

PROGRESS



IN 1820, at Plattsburg, N.Y., a child was born who was to play an important role in the story of Kateri Tekakwitha. His name was Clarence Walworth and he could trace his ancestry to England as far back as 1689¹. He was the fourth son, the eldest boy, of Reuben Walworth and of Marie Ketchum Averill, both fervent Protestants. His father, a judge and later chancellor of the State of New York, took up his abode for some time at Albany, capital of the State.

In early childhood, Clarence became fond of Amerindians. His parents used to relate that this affection he had for the native people resulted from an incident which had happened to him at the age of six. His mother, a charitable soul, allowed him to dispose of some clothes he had found in a package close by his home, at Saratoga, N.Y. He gave its contents to an Indian scantily clothed, who walked into his yard at the end of summer. The bronze-skinned visitor disappeared without saying a single word, but the following spring, he came back with a beautiful bow with arrows to match—his way of showing his gratitude to the generous child.

Clarence obtained his primary, secondary, and college education in the best schools of the period. Graduated at the early age of 18 years, first of a class of 126 students, he took up law, which he was authorized to practise in 1841 in the Supreme Court of the State. However, as he himself noted, "I felt growing in me a great desire to consecrate myself totally to the Church." And he went on to the Episcopal Seminary of New York.

There, with a few friends, he became interested in the Tracts of the Oxford Movement published by John Newman, Pusey and Keble, and in 1845, he decided to abjure and become a Catholic.

A stylized Kateri, design by Paul Boulva, ceramic by Yolande Rioux, wood carving by Fr. Roger Chabot, at Camp Tekakwitha, Leeds, ME.

1. Our subscribers will recall the brief biography of Clarence Walworth by Fr. T. Egan, S.J., which appeared in the March 1982 issue of *Kateri*. For the many new subscribers who did not get the interesting story of this great friend of the Lily of the Mohawks, I have summarized the most important events of his life before continuing the series on Blessed Kateri. H.B.

This he did at the Church of the Holy Redeemer of the Redemptorist Fathers in New York City. Shortly afterwards, he asked to be admitted among the sons of St. Alphonse and was sent to Belgium for his novitiate and to Holland for his theology. In 1849, he was ordained a priest, and went to work in England where he came into contact with Fr. Newman.

On returning to the United States, he preached on all sides, and several years later, with Isaac Hecker, he founded the Fathers of St. Paul, better adapted to the needs of the times. During the Civil War, he served as military chaplain and at the end was worn out. Convinced that he should not burden the young community of the Paulists with a man of feeble health, he left and, after regaining his health, became pastor of St. Mary's at Albany, scarcely forty miles east of the site of the ancient village of Ossernenon, where Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha saw the light of day.

A little later on, he became interested in General John Clark's research to locate the sites of the chain of Iroquois villages stretching out from one end of the State of New York to the other. In 1883, with the general, Fr. Walworth, and his niece, Ellen, visited the three sites known to Kateri: the Sand Flats to the east of Fonda, N.Y., where the Mohawk Maiden received baptism; a hill to the east of Auriesville, N.Y., where Saints Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and John de La Lande shed their blood for Christ, the very spot where she was born in 1656, and finally another hill where her people lived after the expedition of Marquis de Tracy in 1667.

The uncle and the niece soon became ardent propagators of devotion to the Indian girl. Fr. Walworth certainly had much devotion for the Martyrs, but as he often repeated, "Jogues and Goupil have their fellow Jesuits to maintain interest in them, whereas Kateri could easily be forgotten."

After the efforts of the 17th-century Jesuits, whose writings aimed at the canonization of the young Iroquois, in 1894, thanks to Fr. Walworth's efforts, the Cause of the Lily of the Mohawks took a giant step ahead. Archbishop James Gibbons of Baltimore, Cardinal to-be, President of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, drew up a petition in which he invited the American Bishops to forward a request to the Holy See for the canonization of Isaac Jogues, René Goupil, and Kateri Tekakwitha. The name of Fr. Walworth, who had obviously prompted him to action, was the first of the four signers. The Archbishops and Bishops of the United States followed straightaway the lead of their president. During the following year, in Canada, Their Lordships Dominique and Antoine Racine, respectively Bishops of Chicoutimi and of Sherbrooke, born at Ancienne Lorette, quite close to the Huron Village, also requested the beatification and canonization of Isaac Jogues, René Goupil, and Kateri Tekakwitha.