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Sparkling waterfalls at Watkins Glen, N.Y. Prayer is ever so much more powerful than this mass of falling water. Make use of it to hasten Kateri's Beatification.

Katharine Tekakwitha

An eighteenth century write-up on the Lily of the Mohawks

THE REPUTATION OF THE IROQUOIS girl, Katharine Tekakwitha,¹ is so commendable in this new world that we must not pass by this model of virtue and holiness in silence. Her memory is held in great veneration, and it has been observed that many persons have felt wonderful effects from the pious confidence they have placed in her on different occasions. However that may be, about twenty-five years ago [1680] there was among the Iroquois a girl twenty-five [-three] years of age, who possessed the best qualities of the Algonquin mother and of an Iroquois father. Her mother had been captured forty years previously in the great overthrow of her nation. Conducted to the Iroquois, they spared her life and married her to one of their tribe. She had been baptized at Three Rivers by the Jesuit Fathers and never forgot the duties of Christianity in the midst of an infidel nation.

Tekakwitha, who was born later, doubtlessly was the recompense of the Christian life she always led. This girl lived among the Iroquois in an inexplicable innocence until she was twenty-two [twenty] years old. While still very young, she had smallpox which disfigured her considerably. Before her Baptism she preserved a natural modesty which led her to shun the pleasures of the senses, and even marriage. This was not in order to be freer in her actions, but so that she might be guided only by Providence, and to devote herself more freely to the exercises of piety.

One did not find in her the vices to which the other girls, who care only for debauchery, are so much subject. She was not at all given to the visions and dreams which occupy their imagination so much, and of which they make a divinity.

Her greatest fault was to permit them to dress her too

1. The illustrations are by George Dickson of Caughnawaga.

properly, which she did only to pass the time or to comply with the wishes of her relatives, who wished to oblige her to marry. When they pressed her to make a decision she hid behind a stack of maize or ran away into the fields.

A sore foot confined her to her cabin and contributed in no small way to her conversion. The Jesuit Father who at the time was at the Mohawk village called Gandaoagué, entered the cabin by chance. He spoke to her of the faith and exhorted her to come and pray. She obeyed. Her fervent devotion hastened her Baptism, which was solemnized in the chapel of her village on Easter Sunday. There were some who contented themselves merely with being baptized, and who practised scarcely any of the duties of Christianity. For this reason it was not easy thing for this girl to maintain her faith in the midst of so many bad examples. What was admirable, however, was that she bravely resisted all these temptations, and all the efforts that were made to prevent her from following: the example of the most fervent Christians. One day she was touched by the following incident.

Some drunkards wished to force a Christian woman to drink some brandy. They adroitly drew her to the cabin where they did their best to pour it into her mouth. She spit it in their faces three times, and did likewise each time they pressed her to drink it. The example of this good Christian woman confirmed Tekakwitha in her good resolutions. For two years an admirable perseverance could be observed in her in the midst of that Babylon. The Jesuit Father who instructed



Kateri's fervent devotion hastened her Baptism.

An Oneida captain... arranged an opportunity for Tekakwitha to leave for Montreal.



her in the mysteries of our religion, told her she would be always in danger of losing her soul. She realized that he was right. For some time she had decided to come to Montreal to live, but she awaited a favorable occasion to go there when no one would be suspicious. It was customary at this time among the Iroquois to visit one another on the return from the hunt. Some came to Montreal in passing, while others went to the English and stopped among the Mohawks to see their relatives and to try to inspire others to become Christians. This annual visit was quite successful, so that many left the Mohawks to live with their relatives at the Sault [Caughnawaga], near Montreal.

An Oneida captain, recently baptized, who was later killed in the war against the Senecas, made a voyage to his country for the purpose of preaching the faith there. He first passed through the Mohawks where, after having preached in the full council more by example than by words, he arranged an opportunity for Tekakwitha to leave for Montreal. When she arrived at the Sault, she made the resolution to live there as a perfect Christian.

Kateri would have wished to choose the state of which she had only a confused idea, namely that of virgin... Only marriage was suggested to her, in order to persuade her to remain at the Sault. She decided to establish herself there permanently, but she could not make up her mind to marry. She remained in this state, begging God to inspire her with



Kateri received her First Communion on Christmas Day, 1677.

what would be most pleasing to Him. It has been said that the close friendship she had with an Oneida woman was instrumental in her decision to embrace the state of perfection. This woman had been baptized for a long time, but had only been converted for two years.

The occasion of her conversion was an accident which occurred on the hunt. Of a band of twelve hunters, including her husband, only two returned. The other ten died of hunger. This . . . is not common among the Iroquois, because outside of the hunt they have grain and come to seek provisions when they have no meat.

Those of whom I speak had not taken this precaution. They thought that in going along the Sault and following the river of the Ottawas they would find game. The contrary happened. They had among them a dying old man whom they had to carry. He himself asked that they should kill him. They asked the Oneida woman who was baptized, what the Christian law said about a matter of this kind. Fearing that they would kill her likewise when her turn came, she did not dare to answer. The fear of death, her drunkenness, and the disorderly life she had led since her Baptism, caused her strange trouble of spirit. She reflected seriously enough, however, to realize that she had been unfaithful to the lights and graces of God. She promised to lead an entirely different life if she might safely escape from the cruel circumstances in which she found herself. In the meantime the old man died. . . A child and others



After Kateri's death, many cures were obtained by her intercession.

successively died. . . , until they arrived at an Algonquin village where they received sufficient provisions to last them on their journey home. This disaster made a great impression on this woman, so that she changed her way of living. She has since lived as a good Christian and has persevered for twenty years. Her husband died after the return of the hunt, overcome by misery.

This widow and Tekakwitha lived two years together in excessive penances which are known throughout Canada. The Jesuit Father in charge of them saw that the time had come to speak and revealed to them the excellence of the state of virginity. He told them that God had made us master of those two states and that it was for us to choose. Tekakwitha embraced this state with such a fervor that she took the vow on the feast of the Annunciation, and died twenty days [a year] later. Several girls afterwards imitated her in spite of the disorders which the last wars caused among these new Christians.

While I was in Canada, several people sick with fever had great confidence in Kateri Tekakwitha, but since I left there two years ago I have learned of many who were cured through her intercession, and it is perfectly clear that there was something extraordinary in the graces obtained from heaven by addressing her.

Claude Charles Le Roy, Lord of Bacqueville and of La Potherie, *Recent Journey in Canada or New France and the Wars Between the French and the English and the Aborigines*, (Paris, 1716).