

## CHAPTER XV

### **My Missionary Tour Continued. The Dagger of the Assassin on My Breast at Quebec**

The first Sabbath of February, 1859, at 3 o'clock, the large hall of the village of Napierville was filled by the intelligent Roman Catholics of that interesting town, who wanted to know why I had left the Church of Rome. Far from following the advice of their priest by giving me such a reception that I would never be tempted to come again, they overwhelmed me with all the marks of respect and friendship which they were able to give. It was the same thing next morning when their hall was again crammed by an audience to hear why a man could not make God with a wafer.

In the afternoon the doctor of the village was sent by the priests to argue against me and to defend Auricular Confession. He tried to show us that our Saviour had established that sacrament of penance (Auricular Confession) as the only way to get pardon for our sins. But he was soon at the end of his arguments, and I asked him to tell us how long it was since he had gone to confess his sins to the priest. He was forced to answer, "Ten years." The people laughed at him to their hearts' content. This threw so much cold water on his fiery eloquence, that he found the only way to save his lost cause was by making use of a dozen rowdy Irishmen to drown my voice every time I tried to speak. Though the immense majority of the people wanted to hear more, we had to stop the meeting. But much of the good seed had fallen on that well-prepared soil. The Rev. Mr. Lalleur, Revs. Cyr and Roussy had faithfully worked before me in that precious part of the Good Master's vineyard. A good number of its families had already given up the errors of

Rome and formed a very interesting congregation of Protestants.

It was my joy in the evening meeting, in my host's house, to get, from ten heads of Roman Catholic families, the assurance that they had also taken the resolution to accept the Gospel as their only guide and Jesus Christ for their only Saviour.

The next day, Tuesday, it was my unspeakable joy to meet the honest and intelligent farmers of Lacadie, in their interesting village. For more than an hour they listened to the address I gave them on the Gospel as the only solid foundation on which a people should stand to become strong, happy and free.

A notary having been sent by the priest to interrupt me was politely taken to the end of the village on the shoulders of six sturdy farmers and requested to be quiet, there, if he would not fare worse.

I was not surprised at the friendly reception I received from the people of Lacadie, when I remembered that it was in the midst of this town that the Grande Ligne Mission was spreading floods of Gospel light and truth for the last ten years. There, again, a good number of families accepted the Gospel.

From that place I came back to Montreal, in order to take the train for Quebec, where I was expected the very next day.

In the Quebec Gazette of February 11th, 1859, was the following:

“ARRIVAL OF MR. CHINIQUY.

“This gentleman reached Point Levis on Wednesday evening by the train, and was waited upon by a large number of the inhabitants of that locality, and also of this city, who went across for the purpose of receiving him. He remained at Frazer's hotel for that night, and came over to the city yesterday forenoon, and took up his residence in Crown Street, St. Rock.

"We are informed that the number of persons who have visited him since his arrival cannot have been less than four thousand. Twice he was obliged yesterday to speak to the multitude from his window. The people flocked from all the neighbouring parishes, and many had stayed since Monday to see him. Some on hearing of his arrival at Point Levis, the night previous, came up from St. Anne Chateau Richer and the Orleans Island. Not an offensive word was used by any one, but all evinced the extreme pleasure of having amongst them once more one for whom they entertained the most sincere affection.

"Mr. Chiniquy addressed a public meeting in the lecture hall, St. Anne's Street, this afternoon, but the hour is too far advanced to admit of our giving particulars to-day.

"We would just say, however, that the building was crowded to its utmost capacity, principally by his own countrymen; and that, up to the time that we left, the greatest decorum prevailed, the remarks of the reverend gentleman being frequently applauded with great enthusiasm."

Just as the Quebec Gazette gives it, that address of Thursday was a glorious Gospel success, as well as those of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, which were all given at 2 P. M., for I did not like to wait till the night to address the people. There were not sufficient lights in the streets of Quebec to prevent the rough element from playing their mischief.

The Quebec Gazette tells it, in the intervals of the addresses the large room I occupied was filled with friends and enquirers, and the street before the house was so crammed with the multitudes of kind friends who wanted to hear the Gospel message I had to give them, that two or three times a day I had to address them in the open air from the window.

Of course the priests were furious. You could have seen them running through the streets to stop the multitudes that were coming from every side to see and hear me, and asking

them: "Where are you going?" The answer was, invariably "We go to hear Father Chiniquy." "But don't you know that it is a crime, an abominable sin, to hear him? Don't you know that you are excommunicated if you speak to that abominable heretic?" "Yes, we have been told that," said the crowds, "but have you not told us hundreds of times that you have the power to forgive all our sins?" "Yes, yes," answered the priests, "our Saviour has told us: All the sins ye forgive on earth shall be forgiven in heaven." "Well," rejoined the people, "after hearing dear Father Chiniquy, if our conscience is too much in trouble, we will go and confess to you again, and you will forgive the new sin with the rest." And the priests had to go to another corner with that sarcasm in their ears.

The second day a band of brave men who were all among the five hundred who had invited me to come, told me that the priests were evidently preparing a mob to kill me during the night, and they offered themselves to guard the house.

I answered them to do as they pleased in that matter. As it was at their invitation that I was in Quebec, it was their business to prevent this trouble they were in fear of. And a guard of fifteen well-armed, intrepid young men was organized to watch, during the dark hours of the night, around my lodging.

The Sabbath address was, "Our Salvation Through Christ." Though the most terrible fulminations and excommunications had been launched at the morning service against all those who would come to hear me, or would even talk a single word with me, the crowd was so great that we had to open the windows of the large hall, so that the multitudes who stood outside from the want of room could hear.

The joy that filled my heart was such that, though I was exhausted, when the night came I did not feel the fatigue. The sight of those multitudes who were hungry and thirsty after the bread of Life, and to whom I was permitted to give that bread and that water, was such a marvelous thing

to me, that very often I could not speak to them except with my tears of joy.

But at 10 p. m. two very respectable friends came to tell me: "Dear Father Chiniquy, you will surely be killed this night if you do not leave the city. We have just come from a meeting of the most desperate rowdies of the city which has been addressed by two of our priests. They have so inflamed their brutal passions, that more than fifty have sworn to set fire to your house this night, and to kill you when you try to escape; please leave the city. We have a good sleigh in readiness to take you to a safe place eight or ten miles away." I answered them: "I thank you for your kindness, but I cannot follow your advice. When I left the Church of Rome, as well as when I came to Quebec to preach the Gospel, I knew the cost.

"I did not come here to run away. If it is the will of God that I should shed my blood this night for the cause of His Gospel, I shall have the whole eternity to bless Him for that favour." "Then," said my friends, "you cannot prevent us from putting a double guard this night to protect you." "Do as you please in that matter," I answered. And they left me alone.

The few hours before a man expects to die, under such circumstances, are too solemn to allow him to sleep. The shores of eternity are so near, look so bright and grand, that one can hold his breath at their aspect. At about three o'clock in the morning one of my night guards came to me and said: "As the night is much advanced, and the first rays of the day are very near, we think that the danger of an attack from the mob is over. If you have no objection we will go home and take a few hours of rest, for we are all working men, and we must be at our different posts by seven this morning."

"All right, my dear friends, go and rest a few hours; may the dear Saviour bless you for your kindness towards me," I answered. And they left.

I then went to the good waiters, who were also watching, to ask them to give me a cup of coffee. As I had not shut my eyes, I felt the want of some food to keep up my strength.

I was just going to take that cup of coffee when we heard a terrible noise at the door. That door was evidently broken down, and a multitude of men were running upstairs to the parlour.

They were the very ones who had prepared at the evening meeting of the priests, to set fire to the house, and to kill me when I would try to run away. Every one had a mask on his face. Too cowardly to approach the house when it was guarded by my thirty young friends, they had concealed themselves in a building at a short distance, waiting for the moment that my guardians would leave, at the dawn of day. I asked them: "What do you want here at such an hour of the night?" The leader, who had a long butcher-knife in his hand, answered: "Miserable apostate! we come to put an end to your infamous life, if you do not swear that you will never preach your d—d Bible any more." And seizing my right arm with his left one, he planted his knife on my breast. The half of his companions, armed with sticks and daggers, made a circle around me, and repeated what their chief had said: "D—d apostate! if you don't swear that you will never preach your d—d Bible again, you are a dead man." During that time the rest of the band filling the room with terrible imprecations, were breaking the chairs and threatening to kill the good man, who, with his wife, consented to lodge me during my stay in Quebec.

I told them: "Let those people alone—if it is a crime to preach the Gospel of Christ here, I am the only guilty one—kill me—death has no terror for me, but do not molest those people."

In that moment I felt the dagger so hardly pressed on my breast that I thought at every moment it would go through

and through. Raising my supplicating hands towards heaven, I said: "Dear Saviour! For my sake Thou hast shed Thy blood on the cross, if it is Thy will I should mine for Thy sake, may Thy will be done: but come and receive my soul into Thy hands."

These words were hardly said when the would-be murderer, with a most awful imprecation, said: "Infamous apostate! We do not come to hear your heretical prayers, we come to put an end to your infamous life, if you do not swear that you will never preach your Bible." He then pressed his knife so hard that I felt blood running on my breast. Expecting every moment to fall a corpse, I again raised my hands towards heaven, and said: "My God! In a moment I will be in Thy presence and I bless Thee for it. But as they want an oath before I die, they shall have it; I swear that, as long as my tongue can speak, I will preach Thy Holy Word as I find it in the Holy Bible." And then opening my vest with both hands, I said, "Now, strike the last blow." But my dear Saviour was there to protect His poor, helpless soldier.

The would-be murderer began to shake from head to foot. The dagger fell from his hands on the floor, and with a trembling voice he said, "Well, Father Chiniquy, if you promise to go away we will not kill you."

He evidently meant that I would promise to go away from the city. But I thought it was not very wrong to deceive him, when saying the truth. I answered, "Yes, I will go away," secretly meaning, "I will go away from your bad company." And he left me alone.

The snow had fallen more than two feet deep in the street during the night, and I had a pretty long distance to walk to reach the house to which I wanted to go. I felt my bodily strength pretty much exhausted by the trials of that night, and I thought it prudent, before leaving, to take my cup of coffee, which was there on the table. Besides that, I wanted to gain some time, in the hope that some of my friends or night-

guards would know my position and come to my help, for I had seen one of the servants running away, probably to give the alarm.

I told the mob, which was then silent, though their bloody eyes were watching me closely: "I have to walk quite a long distance in the snow to my knees; you will not find fault with me I hope, if I take a cup of coffee, with a mouthful of bread." And I sat at the table. But I had not drunk half of the cup when a furious voice, which I had not yet heard, cried out: "Do you not see that he is deceiving us? He takes too much time. And he means to remain here." Saying that he upset the table, broke the cup and plates, and with a fearful blasphemy said, "Infamous apostate! Go away at once! No delay! Go Quick!" And he nearly brought me down with his fist.

I felt I had to go. Putting on my overcoat and my cap I took my bag and walked to the door. It was still very dark and, as I said before, two feet of snow had fallen in the streets, during that night. I was not without anxiety how I could walk the long distance which was before me. But, by the good providence of God, a carter was just passing before the door with his sleigh. I asked him, "Can you take me to the pro-mayor, Mr. Hall?" "Yes, sir," he answered. And soon I was safe under the roof of that noble Scotch Protestant.

For, by the marvelous mercy of God, the mayor, Langevin, a most fanatical Roman Catholic, was absent for the few days I was in Quebec.

I showed my bleeding breast to Mr. Hall, and I told him: "Sir, I am just escaping from the hands of a furious Romanist mob who have sworn to kill me if I continue to preach in Quebec. As I promised yesterday to give, to-day, my last address on the Bible and the right which every man has to read it, I will fulfil my promise even if I have to die for it. I come to put myself under the protection of the British flag, for the enjoyment of my rights and liberty."

“If you can swear upon that,” said Mr. Hall, “I will protect you. But I have a favour to ask of you. Please do not speak of the wound that you have on your breast, nor of the blood you have lost. You do not know the terrible effect that sight has upon me. Blood calls for blood. If it were known that you had received such a wound in Quebec, and that you have had to shed your blood from the hands of the priests, it might have the most terrible results. It might be difficult, if not impossible, to calm the rage of our Protestant soldiers and the other Protestants whom I must call to protect you. For I must put the city under martial law and gather all the powers I can lay my hands on, if I want to save your life, and perhaps my own, to-day, against the mighty and bloody power of Rome.”

Half an hour later the city of Quebec was proclaimed under martial law, and more than 1,000 English soldiers with their bayonets were around me to protect my life. It was between the two ranks of those soldiers of British liberty and fair play, that the mayor drove me, at noon, in his own sleigh, to give the last lecture I had promised on the Bible.

When on my way to the hall between the two ranks of bayonets glittering in the sun, it was quite amusing to see the priests of Rome, half dead with terror, running through the crowds of their poor slaves who were massed all along the streets, saying: “Do not make any demonstration; do not make any noise, do not move a finger against Father Chiniquy. The city is under martial law! The soldiers will fire at you and slaughter you at the least appearance of trouble. For God’s sake, be still!”

The large hall could not contain half of the people who wanted to hear what I had to say about the Holy Bible and the right of every one to have and read it. Several thousands who could have no place in the hall, were standing around and listening with breathless attention, through the windows which were opened. The day was splendidly bright and mild as a summer day.

I had large boxes containing six hundred New Testaments which I distributed, to the last one, to my dear Roman Catholic countrymen, after the meeting.

Thanks to God, the good seed sown in those days has not all been lost, and the blood shed has not been shed in vain. The modest evangelical work which our Protestant societies had begun there, some time before, under the Rev. Mr. Tetreau and Normandeau, two converted priests, has taken a new and rapid extension.

Not far from that very spot where I was so cruelly wounded, a fine stone French Protestant church, for the Canadian converts, has been built. That church would be much too small to-day, if our dear French Canadian converts from Rome could have remained in their own country. But, alas! many have been forced to take the sad way of exile. The cruel and unmanly persecutions they are subject to from the priests of the Pope have made it impossible for many to remain in their own country. Thousands of them are now eating the bitter bread of exile in the United States.