



DAMIANO COLOMBO & FIGLI MILANO, ITALIA

KATERI

Father Claude Dablon, Superior General of the Jesuits of New France, Fathers Jacques Frémin and Pierre Choleneq, who were in charge of the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, enthusiastically praised its residents: "These fervent Christians", the *Relation* of 1676-77 tells us, "led such an edifying life that it was even felt by the French who were witnesses of it, that this mission was a living picture of the primitive Church."

Now how could Kateri Tekakwitha manage to find her way to Kahnawaké? The Lord, who feeds even the birds of the trees, was preparing the Iroquois Maiden's escape. At the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, she had an elder adoptive sister, who had gone to live with her husband among the Christian Indians. On considering the successful apostolate of the Great Mohawk and of his friends, the thought came to this sister that Tekakwitha would be immensely happy if only she could enjoy the fine religious milieu of the village. She discussed the idea with her husband, who resolved to go south with the intention of bringing back his sister-in-law. Hot Ashes, one of the leading Oneidas among the converts, declared that he was ready to help him, and a Huron from Lorette, whose name is unknown to us, offered to accompany him. Shortly afterwards the courageous trio disappeared in the direction of the Mohawk Canton.

Hot Ashes, Ogenheratarihiens in Iroquois, exercised considerable influence on all the young warriors he met as well as on his compatriots of every age. His recent baptism had aroused the curiosity of many of his people, who left Oneida and Cataracoui to come to the Mission of St. Francis Xavier to discuss his new religion with him. Quite a few subsequently asked to be christened. When his zeal and his capacity became known, he was chosen to be the fourth chief of the village of the praying Indians.

After the election, the investiture, a rather complex ceremony, took place. The elders gathered together, invited the chief-elect to present himself before them, lit a fire in his honor, offered him an Indian pipe, and put a few gifts into his hands. Unfortunately they forgot Hot Ashes' ceremonial mat. As soon as the ceremony was over, the new chief sought out Father Frémin: the elders had made fun of him; they had treated him as a child; he was a chief without a mat and would be obliged to hold council out of doors! As a result the elders had to be convened anew, and Hot Ashes was invested according to the strict rules of protocol. After receiving all the emblems of his dignity, he acted as a veritable chief and later