

a new Christendom amid the most fearful barbarism, and to cement it with their blood, chose none of these to display on their tombs, all the riches of his power and mercy ; but conferred this honor on a young neophyte, almost unknown to the whole country during her life. For more than sixty years she has been regarded as the Protectress of Canada, and it has been impossible to oppose a kind of *cultus* publicly rendered to her.¹

This holy virgin, so celebrated under the name of Catharine Tegahkouita,² was born in 1656 at Gandahouagué, a town in the Mohawk canton,³ of a heathen Iroquois father and a Christian Algonquin mother. She lost her mother at the age of four, and was still quite young when her father died, leaving her to the care of one of her aunts, and under the control of an uncle who had the chief authority in his village. The small pox which she had in her infancy having weakened her sight, she was long compelled as it were to remain in the corner of a cabin, her eyes being unable to stand the light, and this retirement was the first source of her happiness. What she did at first from necessity, she continued to do from choice, thereby avoiding whatever could cause her to lose that moral purity so difficult to preserve amid idolatrous and then very dissolute youth.

As soon as she saw herself of age to act, she took on herself almost all the toil of the household ; and this shielded her from two dangers, fatal to most Indian girls ; I mean, private conversations and idleness. Her relatives however wished her to use the decorations common to young persons of her sex, and although she yielded from simple compliance with their wishes, and with all possible repugnance, it was a matter of much scruple to her, when, favored by the light of faith, she learned how dangerous it is to seek to please men.⁴

The first knowledge that she acquired of Christianity, was imparted by some missionaries sent to the Iroquois after Mr. de Tracy's expedition. On their way they passed through the town where she lived⁵ and were

¹ As to this general veneration of Catharine Tegahkouita, see the MSS. of Remy, Curé of La Chine ; Bishop de St Valier, Etat Present, (1688,) pp. 48-9 ; De la Potherie, (1722) i., p. 357.

² The name Tegahkouita means "who puts things in order" (Marcoux,) and is still in use at Caughnawaga.

³ See ante, vol. ii., p. 146, n.

⁴ Chauchetière, Vie, ch. iii., enters into details on her skill in needle-work, and the ornamental work done by Indian women, as well as on her cheerfulness.

⁵ These missionaries were Fremin, Bruyas, and Pierron. They reached Caughnawaga in August 1667. Ante. vol. iii., p. 109. Relation, 1668, p. 4-6.