

The First Engraving

One of the missionaries intimately acquainted with the Lily of the Mohawks, Father Pierre Cholenec, tells us that "a person of virtue and worthy of belief" was praying at four o'clock in the morning, when Kateri appeared to him surrounded by glory, with majestic bearing and shining face lifted toward heaven as if in ecstasy . . . The vision lasted for two whole hours during which this person could contemplate her at leisure and did so with a joy and pleasure difficult to express, Kateri wishing by so marked a favor to acknowledge the great service she had received from him during her lifetime." This occurred on Easter Monday, six days after her saintly death in 1680. The "person of virtue" to whom the writer refers was his fellow missionary, Father Claude Chauchetière, S. J.

The three visions

Kateri, radiantly beautiful, seemed to him "as a rising sun", and he heard these words in Latin: *Adhuc veni in dies: I am rising again*. On the first of September of the following year, Father Chauchetière had a similar vision, and still another on the twenty-first of April, 1682. The only difference was that the priest then saw Kateri not as the rising sun, but as the sun in mid-heaven with these words: *Inspice et fac secundum exemplar: Look and do according to the model* (Exod. 25: 20). She was so brilliant with surrounding light that his eyes could hardly bear it.

Both missionaries understood that God wanted pictures to be made of the Iroquois Virgin. "For a long time," remarked Father Cholenec, "we had refrained from doing so, but when they were painted later on they contributed a great deal toward making Kateri known, for, being placed on the heads of the sick, they brought about marvelous cures."

The first painting

Who did the first painting of Kateri? In 1684, after General de la Barre's expedition to Famine Cove, Hot Powder, then head chief of the praying Indians, made his way to the vicinity of Cataracouy, with the intention of converting as many pagan

Indians as he could. He carried along paintings depicting the lives of the most edifying Christian Indians of the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, and among them, at least one of Kateri to whom he was intensely devoted. He had helped her in 1677 to escape from Gandaouagué on the Mohawk and she in turn had cured his wife during the summer of 1682. Who was responsible for this painting? None other than Father Claude Chauchetière.

After the command, "Do according to the model", the priest set to work. He was no great artist, and we are told "he made the painting as best he could."



Others, badly done

Other pictures were also prepared, "and though these were badly done," wrote Father Cholenec, "the Canadians value them so highly that there are hardly enough to supply the requests for them."

They were indeed badly engraved and struck off. During 1951, I received, at the Indian Mission, Dom Pierre Minard,



O. S. B., then Master of Novices at the Benedictine Priory of St. Benoît du Lac (Quebec). He later forwarded me an engraving of the Lily of the Mohawks, probably a copy of one the first prints.

A patrolman's opinion

After the engraving was reproduced in *Kateri**, a good friend, Patrolman Walter Byrnes of Union City, N. J., wrote me a few lines of comment:

"... No kidding, Father, if my Dominican Aunt ever got one look at that picture, the convent would let out a squeal of terror and go running to the protection of St. Catherine of Siena... One thing, Father, you certainly picked the right time of year to print it. Hallowe'en, season of ghosts, goblins and Jesuit art!..."

Indubitably, Father Cholenec was right: "these pictures were badly done." The demand for them, however, grew constantly. The prints even found their way across the sea. Who had these humble portraits of Kateri engraved and printed?

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The Intendant

Monsieur Jean Bochart Chevalier de Champigny was appointed intendant of New France—the administrative officer next to the governor general—on April 24, 1686, six years after the death of the Lily of the Mohawks. His ship dropped anchor in Quebec during July of the same year. With him was his wife, Madeleine de Chaspoux.

Father Cholenec reports

Madam de Champigny became an ardent votary of Kateri. Of course, Father Cholenec told her about Father Chaudetièr's vision, without naming him. The outcome is set forth in Father Cholenec's *Life of Kateri Tekakwitha, First Iroquois Virgin*, completed in 1696. After reporting the cures and favors obtained through Kateri's intercession from 1681 to 1695, he wrote:

"1695.—We have come to the year 1695... I could not make a more fitting beginning to this recital than with the story of M. de Champigny, our Commandant. For more than two years he had been suffering from a severe cold which finally became so serious that he almost lost his voice, as his wife wrote us in the letter we had the honor to receive at the Sault asking us to make a novena to Kateri. With all Canada, we were too much interested in his health to fail to do our utmost.

"The novena was made by the Sisters of Kateri [Marie-Therese and her friends], who fortunately were all present at the village, and during it M. de Champigny was cured of his cold at Quebec. I do not doubt that on this occasion Kateri wished to reward the great obligations that all our missions in general, and that of the Sault in particular, had to M. and Mme. de Champigny for the marked favors we had received and still receive from them. Everybody in Canada also knows Mme. de Champigny's devotion to Kateri and her zeal that brought about the drawing of Kateri's first picture. Moreover, not being satisfied with distributing copies of it in Canada, she sent some to France to the important people at court. In this way God used the piety of so prominent a person to make a poor Indian known in the first court of the world. God blessed this action, for we received information from Paris that Kateri cured a dying person that year..."