



● The beautiful statue of Tekakwitha offered by Mrs. Claire Griffin in loving memory of her son James, to the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis Springfield, Illinois. Before long, there will be a statue of Kateri in her own parish...

The Maiden Called Tekakwitha

by

EDMUND J. RHODEBECK, B.S., M.D., FELLOW N.Y. ACAD. MED.

SURELY another life¹ of Kateri Tekakwitha must seem unnecessary. Everything that is known about her—and that is very little indeed—has been written many times and in several languages, and the size of her bibliography is astounding. All that is known for certain can be found in the accounts by Fathers Cholenec and Cauchetière, her confessor and her spiritual director. Additional details are presented in the recently published "Position of the Historical Section of the Sacred Congregation of Rites." That is all that there is.

● Many biographies

A number of biographies have been based upon these earlier documents. In English, one of the first, that of Ellen Walworth, is particularly noteworthy. It is a scholarly piece of work. Father Wynn, S.J., co-Postulator for the cause of Kateri, wrote a life which is authoritative and there are many others.

When all is said and done, these lives portrayed the cold and rather dull portrait of an Indian girl placed in a setting of historical facts and usually playing a secondary role in the glorious story of the Jesuit Martyrs who preceded her.

● First meeting

Now I am very fond of Kateri, which is the reason why I have been asked to write this article. I met her a few years ago when a casual acquaintance presented me with a medal of a little Indian girl, a Mohawk, of the Iroquois tribe in which I had always been interested.

Immediately I sensed what newspaper men would call a human interest story when the facts of her life were told to me. How could a Mohawk girl of that age and cultural pattern trod the path that Kateri trod? What made her do so? What factors in her life played parts in the formation of her personality? What was her personality pattern? What was her cultural setting?

● A not too happy little girl

Kateri was the first "Saint" in whom I really became interested. The accounts of the lives of others which I had read were so saintly that I had very little in common with them. They were not human. They needed defrosting and I should not want that to happen to Kateri. I should not want her gilded up and surrounded by an aura in which the struggles and strivings of a little Indian girl, and a not too happy one, played no part.

(Please turn to p. 14).

(1) Dr. Rhodebeck worked in collaboration with Miss Marie Buehle on a "Life of Tekakwitha". "He is really the moving spirit behind this book," wrote Miss Buehle. "For years he has been doing research work on the Indians of the Five Nations and especially on the little 'Lily of the Mohawks.'" Dr. Rhodebeck, a recent convert, died last September in New Orleans.