Maisonneuve on level land at the mouth of a little stream. The spot is now called Custom-House Square; and the wild Ilet Normandin has been transformed into Island Wharf.

These buildings were so placed along the Rue St. Paul that a cross-fire from them and from the bastioned fort across the little stream (which has since disappeared in the maze of modern streets) could be maintained in a way to render the position of the colonists impregnable against an Indian assault.

Marguerite Bourgeois was still a leading spirit in the colony, and was actively engaged in founding and conducting her schools for the Indian and Canadian children.

Gannensagwas grew up, lived and died in a convent, and was the first real Indian nun. A tablet to her memory is preserved in one of the towers of the old fort at the mission on Mount Royal.

Beyond that point no permanent settlers had ventured until Montreal, the strange, solitary island city, was established for no other purpose than to convert the redmen to Christianity. The whole plan was made in France by a company of devout and wealthy persons. Two of the leading spirits, not yet mentioned, were M. Olier, an ecclesiastic, and M. de la Dauversière, a pious layman.

The remnant of Hurons that remained with them after the war, were gathered together in the mission village of Lorette near Quebec. Sillery, in the same vicinity, was a settlement of the Christian Algonquins.

Already she stood at the corner of the Rue St. Paul and the Rue St. Joseph. If she chose to follow up the latter street, it would take her to the great square where the foundations of the new church of Notre Dame had been laid. But the chapel of the Hôtel Dieu was right before her, and she entered there.

The hospital Sisters, though chiefly of noble rank, were poorly lodged and suffered many privations. The hospital was endowed by a lady of fortune in Paris, but it had been built and equipped under the eyes of Mademoiselle Manse, who cared for the sick herself till the Sisters came from France.

In the convent across the street from the Hôtel Dieu, Kateri and her friend were warmly welcomed by Marguerite Bourgeois and the Sisters of the Congregation.

Marguerite Bourgeois and her companions were successful in doing good from the very first; and today the great Villa-Maria, which is the outgrowth of her humble but earnest efforts, is set like a queenly diadem on the brow of Mount Royal.

She knew they had come far away from their own country to teach the Iroquois and the Algonquins as well as the Canadian children to live like Christians. Kateri did not ask all the questions that came into her mind; but this much she certainly learned,—that the sisters lived unmarried, apart from the rest of the people, and spent much time in prayer.

It is more than likely that she went with them on a visit of devotion to the stone chapel of

Bon Secours, a little way out of the town. It was just finished at that time; and a small statue of Our Lady, brought from France by Soeur Bourgeois, had been placed there.

She was both interested and attracted during her stay in Montreal by everything she saw at the Convent of Notre Dame and at the Hôtel Dieu. But she gave no intimation of a wish to remain with the nuns at either of these establishments. Her whole life had been the life of an untamed Indian. She had accepted Christianity in the only way in which under the circumstances it could possibly have been offered to her,—that is to say, Christianity pure and simple, with few of the trappings of European civilization. She was a living proof that an Indian could be thoroughly Christianized without being civilized at all in the ordinary sense of the word. She was still a child of the woods, and out of her element elsewhere.

But Kateri had been struck by the example of the Jesuit Fathers themselves, and her penetrating mind had already guessed that something was withheld from her on this point; after her visit to the nuns at Montreal she was confirmed more than ever in her resolve to remain unmarried.

She said she knew just the right sort of a person,—a good Christian, advanced in years, who had lived for some time at Quebec and also at Lorette, the older Huron mission which was conducted on the same plan as the Iroquois mission at the Sault. The name of this woman was Marie Skarichions.

As their imaginations grew more and more excited in picturing to one another the ideal life they would lead in their little community, shut off from everything that might distract them from prayer and holy thoughts, their eyes fell naturally enough upon the solitary unfrequented Isle-aux-Hérons which lay off in the midst of the rapids.

Kateri had great respect for authority, and a true spirit of obedience.

Chapter 21 (I am not any longer my own)

She selected, therefore, a particular day, and after having shown Catherine even more affection than ordinary, she addressed her with that eloquence which is so natural to these Indians when they are engaged in anything which concerns their interests.

'Ah, my Father,' said she, '*I am not any longer my own*. I have given myself entirely to Jesus Christ, and it is not possible for me to change masters. The poverty with which I am threatened gives me no uneasiness. So little is requisite to supply the necessities of this wretched life, that my labor can furnish this, and I can always find something to cover me.'

'It is settled,' said she, as she came near me; 'it is not a question for deliberation; my part has long since been taken. No, my father, I can have no other spouse but Jesus Christ.'

[...] and that if she had faith, she ought to know the value of a state so sublime as that of celibacy, which rendered feeble men like to the angels themselves. At these words

Anastasia seemed to be in a perfect dream; and as she possessed a deeply seated devotion of spirit, she almost immediately began to turn the blame upon herself; she admired the courage of this virtuous girl, and at length became the foremost to fortify her in the holy resolution she had taken....

She remained, therefore, during the winter in the village, where she lived only on Indian corn, and was subjected indeed to much suffering. But not content with allowing her body only this insipid food, which could scarcely sustain it, she subjected it also to austerities and excessive penances, without taking counsel of any one, persuading herself that while the object was self-mortification, she was right in giving herself up to everything which could increase her fervor.

...some of them, by these voluntary macerations, prepared themselves when the time came, to suffer the most fearful torments....

It was a common saying in the village that Catherine was never elsewhere than in her cabin or in the church; that she knew but two paths,—one to her field, and the other to her cabin.

Kateri had at last learned, by repeated inquiries, all she wanted to know about the nuns whom she had seen at Montreal. She was now aware that they were Christian virgins consecrated to God by a vow of perpetual continence.

I would not, however, give my consent to this step until I had well proved her, and been anew convinced that it was the Spirit of God acting in this excellent girl, which had thus inspired her with a design of which there had never been an example among the Indians.

Chapter 22 (Kateri's Vow on Our Lady's Feast Day, and the Summer of 1679)

He also knew her quiet determination of spirit, and he no longer resisted her pleadings to be allowed to consecrate herself to God by a vow of perpetual virginity. This she did, with all due solemnity, on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin, the 25th of March, 1679.

Kateri Tekakwitha, the treasure confided to his keeping by Father de Lamberville, was in all simplicity and earnestness wrecking her health and strength by undergoing fearful penances. Suggested to her either by the remorseful and penitent mind of Thérèse, or the stern instructions of Anastasia, they were carried out with the utmost severity by Kateri on her frail and innocent self...

It was then that Kateri laid bare the sentiments of her heart in such words as these: "My Jesus, I must risk everything with you. I love you, but I have offended you. It is to satisfy your justice that I am here. Discharge upon me, O my God, discharge upon me your wrath." Sometimes tears and sobs choked her voice so she could not finish what she was saying. At these times she would speak of the three nails which fastened our Saviour to the cross as a figure of her sins.

It would be a long and harrowing task to give a full account of all the austere fasts and

penances that Kateri Tekakwitha underwent during the course of the year 1679. Many of them belong to the age and the place in which she lived, and were in common practice then and there. Others go to prove the rude, Spartan spirit of her race, which gloried in exhibitions of fortitude under torture. But the tortures that her people knew how to endure so well through pride, Kateri endured in a spirit of penance and atonement.

When she entered the church in taking the blessed water she recalled her baptism, and renewed the resolution she had taken to live as a good Christian; when she knelt down in some corner near the balustrade for fear of being distracted by those who passed in and out, she would cover her face with her blanket, and make an act of faith concerning the real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. She made also several other interior acts of contrition, of resignation, or of humility, according to the inspiration which moved her, asking of God light and strength to practise virtue well.

Chauchetière declares that Kateri's life at the Sault might well serve as an example to the most fervent Christians of Europe, and compares her spirit with that of Saint Catherine of Sienna; then he sums up in a few words her exalted spiritual attainments by saying that she was already in the "unitive way" before having well known the other two.

Chapter 23 (Kateri ill.—Thérèse consult the Blackgown.—Feast of the Purification.—The bed of thorns)

They saw that on Wednesdays and Saturdays she ate nothing. At these times, she would spend the whole day in the woods gathering fuel.

As Kateri was assisting the other women to make a grave for her little nephew, one of them said to her, laughing, "Where is yours, Kateri?" "It is there," she answered, pointing to a certain spot... The place she indicated was near the tall cross by the river, where she was accustomed to pray, and where she had her first long talk with Thérèse Tegaiauenta.

He had a book or scroll of pictures in which all the chief events recorded in the Old and New Testaments were depicted. Copies of this ingenious form of Indian Bible are still to be seen at Caughnawaga and elsewhere.

Though she thus tried as much as possible to hide from observation by accommodating herself to the ways and dress of those with whom she lived, there grew to be a something about her,—a "je ne scay quoy," says Chauchetière,—an atmosphere of purity and sanctity that almost amounted to a visible halo. Even her directors sometimes wondered at the impression of personal sanctity which she made upon the people.

"Catherine, who trembled at the very appearance of sin," says Cholenec, "came immediately to find me, to confess her fault and ask pardon of God. I blamed her indiscretion, and directed her to throw the thorns into the fire." This she did at once.

Her confessor testifies that she never showed the least attachment to her own will, but was always submissive to his direction.

Chapter 24 (Kateri's death.—“I will love thee in Heaven.”—The burial.—Her grave and monument)

The dish of Indian corn and a pot of fresh water were left beside her each day; and towards the last, women were appointed to watch with the sufferer at night. These watchers belonged to the Association of the Holy Family. Kateri was not more neglected than others who were ill at these busy times. She, however, was perfectly content, and even glad to be left alone with God. This relish for solitude did not prevent her from greeting with a smile or a gay, bright word any or all who came to her side.

Not long to live? Was this in truth what they said? She could not conceal her happiness at the thought of death. The angel with shadowy wings was close at hand, waiting to show her the face of Rawenniio.

The blackgown, with the sacred Viaticum, entered the rude bark cabin, which was crowded with kneeling Indians. The Confiteor was recited. Kateri Tekakwitha renewed her baptismal vows and the solemn offering she had made of her body to Almighty God.

He adds that the words of the dying always had great effect at the mission in converting those who could not be brought otherwise to be baptized or to confess their sins. If this were the case ordinarily, how doubly effective must have been the words thus wrung from Kateri, despite her humility, by the command of her director! But after all, it was her example, in life and in death, that preached most forcibly to them.

Take courage!" she continued with great tenderness; "you may be sure that you are pleasing in the eyes of God, and I will help you more when I am with Him."

I will love you in heaven,—I will pray for you,—I will help you—'

It seemed more like the face of a person contemplating than like the face of one dying. In this state she remained until the last breath... she died as if she had gone to sleep. Those beside her were for a time in doubt of her death.

[...]to watch her face, which changed little by little in less than a quarter of an hour. It inspired devotion, although her soul was separated from it. It appeared more beautiful than it had ever done when she was living. It gave joy, and fortified each one of them in the faith he had embraced. It was a new argument for belief with which God favored the Indians to give them a relish for the faith!

"But this face," says Cholenec, "thus emaciated and marked, changed all at once, about a quarter of an hour after her death; and it became in an instant so beautiful and so fair that, having perceived it at once (for I was in prayer near her), I gave a great cry, so much was I seized with astonishment, and I had the Father called, who was working on the repository for Thursday morning.

Many lingered for a long, long time, unable to withdraw their eyes from the face of the Iroquois maiden so long hidden by her blanket, and now so wondrous fair to behold. It was aglow with a miraculous beauty that gave deep joy to those who looked upon it; with

the joy came also a longing to be pure and holy, and to possess the happiness reflected on those noble features.

"But they were very much surprised," writes Cholenec, "when they learned a moment after that it was the body of Catherine, who had just expired. They immediately retraced their steps, and casting themselves on their knees at her feet, recommended themselves to her prayers. They even wished to give a public evidence of the veneration they had for the deceased, by immediately assisting to make the coffin which was to enclose those holy relics."

There, on the afternoon of Thursday in Holy Week, the Lily of the Mohawks and the "Geneviève of New France" was laid to rest. So great was the fame of her sanctity that her grave soon became a much-frequented spot. Pilgrim after pilgrim has directed his footsteps to that cross and mound.

The old cross was mouldering; and a new one, twenty-five feet high, was prepared, in which were encased some relics of the holy virgin of Caughnawaga. On Sunday, the 23d of July, 1843, the Caughnawagas, headed by their missionary and chiefs, repaired to the little river Portage, near which their former church and village had stood, on a bluff between that little stream and the lordly St. Lawrence.

In September, 1884, the author of this volume visited her grave, and found that the cross described above had been blown down in a recent storm. It was lying in broken fragments on the river-bank, near the little enclosure of wooden pickets surrounding the grave. Pious hands were soon at work there, however, and on Sunday, Oct. 5, 1884, another cross was raised.

In the month of June, 1888, the author, having travelled by the ferry-boat from Montreal to La Prairie, and thence driven a few miles westward along the river-bank, was fortunate enough to stand once again by the grave of Tekakwitha. There, in addition to the new cross, which stood firm and erect within the little enclosure, a large granite monument was to be seen lying close beside it, partially unboxed and ready to be placed upon the grave.

This title, given to her by the English, is altogether foreign to the Iroquois language, as they have no distinctive word for Lily (nothing more definite than "white flower"); and Mohawks is a name they dislike, because it was first given to them by their enemies; they prefer, therefore, their own term, Caniengas.

Footnotes

The old wall and priest's house connected with the above-named church date back to 1720, but the church itself is more modern. It was rebuilt in 1845. The desk at which Charlevoix and Lafitau wrote is still used by the missionary who occupies the presbytère.

the touch of a gifted artist of New York State, Mr. Charles M. Lang, has been brought to bear on this ever-growing theme.

Chapter 25 (The memory and influence of Kateri Tekakwitha after her death.—Modern Caughnawaga)

An ideal portrait of her by Mr. Lang, completed in the early part of the year 1889, is by far the best representation of her now in existence.

When once she had formed the band known as Kateri's Sisters, and had passed from among men, then indeed there was nothing left on earth of the Lily of the Mohawks save lifeless relics and what the old writers are pleased to call "an odor of sanctity." Onkwe Onwe-ke Katsitsiio Teiotsitsianekaron.

Choosing Aquasasne,— "the place where the partridge drums,"—a plain east of a slight hill, at one of the few spots where the rapid-vexed river glides calmly by, —they began the mission of St. Francis Regis, and threw up a log-cabin for the Jesuit Father Mark Anthony Gordon, who accompanied them, bearing as a precious treasure part of the remains of Catherine Tehgahkwitha.

A new wooden church soon replaced the rude chapel, and in 1791 this in turn gave way to the present massive stone church of that mission.

The Caughnawagas, moreover, are noted for being especially brave and skilful in the use of every kind of river-craft. As raftsmen and pilots they are unequalled. The patriarchal figure of the famous Caughnawaga Indian, Jean Baptiste, with his swarthy face and bright-red shirt, seen year after year at the pilot-wheel of nearly every excursion-steamer that shot the Great Rapid of the St. Lawrence on its way to Montreal, will not soon be forgotten by the many travellers whom he steered safely to their destination.

They were present in full Indian costume, both at the opening of the city gates, and at the grand military high mass celebrated on bi-centennial Sunday at St. Mary's, the oldest Catholic Church of the city.

The Corpus Christi procession, as witnessed by the author, in 1888, at the village of Caughnawaga, was picturesque and edifying beyond description.

Conclusion

"The sixth day after the death of Catherine, this was Easter Monday, a virtuous person worthy of belief, being in prayer at four o'clock in the morning, she appeared to him surrounded with glory, bearing a pot full of maize, her radiant face lifted towards heaven as if in ecstasy. This vision of joy so marvelous was accompanied by three circumstances which rendered it still more admirable. For in the first place it lasted two whole hours, during which this person had leisure to contemplate her at his ease.

This happened in the month of April of the year 1680; and in 1683, the night of the 20th of August, a storm, so terrible and with so much thunder and lightning that it could only have been caused by the evil spirit, took up the church of the Sault,—60 feet long, of stone masonry,—took it up, I say, at one corner with such violence that, contrary to all likelihood, it turned it over on to the opposite angle and dashed it to pieces.

Finally, the third circumstance of this apparition, so remarkable, is that in the following year, 1681, on September 1st, and in the year 1682, on April 21st, the same person had the same vision and under the same circumstances; with this only difference, that in the first apparition Catherine was shown to him as a rising sun, with these words which were audible to him: '*Adhuc visio in dies*;' instead of which, in the two following ones, she was shown to him as a sun at mid-day, with these other words: '*Inspice et fac secundum exemplar*,'

Footnotes

Another manuscript contained in this same *Carton O*, which will doubtless be carefully examined by those who are interested in promoting the cause of canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha, is that of M. Rémy Curé of La Chine, dated March 12, 1696, and testifying to miracles worked through her intercession in his own parish.

Appendix (Notes. A location of Mohawk villages)

A few prominent and unmistakable facts, however, are accepted by all. There were certainly three principal fortified towns in the Mohawk Valley all through the early colonial days, built and occupied by the Caniengas (Kanienkehaka), or "People of the Flint," as they chose to call themselves, but who were known to the Dutch as Maquaas, to the French as Agniés, and to the English as Mohawks.

End of redacted text – November 9th, 2016

Texts chosen by Gabriel Berberian.