

PETER, THE TWO JAMESES AND CLAUD¹

By Tekaronioken



UGHT not Canadians and Americans to recall that Tekakwitha was a delightfully holy Indian girl? A few months ago, however, a friend of mine wrote in to tell me that Fr. So-and-so dit not know the difference between her and Pocahontas!

Tsk! tsk! Maybe Father was trying to pull my correspondent's leg. And again, maybe he was not. In the latter case, just imagine what color his face would be if my friend questioned him about the Blackrobes, docile instruments of God, who led little Kateri into His Church!

Here, in dehydrated form, is the story of four Jesuits, Peter, the two Jameses and Claud. They all helped Kateri Tekakwitha weave the beautiful tapestry of her days.

● Fr. Pierre Cholenec

Fr. Pierre Cholenec was born in 1640 at Saint-Paul-de-Léon, a small town of Brittany. He entered the Society of Jesus at the age of eighteen and later taught rhetoric. When Cholenec was thirty-four, he obtained permission to come to Canada as a missionary. In this role, he passed the greater part of his life at Mission Saint-François-

Xavier. In 1715, his Superiors sent him to Quebec where he soon died.

Fr. Cholenec was entrusted with the guidance of Tekakwitha. He granted her the permission to pronounce the vow of perpetual virginity, prepared her for death, and administered her the Last Sacraments. He was the first to notice the marvelous change that came over her features after her death. Later on he wrote what is probably the best biography of Kateri Tekakwitha.

● Fr. Jacques de Lamberville

To Fr. Jacques de Lamberville go the merit and the glory of having been her first spiritual guide. Born at Rouen in 1641, he entered the Jesuits when he was twenty. In 1674, he crossed the sea to Canada, where his brother, Jean, had been working among the Indians since 1669.

On Easter Sunday, 1676, Jacques de Lamberville baptized Tekakwitha and eventually helped her flee to Mission Saint-François-Xavier on the banks of the Saint Lawrence.

● Fr. Jacques Frémin

Little Tekakwitha first saw Catholic priests when she was eleven years old. One of them, Fr. Jacques Frémin, later held the post of Superior at the Cana-

dian Mission which was to be her home, and this, during the years she lived and died there. Fr. Jacques' advice was always clear and practical.

Soldierly in appearance, with a deep voice that impressed the Indians, Frémin was respected by them all. According to Rochemonteix, speculative theology did not appear to be his forte. Even so, among other noteworthy realizations, during his thirty-five years among the redskins, he baptized 10,000 dying children. No wonder Cholenec refers to him as "one of the great missionaries who have been in Canada!"

● Fr. Claude Chauchetière

And now, we come to Fr. Claude Chauchetière. He was born in Aquitaine at Saint-Porchaire-de-Poitiers in southern France on September 7, 1645. His boyhood was filled with dreams of

the Canadian Missions. A few months before Kateri, he arrived at Mission Saint-François.

Fr. Claude was Kateri's first biographer, the first to paint and publish a picture of her (horrid!), the first also, to spread devotion to her. He seems to have enjoyed mystical experiences, but readily admitted that the greatest grace of his life was to have been the witness of the wonderful virtues that were Tekakwitha's. Fr. Claude Chauchetière died, aged sixty, on April 17th, the same day as the 'Lily of the Mohawks'.

Thanks to these missionaries, Kateri learned to esteem and love the Catholic priesthood. "She had", noted Cholenec in 1695, "a high idea of the Faith and all it teaches, and a particular respect for those called by God to propagate it through the world."

"A few months before Kateri, he arrived. . ."

(Woodcut: *Le Messager Canadien*).



(1) On her return from Europe, Miss Fitzgerald will continue OUR HEROINE, Chap. vii of "The Life of Kateri Tekakwitha".