

## A Lady (Too Long) In Waiting



WHEN you visit Montreal — of necessity and joyous choice — you head across for the Indian mission a Caughnawaga (1). There you find the village that is owned and operated by the Iroquois, the chapel that goes back to early Colonial days, the stalwart descendents of the magnificent warriors whom history knows as Iroquois, and a pulsing in terest in Kateri Tekakwitha.

I went across to hear the famous — and rightly so — Caughnawaga choir. Their broadcast over a Canadian network brought letters of praise from across a continent. The music is classic, of every race and age — Beethoven, Mozart, modern composers; but the lyrics are always in Iroquois. Perhaps you don't know it, but at this mission the solemn high Mass is sung in Iroquois, a rare and singular permission from Rome.

When I go to Caughnawaga, I always ask to see the relics of the lovely Kateri Tekakwitha, Lily of the Mohawks, as she is called. They lie under glass, carefully sealed, waiting for the time when they will be

called for in Rome and this little American Indian virgin will become perhaps our first authentic American saint. I lay my hands upon the glass-enclosed relics, red as the skin of an Indian, and ask the little Kateri to bless our land and make to walk in her virginal footsteps hosts of young Americans of another age and race.

The Jesuits fathers who know her well left behind them an extraordinarily detailed record of her life. It is a surprisingly complete word picture of a flower that bloomed in pagandom, a most attractive little girl who lived to precisely the age of the Little Flower and confessed the faith and practiced the Christian life in the midst of a people slowly emerging from savagery to Christian culture. She was for them what Agnes and Agatha and Cecelia and Lucy were for the newly converted and the on-their-way-to-Christianity Romans of the apostolic age. (Yes there was an apostolic age in America, and Kateri and those early apostoles to America were a glorious and suffering part of it.)

Yet despite the perfect word picture, there is little to guide the artists who try to paint or



(1) Fr Lord visited the Mission during the Christmas holidays.

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