

THERE KATERI BELONGED!

A yearly account of the foundation of the Mission of the
Sault up to 1685

by

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THE Mission grew considerably and continued growing proportionately the following years. This multitude became the occasion of greater evils as we shall see below. The Indians, having taken instructions during the summer at the village, went to preach our faith in the woods. During the winter, the heathen Iroquois, in quest of game, coming accidentally during the hunt upon the hutments of the new Christians, admired the change that had taken place in these new apostles. The

women, ever known as the devout sex, had learned their prayers sooner than the men, and it was they who said them aloud in the woods.

One of these women, who still says them at the church of the Sault, used to say them during the winter in the woods where her husband had taken her to hunt in the direction of Chambly. A famous warrior, well known among the Mohawks, because he had defeated the Mahican nation, entered, happily for himself, into the lodge of the woman about whom we are talking. She did not then fall into that trap into which Indians often fall, that is to say, fear of what people may say. Not bothering about the good or evil disposition of their guest, she always said the prayers. This warrior listened to them, and became fond of them, because he admired their signification and their wording. He took a liking to them and learned them by heart after hearing them often repeated. He sometimes said, "He who teaches you has a fine mind and such happy thoughts!" However he was informed that these prayers

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had been invented before the missionary Fathers were born. This answer made him esteem the prayers even more; he learned them very well and did not think of quitting those who had taught them to him. The following spring, he came to the village of Laprairie with them; he acted as they did; that is, according to the praiseworthy habit that exists here and begun at that time: he went to church either before entering the lodge, or immediately after having left his pack at home; then he recited his prayers with his guides.

This sight obliged Father Frémin to ask who this man was and whence he came and who had taught him his prayers. He was informed of the quality of the man, of his sentiments, and how he had passed the winter. The Father, who appreciated how well disposed he was, found in him only one defect, that is he was not married and there were not yet any girls to whom he could be introduced; the priest then told him, partly to sound him out, to go back to his country taking also along with him his comrade, to there choose the girls that would please them most, and to come back, and that he would be baptized.

This suggestion did not displease our man who retorted that he would go back and that he would show if he had any credit. He did go back, spoke secretly about the affair to many, and chose himself a wife. Having won over many persons, he fixed the day of the general departure; when the day arrived, he let the affair come out in public, said good-by in a loud voice in the middle of the village, and ordered his men to pack up. Even a Father¹ joined up with them to lead them away; the quality, the zeal and the spirit of God which possessed him shut the mouths of all the elders whose hearts were full of fury at the sight of such audacity, and not knowing whom to blame, they immediately would have bashed in the head of any other with less authority. After this farewell, forty persons were seen leaving, men, women and children who were abandoning their country to go to Montreal to become Christians.

This first assault against unbelief has depopulated the Iroquois country, for it succeeded so well that, since this time, great bands of Iroquois have left their own people to come and live at Laprairie, and in less than seven years the Mohawk warriors had become more numerous in Montreal than they were in their homeland. This makes the elders of the villages and the Flemish of Manhattan and of Orange fume. Two hundred persons were thus quickly added to the ranks of the Christians at Laprairie in less than a year or two.

(To be continued.)