

CHAPTER XXV

The Stratagem

In the winter of 1873, all the priests of the city of Montreal had received the order from the Bishop to prove, on the same Sunday, from their pulpit, the proposition of their catechism: "That Mary, the mother of God, is the most powerful intercessor men have in heaven; and we must address ourselves to her, if we expect to receive the favours we ask."

The next Thursday the citizens of Montreal could read on fifty large placards, placed in the most conspicuous parts of the city: "Mary cannot be the mother of God: God has no mother. Jesus, and not Mary, is the only one to whom we must address ourselves if we want to receive the favours we are in need of. This truth will be proved next Sabbath evening at the French Protestant Church of Craig Street, by Father Chiniquy."

When on my way to church that evening, one of the head men of the police stopped me on the street, and said: "Father Chiniquy, please change the subject of your address. The French Canadians cannot allow you to speak against 'The Holy Virgin Mary.' There will be a terrible riot this night to silence you, and your life is in great danger."

I answered him: "I will not say a word against The Holy Virgin Mary in my address, I will only refute and protest against the awful blasphemy of your catechism, that Mary is the mother of God, and most powerful intercessor man has in heaven. If there is a new riot to take my life, the Lord will again protect me. My trust is in Him. Let the police of Montreal do their duty, and I will do mine."

I found the church crowded to its utmost capacity. To

the best of my ability I protested against the impious doctrine of Rome about the power of Mary in heaven, and the title of Mother of God given her.

Then I read to them the story of

THE GOOD SHEPHERD AND THE WANDERING SHEEP.

“Then Jesus spake this parable unto them saying, What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends, and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.” (Luke 15.)

I said, in substance:

Let us weigh each of these words of Jesus, and meditate on them with the aid of His grace.

The good shepherd hath counted his sheep; but oh! unfortunately, one of them misses the call; one of them has wandered away and is lost on the way. This discovery is a thorn which pierces his heart. He can no longer rest; he is uneasy and troubled; and he leaves there his ninety and nine sheep that he loves so much, he seems no longer to think of them, that he may think only of the sheep that has gone astray. He runs after it; he searches every place regardless of trouble; and neglects no measure that may put him on the track of his dear sheep. He is wearied and exhausted in the search, but no obstacle stops or disheartens him. He loves his dear sheep so much that he thinks of nothing else. He courageously continues to seek until he finds it. He sees it at last, but in what a state! Half dead with fatigue, lacerated with thorns, its limbs torn by the brambles, and not able to go another step. What does the good shepherd do at the sight of his guilty, but still dear sheep? Does he load it with reproaches? Does he drive it with a lash to make it walk and return to the fold? No, no; the good shepherd has

not one thought of anger, not one bitter word against his dear sheep. Its errors have not in the least diminished his love for it. This guilty sheep has done much to sadden and grieve the heart of the good shepherd; but his heart, though crushed with grief, has remained full of love and compassion. He would say, on the contrary, that the errors and misfortunes of the poor sheep have only increased the love of the good shepherd towards it. He sees well that it is too much exhausted to walk and return to the fold. What does he do? He stoops down to it; he takes it in his arms; he presses it to his heart. Then he puts it on his shoulders, and behold him, bowed under his precious burden, carry back his poor deluded sheep to the fold! But this is not all. The joy of the good shepherd is so great, his happiness so sincere, that he can no longer contain himself. He shouts, he calls his friends, he wishes that the joy which he tastes may be shared by all the world; he does not allow any one to remain indifferent. "Rejoice," says he to them, "for my sheep, which was lost, is found."

Behold the Good Shepherd of the Gospel! Behold Him described by Himself—this Saviour of the world, whose blessed name makes every knee to bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth!

The Good Shepherd—the crucified Jesus—whose Gospel we preach, is the mercy of God, the boundless and the benevolence of the Eternal, incarnate in the person of the Saviour. The Saviour of the Gospel is not angry, is not incensed against His flock, even when they go astray. He loves them with a love so great, so true, that never, no never, will saints, angels or virgins be capable of loving them so much. The Shepherd—the Jesus of the Gospel—never met among His friends any one who could love His dear sheep as much as He Himself does. He has never permitted, either on earth or in heaven, any one to put himself between Him and His sheep to stimulate Him to love them.

The modern doctrine of Rome which tells us that the heart

of the Good Shepherd is so cooled and irritated against His erring sheep that He would forget them or cast them off, if the Holy Virgin or some of the other saints were not there to remind Him of what He has suffered for them, is so absurd and so wicked, that one cannot understand how so many people of intelligence allow themselves to fall into that snare.

For what reason does the Holy Virgin interest herself in the salvation of sinners, more than Jesus Himself? Why should the heart of Mary in heaven be more compassionate towards miserable sinners than the heart of Jesus? And why should her ear be more attentive to our prayers than that of the Saviour? We can never find answers to these questions within the laws of common-sense. Never shall we be able to find, in the Holy Scripture, a single word that can, in any manner, serve as an excuse or cloak for this monstrous doctrine; and it certainly insults the saints in heaven, as well as Jesus Christ Himself, to believe and say, with the Church of Rome, that our salvation does not depend entirely on the love and mercy of our Saviour, but that this love and this mercy of Jesus Christ, being paralyzed by our sins, must be, as it were, incited and revived by the compassions and by the more active and the more efficacious mercy of the saints.

To render the sacrilegious worship which she offers to the saints acceptable, and to induce sinners to put all their confidence in the Holy Virgin Mary, the Church of Rome assures us that our sins have the effect of cooling the love and compassion of Jesus Christ for us. But, then, the Church of Rome ought to tell us how it is that our sins have not the same effect of cooling the heart of the Holy Virgin and of the saints who, according to the Church of Rome, know all that we do.

If, as is no doubt the case, the saints in heaven are united in will and sentiment with God, that which displeases God, ought also to displease His saints; that which saddens and cools the heart of Jesus Christ, ought equally to sadden and

cool the hearts of the saints (always supposing the system of Rome to be true, about the pretended knowledge that the saints have of everything that transpires on the earth), and then, whilst Jesus is excited and angry in heaven, as the Popes of Rome assure us, the saints, and especially the Holy Virgin, ought to partake and approve of His wrath, instead of opposing it and hindering its effects.

Behold the misfortunes of the Church of Rome, having left the Word of God, which is the only guide of the human mind, to follow the fables and traditions of men. She has forgotten that Jesus is our intercessor in heaven; not only the intercessor for saints, but for sinners; she has forgotten that this intercessor is sufficient, and that consequently there is no need for another; she has forgotten that thousands and thousands of times, Jesus has said to sinners, "Come to Me and ye shall be saved." And that He never said, "Come to My mother, or such or such a saint, and ye shall be saved." The Church of Rome has forgotten that the name of Jesus is the only name that we can call on to be saved. She has forgotten that St. Paul, or rather the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of St. Paul, said, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4: 15, 16.)

The Church of Rome having, then, forgotten that Jesus was always good and merciful; but believing and preaching to the people, whom she had deceived, that Jesus Christ was often angry with the sinner, and seeing that sinners need to have a Saviour always good, and always merciful, a Saviour, in a word, always ready to receive those who come to Him, is bound, then, to invent and try to find another Saviour than this Jesus, whom she tells us is always angry.

Then she creates other saviours in heaven; she seeks other friends—other intercessors—other advocates, to whom she

has sacrilegiously accorded all the goodness, mercy and unfailing kindness of which she has robbed the true Saviour.

But let us hope that our brethren of the Church of Rome will soon understand that they are deceived by their Popes. It is not Mary, but Jesus, who is the "gate of heaven, the hope of sinners, and the salvation of the world."

Nothing could surpass the respectful attention of my auditors, though more than the half of them were Roman Catholics.

My hope was that the threatening storm had vanished and that there would not be any trouble. But I had again to be disappointed.

When I was just entering into my peroration, I felt as if the ground was shaken under my feet. It was evident that a great multitude of furious men were rushing towards the church.

The air was filled with the cries of, "Kill him! kill him!" and a volley of big stones broke almost all the glass of the windows, and fell on my auditors as well as on me.

As at the beginning of the address, I had warned the people that there might be some cries heard outside, and some stones thrown at me, the excitement was not so great as might have been expected. I said to them: "Be calm, I am the only one the rioters want to strike, and kill, if they can. Do not trouble yourselves. They will not molest you if you go out of the church, without any hurry, as fearless men and women. Trust in the protection of the God of the Gospel, of whom, I hope, every one of you is a true servant and believer. No doubt you will find some brave policemen at the door who will protect you."

But, as the stones were falling upon us thick as hail in a storm, there is no need to say that everyone was rushing to the doors as quickly as possible.

In a very short time I found myself almost alone in the church with the chief of the police.

"You see, Father Chiniquy, that you should have followed

my advice, and changed the subject of your address, or not have spoken at all this evening. I do not conceal from you that your life is in great danger. Look through this small aperture of the door and you will see that there are more than a thousand furious men whose determination is to kill you. Do not go out of the church, for I have only twenty policemen with me to protect you. Remain in the church the whole of the night and I give you my word of honour that nobody will injure you; with my men, well drilled, I can repulse the multitude of rioters, if they want to come into the church; but my men will be powerless to protect you if you go out, they will be overpowered by the thousand blood-thirsty would-be murderers you see in the street."

I answered him, "I see that you ignore that my God is my keeper. He is stronger than all those furious men. He has saved me already from great dangers. He will not forsake me this night.

"That merciful God has just given me a plan which, I hope, will save me and confound my would-be murderers, the priests. For I know it—these poor, blind people are sent by their priests.

"I cannot consent to spend the night here; though I do not know where I can sleep. You see that I am completely disguised. I have changed my fur cap and my fur coat with a friend to more easily fulfil my plan. The entire crowd of rioters is behind your twenty policemen, just opposite the door of the church, in the midst of the street. My intention is to go straight to them, when leaving the church. They all expect, no doubt, that I shall go right or left of the door and keep myself at the greatest distance possible from them. When I go straight to them, not one of them will suspect that I am Father Chiniquy. They all think I am too wise or too cowardly to throw myself into the lion's jaws. Follow me at a distance of twelve to fifteen feet to protect me, if you see any danger, though I do not expect any. I will go through the crowd of rioters, penetrate their ranks by pushing, and they

will open and allow me to pass as one of your personal friends."

The chief of police looked at me with a smile, and said: "You would have made a good general. I think your stratagem is as good as it is daring. Let us try it."

And, without a word more, after asking the dear Saviour to protect me, I left the church at the double quick and turned my face to the rioters who were packed, crying like wild beasts, filling the air with the most awful imprecations against me, brandishing their sticks above their heads, and asking each other, "Where is he? Where is he?"

The first I met was a giant man, swearing like a demon against the Apostate Chiniquy.

I seized him by the arm as roughly as I could do it, shook him and pulled him out of my way, with as much rudeness as was possible, saying, "What are you doing here, you band of fools? Open your ranks to let people pass. What right have you to obstruct the street? What is the matter with you all?"

He answered me with a curse, "We are looking for the infamous apostate, Chiniquy. I want to dash out his brains with this stick. But, the coward; he is probably concealed in the church under some pew."

"Chiniquy! Chiniquy!" I said, "I have seen him going out of the church in disguise. He is laughing at you all. You had better let him alone, and go back to your homes." I had to push the next and the next, in the same rough way, and exchange words of about the same kind, till I had passed through the whole crowd, and reached the file of patient hackmen who were peacefully waiting behind the rioters for customers.

Addressing myself to one of them, I said, "Take me to St. Catherine Street, and when there go to the Rev. Monro Gibson. Do you know the number of his house?"

"Yes, sir," said the good hackman, and ten minutes later I was knocking at the door of the Rev. Mr. Gibson, where I met with the most fraternal and Christian reception, and where I spent one of the most peaceful nights of my life.