A MOHAWK MAIDEN

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BY ALICE HOWARTH

I. Birth and Early Life.

In the year 1654 a band of Christian Algonquins were dwelling peacefully among the French settlers at Three Rivers, Province of Quebec, Canada. They were able to follow the practices of the Catholic Faith which they had received from the hands of the devoted Jesuit missionaries. Unhappily from time to time their peace was disturbed by their enemies, the fierce Mohawks, who descended upon them, raided their villages, and carried off many prisoners and much spoil to their own country. On one of these raids a Mohawk brave captured an Algonquin maiden, who was a devout Christian. What must have been the forebodings of this young girl, torn from her peaceful home on the banks of the river, carried by this fierce warrior to his canoe, and thence by lakes and woods to a strange, unknown land, perhaps to torture and to death? Her gentle manners, however, won the heart of her captor, and she became his wife, and the mother of a son and daughter, the latter the heroine of this sketch.

Tekakwitha was born to this strangely assorted couple in 1656, in the Mohawk Valley, near Auries Creek, now called Auriesville, in New York State. Tekakwitha's father was a man of importance in the tribe, and took part with the chiefs in the councils of war. He was a kind husband, and offered no opposition to his wife following the practices of her religion, although he took very good care to prevent her from meeting Father Lemoyne, who visited the Huron captives in the year of Tekakwitha's birth. We can picture the young mother's anxiety to take her new-born babe to the good Father for baptism, but her husband successfully circumvented her efforts to leave her home until after the priest's departure. The Mohawks were always opposed to the teaching of the Christian religion, and it was this tribe that cruelly tortured and martyred those heroic men who, in the early days of the Church on the continent of North America, sacrificed their lives in spreading the Faith and in endeavouring to convert these people to Christianity. Most likely Tekakwitha's father was among those who practised their fiendish cruelties upon those holy Jesuit Fathers, Jogues, Daniel, Brebœuf, and many others.

In the autumn of 1657 Father Lemoyne visited the Valley of the Mohawks to minister to the needs of the pious Hurons. On this occasion he was not received very favourably by the Mohawks, but was held as a hostage for some time and finally sent to Canada. This proved to be the last visit he paid to this valley. The disappointment of Tekakwitha's mother was very great when again her efforts to reach the good Father were frustrated, and she almost despaired of having her children baptized. She prayed fervently that they might grow up good Christians and keep the Faith, and when the opportunity arrived be baptized. We shall see how the prayers of this pious mother were answered by God in His own good time.

In the year 1659 small-pox, a disease very prevalent among the Mohawks, broke out and raged for two years. During this time death robbed the little Tekakwitha of her father, mother, and brother, and she was left alone in the world. What agony must this dying mother have suffered, knowing that she was leaving her little child in a strange country, among a fierce and warlike people, far away from her own beloved home, and unprepared for the life of trials awaiting her. At the age of four years Tekakwitha almost

fell a victim to this same disease, and although her life was spared it left her very delicate, and affected her eyesight so much that all through her life she was unable to bear a strong light, and was obliged to keep her shawl closely drawn round her face. As she grew older this was a cause of thanksgiving, as she was thus free from observation and able to indulge her desire for a life of solitude.

On the death of her parents, Tekakwitha was received into the family of her uncle, who had succeeded her father as head of the family. He had no children of his own, but adopted a little girl as a companion for his young niece. The early years of Tekakwitha were happy and uneventful. As she grew older her aunt taught her to help in the work of the wigwam; to fetch the water, gather the wood, and to keep the fire well supplied with logs. She was very clever in all the arts of the Indian woman, embroidering with beads mocassins in daily use, weaving baskets of the sweetscented hay, making chains and bracelets of porcupine quills. She was never idle, and her cleverness and good behaviour were a source of great pride to her uncle and aunt. Father Chauchetière tells us "what she did during the first years of her age"; how she amused herself with the jewels she had made, decking herself in the same fashion as her young companions with necklace, bracelet, and rings. She made ribbons out of the skins of eels with which to tie up her hair, and embroidered mocassins and beautiful girdles with beads of many colours. These girdles are called wampum belts, showing the rank of the wearer, and are handed down from generation to generation as precious heirlooms. In after years Tekakwitha repented of these childish vanities with tears of mortification, and looked upon them as grievous sins.

II. First Knowledge of Christianity.

In the year 1667 the Iroquois were informed that the King of France had determined to send his troops to destroy

their villages, and to force them into submission to his authority. This report spread great fear among the braves, who called a council and decided to send envoys to Montreal to make overtures of peace. This was accordingly done. The deputation was well received, and a treaty of peace was concluded with the Iroquois by the Governor in the name of the King of France. The time seemed favourable again to send missionaries to preach the Faith to the Iroquois, and the Governor entrusted three Jesuit Fathers to the care of the chiefs, who were held responsible for their safe-keeping. Fathers Bruyas, Frémin, and Pierron, who could speak the language, were bidden to prepare for their perilous mission. Upon their arrival at the outskirts of Kentaouaguè a feast was in progress, and the chiefs were anxious that the Fathers should not witness the scenes of debauchery and licence that accompanied these festivities. Therefore the wigwam of Tekakwitha's uncle 1 was chosen as their abode for three days, and they were entrusted to her care. Surely God was watching over the little orphan girl and answering the prayers of her dying mother in sending these holy men to aid her. She observed closely the prayers and religious exercises which filled their day; and they on their part were greatly impressed by the modesty and gentleness of the little Indian girl who paid such careful attention to their needs. Charlevoix tells us that the first knowledge Tekakwitha received of Christianity was given her by the Jesuit Fathers who were sent to the Iroquois nation by M. de Tracey. They passed through the place where she lived and lodged in her cabin. She was charged with their entertainment, of which she acquitted herself in a manner to surprise them. She had herself been struck at the sight of them, and felt in her heart strange sentiments. The fervour and recollectedness of these Iesuits at their prayers inspired her with a desire to pray with them. On divining her wish they instructed her

¹ The Mohawks were a tribe of the Iroquois nation.

in the great truths of Christianity as well as their short stay in the cabin permitted, and they parted with mutual regret.

After the departure of the good Fathers, Tekakwitha passed several quiet, uneventful years in her uncle's home, diligently and faithfully performing all the duties allotted to her. She treasured the good seed sown in her heart, and which later bore such abundant fruit. She did not take part in the games and amusements of the young girls of her own age, but kept apart from them; this she was better able to do owing to her delicate health. During these years, no doubt, she was forced to witness many painful scenes, for the Mohawks were continually engaged in skirmishes with their enemies, and it was their custom to torture and burn their prisoners of war.

These scenes of cruelty were abhorrent to the tender heart of this young girl, but a way was to be made by which she might escape from such uncongenial surroundings and find peace and rest among the Christian Iroquois. Early marriages were customary among these people, and Tekakwitha's guardians soon began to look round for a husband for their niece. When the matter was first mentioned to Tekakwitha she told her aunt that she was too young to marry, and she begged for time to reflect upon such an important step, and so she was left in peace for a while. After the lapse of a few months they began again to talk of a husband, and this time proposed a young brave for her acceptance. She still persisted in her refusal, and her guardians were in despair at what they considered her obstinacy. They began a cruel persecution, hoping by this means to shake her determination and force her into marriage, for among the Indians to be an unmarried woman is considered disgraceful. Cholenec describes the Iroquois marriage customs as follows: "Whenever a marriage is spoken of, the business must be settled by the relations of the intended couple; the parties the most interested are not even permitted to meet; the fact that they are discussing the marriage of a young brave to a young girl is sufficient reason to keep them apart and for them to shun all occasions of seeing and speaking to each other. When the relations on both sides have decided that the marriage shall take place, the young brave is invited to visit the wigwam of his future wife, he seats himself beside her, and thus, in the presence of their relatives, announces the fact that they are to become man and wife, the young girl, on her side, offers her future husband some sagamite (corn cake), and so the contract is made.

Tekakwitha's guardians, finding that all their persuasions and entreaties failed, decided to resort to stratagem. One evening, as Tekakwitha was seated in the cabin with her uncle and aunt, she was suddenly surprised by the appearance of a young brave, accompanied by his relatives, who quickly seated himself by her side. In a moment she knew that she had been trapped, but she was determined not to give in. She rushed from the cabin into the fields, where she hid herself and successfully evaded all their endeavours to find her and bring her back; she did not return until she felt assured that the young brave and his relatives had departed. This refusal on Tekakwitha's part was considered an insult by the relations of the young brave, and placed her uncle and aunt in a very uncomfortable position. They again endeavoured, by persecution and severity, to shake her determination; they treated her as a slave, imposed upon her the most degrading and painful duties, and loaded her with reproaches and opprobrium. Her most innocent actions were misinterpreted, and she suffered a martyrdom. To all this cruel treatment Kateri offered no resistance, but endured it with courage and patience, firm in her determination not to marry.

In 1669 the Mohawks renounced their pagan customs, and burned all their charms and instruments used in this worship and formally embraced Christianity. They built a bark chapel in the village where Tekakwitha lived, and

called it "St. Peter's." When Tekakwitha was eighteen years old, Father Jacques de Lamberville was sent by his superiors to this village to instruct its people in the Holy Catholic Faith. During the spring and summer Tekakwith a worked in the fields with the other women. One day, having hurt her foot, she remained in the cabin instead of going as usual to the fields. It was the habit of Father de Lamberville to walk through the village at midday, to visit and instruct those who could not attend the services at the chapel. Owing to the hostility displayed by Tekakwitha's uncle to Christianity, he never visited his cabin, but on this day, prompted, no doubt, by Tekakwitha's guardian angel, he entered, and there found Tekakwitha with several companions. When she saw the Father her heart leaped for joy; here, at last, was the opportunity to ask for instruction and baptism. She at once opened her heart to the priest, and told him all her difficulties and of how she longed to be admitted to Holy Baptism. The good Father was astonished at the courage and ardent longing of this young girl, and promised to instruct her and to help her to attain her desire. From this time Tekakwitha regularly attended all the services in the little chapel, and was most diligent in following the instructions given her by the priest. It was the custom among the missionaries to proceed very cautiously with the Indians and not to administer the Sacrament of Baptism until they were fully assured of their fidelity. Even in the case of Tekakwitha, Father de Lamberville did not grant her pious desire for nearly a year after his first meeting with her. But at last he gave his consent, and on Easter Sunday, 1675, he baptized her in the little bark chapel, and gave her the name of Kateri (Catherine), and by this name she was henceforth known.

Her mother's prayers were granted, and her child was a Christian. Her aunt did not forbid the baptism, and allowed her to practise her religion undisturbed, for she found that all her duties were performed, as usual, with the greatest care and that nothing was neglected.

This period of calm, however, did not last long, and it was from her own people that she had the most to suffer. After her baptism, Kateri refused to work in the fields on Sundays and Days of Obligation, but spent her time in attending Holy Mass and in prayer before the altar in the little chapel. In order to try and force her to work, her aunt, who declared it was laziness on her part, deprived her of food on those days, but Kateri would rather suffer hunger than profane the days set apart for the service of God and His Holy Church.

The children of the village were encouraged to torment her and to cry after her, "See the Christian passing!" Father Cholenec relates that "one day when she was alone in the cabin a young savage rushed in upon her, his eyes burning with rage, his tomahawk raised ready to strike her dead. Kateri showed no fear, but stood calm and unmoved, looking steadily at the intruder, who was so abashed by her courage that his arm dropped to his side and he crept stealthily from the cabin." So passed the summer and autumn following her baptism. She bore all the trial and suffering bravely and without a murmur, for the sake of Him who had borne so much for her. During this time of trial she often thought longingly of her mother's people, who were Christians, and who lived near Montreal, but what hope had she of escape from her uncle's home? She prayed fervently to God that He would deliver her, and as we shall see her prayers were answered in a most unexpected manner, and she was enabled to reach the haven of peace that she desired so ardently.

III. The Mission of Sault St. Louis.

About 1669, peace having been made between the French and the Indians, some of the latter who had been baptized were persuaded by the Jesuit missionary, Father

Frémin, to settle at the village of Laprairie, near Montreal, but on the south side of River St. Lawrence. This was the beginning of the Mission of St. François Xavier du Sault, which, in 1676, was moved to Sault St. Louis, a few miles distant. Little by little this Mission grew in numbers and piety. The Iroquois were visited by members of their tribe who had become Christians, and so attracted were they by the peace and happiness enjoyed by these Iroquois, who, in this quiet spot, were free to practise their religion unmolested, that many who came only on a visit remained and were gladly welcomed by their compatriots, and were given a share in their well-tilled land.

In 1673, two hundred Iroquois from Agniers had joined their brethren at Laprairie. In 1675 the Confraternity of the Holy Family was established, and this Confraternity in Caughnawaga to-day (1907) has a very large membership, and the devotions are practised with great piety. In 1676 Monseigneur Laval, first Bishop of Quebec, visited this Mission and baptized eighty converts, and confirmed many more. He had previously baptized the first six converts of the Mission in the Cathedral at Quebec.

In the same year the Mission was removed to Sault St.-Louis, as the land at Laprairie was not suited to the cultivation of Indian corn, on which the inhabitants depended in a large measure for food. Kateri's adopted sister and her husband had migrated to this village, and it was their earnest prayer that Kateri might be enabled to join them, but the difficulties seemed too great to be overcome. It was the custom among the Christian Iroquois to make journeys into their own country and to try to gain converts among the members of their tribe who were still pagans. At this time a certain chief, named Okenratarihen (in English, "Hot Ashes"), a very pious man, zealous for the conversion of his brethren, decided to take a journey into the Mohawk Valley for the purpose of instructing the Iroquois there in the truths of the Catholic Faith. When

II

Kateri's sister heard of this, she persuaded her husband to accompany him and to try and rescue Kateri and to bring her to live with them. The two men were joined by an Indian from Lorette, a Reserve near Quebec. The three started forth on their long and perilous journey. When they arrived at Auriesville they sought out Kateri and found means to inform her secretly of the object of their visit. They gave her minute instructions as to their plans, and she, overwhelmed with joy, hastened to Father de Lamberville to tell him of her good fortune and to bid him farewell. The good Father wrote to the missionaries at the Sault, and in recommending Kateri to their care he said, "I send you a treasure, guard it well. Kateri Tekakwitha goes to dwell at Sault St. Louis. I pray you take charge of her direction. You will soon know the treasure we have given you. Guard it well! May it profit in your land to the glory of God and to the salvation of a soul that is assuredly very dear to Him."

Fortunately for Kateri, her uncle was absent from the village and thus her escape was made easier. "Hot Ashes" gave her his seat in the canoe, and she and her companions set forth on their adventurous journey.

When her absence was discovered her aunt sent a messenger in haste to her uncle, who, greatly enraged, seized his gun, loaded it with three balls, and rushed off in pursuit of the fugitives. The two men with Kateri had foreseen this, and therefore took the precaution to leave the canoe and to hide Kateri in the woods while they rested idly on the banks of the river, smoking their pipes. Their ruse was successful in misleading Kateri's uncle, who, when he saw the men resting peacefully there, concluded that he had been deceived, as certainly his niece was not with these Indians. He decided to return home, where he expected to find Kateri occupied as usual with her household duties. As soon as he was safely out of sight, the men sought Kateri and embarked with all possible speed, and thus the

prayers of the brave little maiden were answered, and they were able to continue their journey in safety.

IV. Life at Caughnawaga.

It was in the autumn of 1677 that our little party arrived at the Mission of Sault St. Louis, Kateri being twenty-one years of age. We can picture the meeting between the foster sisters who had been separated so long. How deep must have been Kateri's joy and thankfulness in knowing that at last she had reached this haven of peace and rest, where she could love and serve God without persecution or hindrance! She hastened to deliver Father de Lamberville's letter to the missionaries, Fathers Frémin and Cholenec, who gladly welcomed to their Mission such a bright example of fervent piety. She joined her sister and her husband, who were living with a pious woman named Anastasia Tekonwatsionko, a former friend of Kateri's mother, and who welcomed her with great joy and affection. This woman was a fervent Christian, and to her was entrusted the work of instructing converts in the truths of the Faith.

We can imagine how willingly-Kateri placed herself under her direction and what rapid strides she made in the various pious exercises for the first time revealed to her. How fervently she thanked God for His goodness to her in bringing her out from among the pagans into the happy company of these Christian Iroquois! Every morning, in spite of the severe cold of the Canadian winter, she rose before dawn and repaired to the chapel for Mass. She would remain immovable for hours in prayer before the altar, with an expression of ecstasy upon her face, adoring her Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, the fire of her love reflected on her countenance. She shared in all the duties of the house and was never idle. Her chief occupations were making mocassins, weaving baskets of the sweet-scented hay, embroidering belts; industries which are carried on by the

Indian women of to-day. Every spare moment she spent with Anastasia, seeking for knowledge of God and of His Holy Will. Her constant prayer was, "Teach me what is most pleasing to God, that I may do it." Chauchetière says of her at this time that "she learned more in a week than others did in several years." Her one desire was to please God and to advance in virtue. Thus she acquired purity of heart, and so affected was she at the thought of the sins she had committed in the past that she inflicted severe penances upon herself for the most trifling faults, and never failed to approach the Sacrament of Penance each Saturday.

Such exemplary piety excited the admiration of all, and although it was the custom of the missionaries among the Indians here as elsewhere to try their converts by long periods of preparation before admitting them to the sacraments, the virtues of Kateri led them to make an exception in her favour, and on Christmas Day she had the happiness of receiving her first Communion. With what sentiments of faith and love did this young girl receive her Lord on that Christmas morning, and how deeply sensible she was of her own unworthiness except through the merits of His sacrifice!

In the hunting season it was the custom among the Iroquois to leave the village and to camp in the woods for the convenience of the hunters. Kateri accompanied her family, who set out for the hunting-grounds soon after Christmas. Although deprived of the public practices of their religion while absent from the village, the Iroquois did not give up their devotions. They said their morning and evening prayers and recited the Rosary in common. This, however, did not satisfy our young convert. She prepared a little oratory in a secluded part of the woods, tracing a cross upon the bark of a tree, and here she spent many hours in prayer and meditation on the sufferings of our Divine Lord. She prayed fervently during the time that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was being offered in the village, and united her

intention with that of the priest at the altar, and she prayed that her guardian angel would hear Mass for her and communicate the graces to her. . During the day, while the men were absent at the chase, the women occupied themselves with their domestic duties, and as they sat at work Kateri endeavoured to lead the conversation into pious channels, and she would relate stories of the Saints that she had heard from the missionaries. She would sing the hymns of the Church, in which her companions would willingly join. In spite of her constant occupation she found the winter long and tedious, and greatly rejoiced when, in the early spring, they returned to the village. She was fully determined never again to go to the camp, but to remain at home. The ceremonies of Palm Sunday and Holy Week were a great revelation to her, and the contemplation of the Passion and Death of our Lord so impressed her that she was moved to tears. She was filled with the spirit of penitence and sought every occasion to mortify herself and to expiate the faults she considered she had committed against her Divine Lord. But on Easter Day her sorrow changed to joy, for on the Feast of the Resurrection Kateri was for the second time permitted to receive her Risen Lord in Holy Communion.

V. Tekakwitha and Teresa.

Shortly after Easter Kateri made the acquaintance of a young Oneida woman called Mary Teresa Tekaiakentha. She had been baptized, but after a time had been led away and had almost entirely lost her faith. One winter she had accompanied her husband, as was her custom, to the camp, she being the only Christian in the party. The winter was very severe, the hunting bad, and they were threatened with starvation in consequence through the failure of provisions. Then their savage instincts asserted themselves, and they killed and ate several of their companions. Teresa's husband fell ill and died before they reached the village. On

his death-bed he bitterly regretted that he had not been baptized. This and all the horrors she had suffered had such an effect upon Teresa that her first act on reaching the village was to seek the priest, throw herself upon her knees at his feet in the confessional, and make a firm resolution to reform her life and to make reparation for the sins of the past. At the time of her meeting with Kateri she was leading an exemplary life of penitence and austerity. The meeting of the two girls was accidental. One afternoon Kateri paid a visit to the church which was being built at Sault St. Louis, and there she met Teresa. They remained for a long time in conversation, and opened their hearts to each other. They spoke of their past lives, and before separating they promised never to forsake each other, but to be a mutual help in all their trials and temptations. Thus did God draw together two souls, and a friendship was formed that should last till death. Even in this peaceful abode yet another trial awaited Kateri. Her sister conceived the idea that it would be far better for Kateri to marry; not only better for herself but also for the family, who would thus secure the services of a young brave, who would hunt and shoot and bring a plentiful supply of furs and food to the lodge, especially as her own husband was getting old. With this idea she made choice of a young Indian who was truly pious and endowed with many virtues. She was prepared for some opposition on the part of Kateri, for she knew what had taken place before when the same proposal was made to her by her aunt. But in this case it was so different; the young man was a Christian, and they would be a mutual aid to each other in leading a good and holy life. With this hope she approached Kateri one day and pointed out to her all the advantages of the married state. Kateri's love and regard for her sister led her to disguise her real feelings, and in her gentle manner she thanked her for her advice, but begged time for consideration of such an important matter.

Even Anastasia joined her entreaties to her sister's in urging her to marry. In great distress Kateri went to the priest, who advised her to take time to consider the proposal and to pray fervently that she might know God's will. She went away, but returned after a few days to the good Father and said: "Father, I have considered well; for a long time past I have resolved to consecrate myself entirely to Jesus Christ. I have chosen Him for my spouse; He alone shall be my husband."

There was no mistaking the determination of Kateri; no entreaties would move her, so the priest promised to use his influence with her sister to induce her to give up her efforts and to leave the girl in peace to live her life in accordance with her own ideas. How fervently did this young maiden thank God for His help, and endeavour by her prayers and austerities to show that she was indeed His spouse and thought only of how to please and honour Him. The following autumn, when the time came to go to the camp, Kateri declared her intention of remaining behind. She remembered what she had suffered the previous year in being deprived of all spiritual food. The priest advised her to accompany her family, but his entreaties were of no avail; her only reply to them all was: "It is true, Father, that the body is cared for more tenderly in the woods, but the soul is neglected, and its hunger cannot be satisfied there; on the contrary, in the village the body suffers, but the soul finds every consolation and nourishment in the reception of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. I joyfully resign my body to hunger and suffering, that my soul may receive this Divine Food."

When her friend Teresa heard of her resolve she decided to remain with her, and so these two pious women spent the winter alone in the village. They not only suffered severely from cold and hunger, but inflicted upon themselves severe penances and mortifications. They spent many hours each day in the chapel before the altar, meditating on the Passion.

What an example to the Catholic of to-day is the sight of these Indian girls giving themselves up to the service of the God whom they had learned to love and serve—the Rawenniio, their Father and their Friend! On one occasion Kateri paid a visit to the Hôtel Dieu, in Montreal, and when she saw the nuns devoting their lives to the care of the sick and suffering, with no thought of themselves, her heart was inflamed with a desire to join them and so to consecrate herself in this manner to the service of God. On her return home she besought the Father to help her to carry out this intention, but the religious life was not considered suitable to the nature of the Indian, and so he opposed her desire. Knowing, however, the piety and purity of her life, he promised to allow her to make a vow of perpetual virginity, and in this way to consecrate herself to God. On the Feast of the Annunciation, 1679, during Holy Mass and in the presence of her friends and neighbours, Kateri made her vow of perpetual virginity. She begged our Lady to present her to her Divine Son, asking Him to accept the sacrifice that she made of herself to Him. From this day until her death Kateri was but an exile on this earth, her whole thought fixed upon her Lord and Master above.

VI. Illness and Death.

During this time Kateri's health, which had always been very delicate, began to grow worse. Her sister and her friends watched with deep sorrow her privations and austerities which they were powerless to prevent. She continued diligent in all her duties both in the house and in the fields, never neglecting or forgetting any; in fact, she often undertook the work of others in addition to her own. Even a strong and healthy person would have broken down under such a strain, but Kateri was supported by the fire of her love and devotion to her Lord and Master.

Her penances increased in austerity. One day she asked Anastasia "What is the greatest suffering that can be offered to God?" Anastasia replied, "It is the pain of burning, I believe." That night, when all were sleeping peacefully in the cabin, she burned her feet severely. Another day, when walking in the woods, she found a branch of briar thickly covered with thorns; this she managed to carry home and conceal in her bed, and spent four nights in agony upon this thorny couch before she was discovered. Teresa, noticed with dismay how weak and ill her friend was growing, and sought to discover the reason. After many entreaties Kateri told her what she had done, and Teresa, now thoroughly alarmed, hastened to the priest and begged him to use his authority to forbid these practices. When the priest sent for Kateri and told her how wrongly she had acted in undertaking these penances without the advice of her confessor, she was overcome with dismay, and humbly begged the pardon of God for her presumption, and with deep humility and penitence she hastened home and carried out the commands of her confessor and burned the briar branch. But it was too late, her health was shattered, and there was no hope of her recovery. She had no desire to live; her constant prayer was that "Rawenniio would take her home to His wigwam in the skies." She never murmured, but bore all her sufferings with patience, and her expression was always bright and joyful, no fretful discontent was ever to be seen. In the attacks of fever from which she suffered no word of impatience escaped her lips; she was grateful to those around her who tried to assuage her sufferings, and to the last day of her life she was ever thoughtful for their salvation, and she prayed fervently that they might persevere and serve the good God all the days of their lives. During the last two months of her life her agony was intense, the least movement caused her extreme pain, but the greater her trials the greater her happiness. She felt she was carrying the cross her Lord had laid upon

her weak and suffering shoulders, and this thought filled her with an inexpressible joy. She had the most tender devotion to our Blessed Lady, and always attributed her desire for purity to the favour of this Queen of Virgins, whom she had tried to imitate all her life. During her illness she never omitted to recite the Rosary daily, and with such great fervour that after this exercise her strength would be exhausted and she would lie for hours without speaking. Unable any longer to visit the chapel and pray before the Blessed Sacrament, she would meditate upon the sufferings of our Lord and make frequent ejaculations of love and devotion to Him in the Holy Sacrament of His love.

On Palm Sunday, 1680, Kateri's friends were greatly alarmed by her state and feared that death was approaching. On Tuesday it was deemed necessary to administer the Last Sacraments. When they told her this her joy was unbounded, for she felt that at last she was to be released from the burden of this mortal life and that her soul would take flight and rest at the feet of her Lord and Spouse in heaven. It was the custom to carry the dying person to the door of the chapel, but Kateri was too weak to allow this to be done. The Fathers decided to make an exception in her favour and to carry the Blessed Sacrament to her cabin. The whole village assembled at the chapel, anxious to act as escorts to the Blessed Sacrament thus for the first time carried to the cabin of an Indian. Arrived at the cabin, the priest entered and found all prepared for the worthy and fitting reception of our Lord. Kateri renewed her vow of virginity and thanked God fervently for all the graces He had bestowed upon her since her baptism, and after the general confession Holy Viaticum was administered. During these last hours the priest, taking advantage of her holy obedience, desired Kateri to speak to the people who were assembled around her bed, as the Indians have a great respect for the words of a dving person.

She prayed to our Lord to give her strength to speak to them. She urged them to love God and to try to do His holy will, to live in charity, and to follow the practices of the Catholic religion. Her words had a good effect on several of her hearers who had absented themselves from the Sacraments for some time, but who from that moment were devoted to the services of the Church and endeavoured by holy and pious lives to show that the example and exhortation of this dying girl had not been wasted. She was so exhausted after this exertion that they feared she was about to expire, and the priest hastened to the chapel to bring the holy oils to anoint her, but she rallied and told those around her that the good Father need not hurry, as she was not going to die that night. She had several times spoken in this manner, as though the hour of her death had been revealed to her. She passed that night in fervent prayer to our Lord and His holy Mother, begging that He would take her to Himself and praying for a blessing on all those around her. During these last hours on earth she did not forget those she was to leave behind her. She exhorted Teresa to remain firm and steadfast in the faith, and promised to pray for her in heaven. On Wednesday morning the priest administered Extreme Unction, and shortly after receiving this sacrament she lost the power of speech, appearing to those around her to be wrapped in the deepest contemplation, and thus, without a sigh or a struggle, her spirit passed to the judgement seat of her Father, whom she had so deeply loved and so faithfully served during her short but holy life. It was in the twenty-fourth year of her age, on Wednesday in Holy Week, April 17, 1680, that Kateri Tekakwitha died at the village of Sault St. Louis. When it became known that Kateri was dead the Indians assembled round her bedside and paid every mark of respect and veneration to the dead body of the young girl. Father Cholenec took advantage of the occasion, and after

2 I

eulogizing this holy virgin exhorted the Indians to try and emulate her virtues. Her face, which in her life had become so thin and drawn by her sufferings, in death seemed transfigured by a supernatural beauty, and this so astonished those simple souls around her that they firmly believed that God had received her into His glory, and rejoiced at the thought that they had so powerful an advocate in heaven. On the afternoon of Maundy Thursday the body of Kateri was reverently and lovingly carried to the cemetery on the banks of the St. Lawrence, and laid in the grave prepared for it. This spot was the one she had pointed out to Teresa, saying with a smile, "There is my grave." This, however, was not to be the final restingplace of Kateri, for Father Chauchetière says that her body was exhumed later and buried beneath the chapel in the village. Since that time the Iroquois have at three different times moved the site of their village, and we may be quite sure that each time the remains of Kateri Tekakwitha were carried with them as their most precious treasure. At the present day these relics are reverently preserved in the sacristy of the Church of St. François Xavier at Caughnawaga by the Jesuit Fathers of the Mission. It is said that the head was given to the Iroquois of St. Regis. A Mission was founded there many years after her death. The church was burnt down by the hand of incendiaries and the precious relic was destroyed. In 1843 the Iroquois of Caughnawaga and the French Canadians of the surrounding country conceived the idea of erecting a cross on the bank of the river to mark the first resting-place of Kateri. This was accordingly done, and on July 23rd of that year it was blessed with great solemnity by Canon Hudon, Vicar-General of Montreal. This cross, being destroyed by the wind and storms of the succeeding years, was in 1884 replaced by a new one, which was blessed on October 5th by the Rev. Father Bourgeault, priest of the Mission of Laprairie, in the presence of many Iroquois from Caughnawaga and

A Mohawk Maiden

French Canadians from Laprairie, St. Constant, and the surrounding country.

In 1890 the Rev. C. A. Walworth, priest of St. Mary's Church, Albany, U.S.A., visited Caughnawaga, and having seen the modest wooden cross which the pious Catholics of the neighbourhood had erected to mark the grave of Kateri, decided to replace it with a lasting and more worthy memorial. It was a day of great rejoicing to the Iroquois when on July 30, 1890, the Right Rev. Mgr. McNierny, Bishop of Albany, U.S.A. (in whose diocese Kateri had been born and baptized), blessed the monument in the presence of Mgr. Fabre, Archbishop of Montreal, Mgr. Gravel, Bishop of Nicolet, of about sixty priests and more than two thousand Iroquois and English and French Canadians. After the Benediction the Rev. Fr. Drummond, S.J., preached in English and French, and the Rev. P. Burtin, O.M.I., in Iroquois. They both extolled the virtues of this simple Iroquois maiden, and exhorted their hearers to imitate her example and her great devotion to Jesus Christ and His holy Church.

The monument consists of a granite sarcophagus. It is surrounded by an iron railing and covered with a wooden roof to protect it from the storms of winter. Towering above it is a cross 15 feet high, which can be seen for miles around. A relic of Kateri is inserted in the wood of the cross. On the sarcophagus is carved a large cross and the following inscription in Iroquois and English:

> KATERI TEKAKWITHA, April 17, 1680.

Onkwe onweke Katsitsiio Teotsitsianekaron.

The English translation is:

"The fairest flower that ever bloomed among the Redmen."

VII. Miracles wrought through her Intercession.

Many miracles have been performed by the application of the relics of Kateri among the Iroquois and the French Canadians of the neighbourhood, but owing to the lapse of time and the lack of written records it is very difficult to find information that is authentic. The Jesuit Fathers record many instances in which wonderful cures were effected in answer to prayers made at her tomb, by touching garments and articles which had been used by her, by the invocation of her name, by promises of pilgrimages to be made to her tomb, by dust taken from the tomb; these and other means were used by those who sought her intercession for the cure of ills of soul and body. Pilgrims came from all parts of Canada and the United States to venerate her relics and to thank God for benefits, both spiritual and temporal, obtained through her intercession. Father Cholenec says: "God has not been slow to honour the memory of this holy maiden. A number of miraculous cures have taken place and are still continuing, not only among the Iroquois, but also among the French in Montreal and Quebec. I could tell you many such miracles attested by men of intelligence and above suspicion, but I will content myself with only two. The first is the case of M. de la Colombière, Canon of the Cathedral at Quebec and Vicar-General of the Diocese, and I will quote his own' words:

"'Having suffered from intense fever from January to June and finding all remedies of no avail, I made a vow that if God would cure my disease I would make a pilgrimage to St. François Xavier de Sault and pray at the tomb of Kateri Tekakwitha. In a few days the fever became less, and I was able to start on my journey, and before I arrived at my destination I was perfectly cured. I believe that God has granted me this great grace in order that I may make known to the world what the prayers of this holy maiden have wrought for me. And for this reason I send you a record of the miracle, that my humble testimony may increase the devotion to my benefactress and excite a desire amongst those who read to imitate her virtues.

> "'I. DE LA COLOMBIÈRE, P.J., "'Canon of the Cathedral of Quebec. " September 14, 1696."

"The second is the case of M. du Luth, Captain of Infantry and Commander of Fort Frontenac, whose words I also quote:

"'I desire to certify to all whom it may concern that I suffered for twenty-three years from a very serious malady which caused me great agony. In my despair I prayed to Kateri Tekakwitha, the Indian maiden who had died at Sault St. Louis in the odour of sanctity. I promised to visit her tomb if God would restore me to health in answer to her prayer. I made a novena in her honour, and at the end of the time I was perfectly cured and have no return of the sickness.

"'Given at Fort Frontenac, August 15, 1696. ""(Signed) J. DU LUTH."

Father Cholenec calls Kateri "the Thaumaturge of the New World," and the Marquis de Denonville "the Geneviève of Canada."

Father Burtin tells us that "it was the custom of the people of several of the neighbouring parishes to have a solemn High Mass sung every year in honour of Kateri, and to ask for her prayers for themselves and their parishes. Father Rémy, the priest of Lachine, was informed by his parishioners of this pious custom, but replied that he could not allow a devotion not authorized by the Church. Shortly after this he fell seriously ill; he made a vow to follow the example of his predecessors and offer the Mass as desired in honour of Kateri, and he was instantly cured." Father Geoffroy, priest of Laprairie, also tells of many proofs of the marvellous cures wrought through the intercession of Kateri in his parish. In our own day there are also records of wonderful cures performed with the relic of Kateri.

At Sheskegwaning, Manitoulin Island, Ontario, the Indian Reserve of the Ojibways, a woman was dying from an ulcerated throat and mouth, and the doctors had given up all hope of her recovery. A novena was made to Kateri, the relic placed upon the woman's throat, and at the end of the nine days she was perfectly cured. At West Bay, on the same island, a child had been suffering from hip disease from two years of age. As she grew older she could only walk with crutches. When she was eight years old it was proposed to invoke the aid of Kateri on the child's behalf. A novena was started, and she wore the relic. Before the end of the nine days she was running around without crutches, was able to go to school, and the joy of the child was so great that she was ever trying some new feat of agility to prove the success of the cure.

Although no immediate cures like the two just recorded have taken place in Caughnawaga, yet many recoveries can be attributed to the use of the relic and to novenas made in honour of Kateri. The people have the greatest faith in her intercession, and in cases of severe sickness novenas are made with sincere devotion, and often with the desired result.

And so we see realized in the case of Kateri Tekakwitha the promise made by our Divine Lord: "He who humbleth himself shall be exalted."

VIII. Caughnawaga To-day.

This Mission of St. François Xavier du Sault was founded by the Jesuit Fathers in 1669, at Laprairie. In 1715 it was removed to its present site, Caughnawaga (Kahnawake). The definition of this word is "By the rapids," but the village was sometimes described as that of "the Praying Indians." Caughnawaga is five miles above Laprairie (Kentake).

The church and presbytery were built in 1719. The Church was then rectangular in shape, but becoming too small for the needs of the village, was rebuilt in 1845 in the form of a cross and was very much enlarged, and thus it stands to-day. The church, presbytery, and schools are within the walls of the old fort erected by M. de Contreceur in the days of M. de Ramezay, Governor of Montreal. Although in partial ruin, these walls still stand as evidence of the industry and good workmanship of the soldiers of the Old Regime. The presbytery is seventeenth-century architecture, and is considered a very fine piece of work of that period.

There are many precious treasures stored in the church and presbytery, and shown with much pride to the visitor. Tradition states that the High Altar is a gift of Louis XIV of France. It is of wood, finely carved and richly gilt. Above this altar is a fine painting of "The Death of St. Francis Xavier," and over the altar of the Blessed Virgin is an Immaculate Conception; over the Sacred Heart altar, "St. Louis, King of France, in prayer." These three paintings were given by Charles X. In the sanctuary are several smaller paintings of great merit, but tradition does not relate by whom any of these works of art are painted; "The Holy Family visited by St. John the Baptist, bearing a gift of fruit," "Our Lady presenting a rose to the Infant Jesus," "Our Lady guiding the first steps of the Infant Jesus."

In the nave of the church are a St. Philomena and "St. Philip baptizing the Eunuch." Over the altar in the sacristy, where Mass is said in winter, is a fine painting of "The Holy Family." On either side of the High Altar are carved wooden figures of St. François Xavier and St. Ignatius.

A set of "The Way of the Cross," painted on wood, have been discarded as too large for the walls, but they are very curious and interesting, judging from the one still allowed a place in the church, and one feels inclined to regret the banishment of others for the somewhat gaudy set which have replaced these quaint examples of the piety of some old master of the New World. The large bell was given by George IV.

There is a chair used by M. d'Ailleboust, commandant about 1722, some of whose descendants are still living in the village.

There is also an autograph letter from Chateaubriand to the Jesuit missionary of that time, asking for information about the Iroquois of Caughnawaga.

The library of MSS. in the Iroquois tongue would delight the heart of the collector of valuable MSS. The Old and New Testament; Lives of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Popes, the Saints; Histories of the Indians of the various Jesuit Missions, Dictionary, Catechism, and Hymn-book, all most beautifully and clearly written, the work of the zealous priests of the Mission.

The Indians' love of bright colours is to be seen in the decoration of the church for festivals. Paper of every conceivable shade unknown to nature is made up into roses, and these are hung in festoons about the altars and the church. The crib at Christmas is something wonderful to behold. The collection-boxes are very curious, made of cardboard covered with velvet, silk, or cloth of various colours, on which are worked in beads also in different colours; the chalice, the monstrance, and the instruments of the Passion. They are made by the women of the village and presented to the church.

We have left till the last two of the most important of the treasures of this Mission. The first is a relic of Kateri Tekakwitha, which is carefully preserved in a reliquary and has been sealed by the Archbishop of Montreal.

The second is a wampum-belt of great value and interest. This wampum was sent, in 1677, by the Hurons of Lorette to the Iroquois of Sault St. Louis to console them for the loss they had sustained in the destruction of their church by fire. Father Chauchetière thus describes the wampum:

"The wampum was a belt made of highly-polished shells of various colours, emblematical in their arrangement. Each shell was of a different shape and suggested some definite idea. It was to the Indian of that day what a written document is to us. Thus the wampum sent by the Hurons of Lorette was an exhortation to their friends at Sault St. Louis to hold fast to the Faith and to at once set about rebuilding their church. It also exhorted them to overcome the vices which had been the ruin of other Missions. The wampum was hung in the church on one of the pillars supporting the altar, that it might be seen by every one and that all might profit by the lesson it conveyed."

The village of Caughnawaga is inhabited only by the descendants of the Mohawk tribe, the fiercest of all the tribes of the Iroquois Confederation. The Iroquois of to-day is peaceful and content, for the most part industrious. The language spoken is Iroquois, many on the Reserve being unable to speak or understand either English or French. Some of the men work in the iron works at Lachine; in summer they row across the river in their long, narrow, war-canoes, which hold about thirty men. It is very picturesque to see one after another boat-load of these stalwart braves glide out from the river-bank in the early morning, and to hear them calling to each other in their own tongue, and anon singing snatches of the popular song of the day in broken English. In winter they walk across the Canadian Pacific Railway bridge, a very dangerous undertaking, as there is absolutely no protection, and one false step means death, as many an unfortunate man has found to his cost. Some of the men devote themselves to agriculture, and find a sale for their produce in the markets of Montreal. Other industries are the manufacture of toboggans, snow-shoes, canoes, lacrosse sticks, hammerhandles, and chairs; these are made by the men in the village and sold to the wholesale merchants in Montreal. The Iroquois are also skilful pilots, and living on the banks of the St. Lawrence so near the Lachine Rapids, their services are in great demand, both on the rafts which come down from the lumbering camps on the Ottawa River in the spring and also on the pleasure steamers which shoot the rapids during the summer season. The women, too, have their industry; in every house you find them busily occupied with bead-work. The beads are imported from Vienna; the articles into which they are made, such as birds, match-holders, photo-frames, pin-cushions, canoes, and whisk-holders, are most fantastic in shape, and the colour schemes bizarre in the extreme. Groups of women work for one agent, either man or woman, who travels all over Canada and the U.S.A., selling the work and making large profits, but the workers receive very small pay for their labour. Every child is taught "to do bead-work" as soon as she can hold a needle. Nearly all the women and girls wear shawls, and some of these are treasured as valuable heirlooms by the lucky possessors.

In place of the old-time chiefs, the village now boasts a Mayor and Council, who are elected yearly, and all the purely local affairs are settled by them.

The Iroquois are very pious Catholics, and keep all the festivals of the Church with great fervour and devotion. At midnight Mass on Christmas Eve blessed bread is distributed. Two large piles of loaves, gaily decked with lighted candles, paper flowers, and ribbons, are placed on stands by the altar rails. After being blessed by the celebrant, these piles are taken into the sacristy; some loaves are cut up into small pieces, placed in baskets, and distributed to every person in the church. To the chiefs and people of distinction whole

loaves are presented, and these are very elaborately decorated. Before the distribution the relatives and friends of the donors of the bread kneel at the altar-rails and kiss the pax-board presented to them by the priests. The ceremonies of Palm Sunday and Holy Week are carried out in every detail, and followed with devout attention by large congregations. On Easter Sunday, 1907, the number to receive Holy Communion was between five and six hundred. Confessions were heard until midnight on Saturday and from 4.30 to the first Mass at 7 o'clock on Easter Day. On the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi the village is always en iête. Arches and altars of repose are erected by the various clans of the tribes; these clans bear respectively the names of Bear, Wolf, Turtle, Deer, &c. After High Mass the Blessed Sacrament is carried in procession, followed by the entire population and many visitors from Montreal. It is an impressive sight to see our Lord thus honoured by these faithful Iroquois. The Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the patron of the village, is celebrated with great piety, large numbers making the Novena of Grace. During the novena the Devotion of the "Forty Hours" takes place. There is a mixed choir, many of the male voices being very fine, but the women's, as a rule, are shrill and high-pitched. The music is of a weird, dirge-like character, very solemn and impressive.

In May, 1906, Archbishop Bruchesi, of Montreal, in whose diocese the Mission is situated, paid a pastoral visit to the Reserve, and on this occasion 130 children were confirmed and 32 made their first communion. The Indians visited him freely during his stay of two days, and the village was gaily decorated in his honour.

There are two schools in the village, one for boys and one for girls. They are under the control of the Department of Indian Affairs. The masters of the boys' school are Iroquois, and they have 110 pupils; the girls' school, with two English teachers, numbers 85. The children are

bright and intelligent; they have a great love for drawing, and many have a very decided talent. Most of them write, read, and spell well, and arithmetic is quite a strong point. The girls' school is named after the heroine of this sketch, and the pupils have a great devotion to her memory, frequently invoking her aid as "Saint" Kateri Tekakwitha, thus anticipating what in course of time all pray may come to pass. Very delicate tact is required to correct this error. Thus is the memory of Kateri Tekakwitha revered and held up as an example and model to these young girls, and to her prayers is attributed much of the success of the school. The girls are taught plain and fancy sewing, knitting, and crochet. Artistic bead-work is a new feature recently introduced, and is very popular with them. Some beautiful pieces of work have been made, such as collars, chains, card-cases, belts, and lamp-shades. Basketry is also taught, and the visitor to the school has some very pretty samples of this work to choose from if desirous of carrying home some souvenirs of the industry and talent of the Indian girl of to-day. Last year a school was opened in the bush for the children who could not walk to the village every day, a distance of over three miles. There is an average attendance of thirty boys and girls, and the school is in charge of an Iroquois teachers.

It had always been the desire of the Jesuit Fathers to establish a hospital in the village, where the sick could be cared for among their own people. Apart from the distance to Montreal and the difficulty of taking patients there, many of the Indians had a strong objection to going to the city hospitals. In 1905 this long-felt want was supplied by Madame Perronno, a lady from France who is greatly interested in the Indians of the North American continent. She bought a large stone house which had been built for an hotel, and had the building enlarged and fitted up as a hospital, which was dedicated to the Sacred Heart. It has public wards, private rooms, and a well-equipped pharmacy

There is a beautiful little chapel with the Blessed Sacrament reserved, in which Mass is said once a week, and more often if a second priest happens to be staying in the village.

On September 29, 1905, Archbishop Bruchesi visited Caughnawaga and blessed the hospital in the presence of a large concourse of Iroquois, who were deeply touched by the honour done them by his Grace in coming to perform the ceremony. They are very grateful to Madame Perronno and her assistants in devoting themselves to the care of the sick of their village.

During the year and a half of its existence great success has attended this work of charity and love. The hospital and its staff have done untold good, both in tending the sick at their own homes and in caring for them in the wards, while those relieved in the out-patient department are innumerable. Two doctors from Montreal attend every Saturday and give their valuable services free, the waiting-room being generally crowded with the sick seeking relief.

Surely we may believe that Kateri Tekakwitha is watching over this village, and that it is in answer to her prayers that so much good has been and is being done for the souls and bodies of her people.

The following translation of a petition recently presented to the Holy Father for the purpose of forwarding the canonization of Kateri Tekakwitha seems a fitting ending to this short life of a Mohawk maiden:

"OUR FATHER THE POPE:

"Though we Indians are very poor and miserable, yet our Maker had great pity on us and gave us the Catholic religion. Moreover, He had pity on us again and gave us Kateri Tekakwitha. This holy virgin, an Indian like ourselves, being favoured by Jesus Christ with a great grace, grew up very good, had great love for our Maker, and

died good and holy, and is now glorious in heaven, as we believe, and prays for us all.

"This virgin, we believe, was given to us from God as a great favour, for she is our little sister. But we hope thou, our Father, who art the Vicar of Jesus Christ, will grant us this favour likewise; we beg thee with the whole of our hearts to speak and say: 'You, Indians, my children, take Kateri as an object of your veneration in the Church, because she is holy and is in heaven.'

"There are also two others who, though Frenchmen, yet are as if they were Indians, because they taught the Indians the sign of the Cross and the way to heaven; and for this they were killed by bad Indians. Their names are Blackgown Isaac Jogues and Brother Réné Goupil. We wish to have these two also as objects of our veneration, as our protectors and our advocates. If thou givest us these three as our patrons, our hearts will be glad, our behaviour will be good, and our children will become perfect; also a great many unbaptized Indians will enter into the Catholic Church and will see the glory of heaven."

May all who read this touching appeal of these pious Indians say a fervent prayer that in due time our Holy Mother the Church will grant their petition and raise to her altars these holy martyrs.

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