

CHAPTER XXXIII

Australia

Our noble steamer laid her anchors in the calm and magnificent harbour of Port Jackson, on the 29th of September, at 7 P. M., after her narrow and almost miraculous escape from the hurricane of the previous night. The first thing we did was to thank God for having brought us safely into our "desired haven"; and from eight to ten P. M., the walls of the great saloon echoed with the sincere expressions of our gratitude.

At half past ten I had retired to my room and was preparing myself for the night, when I was not a little puzzled by the distant sounds of a great multitude of voices singing the beautiful hymn,

"Ho, my comrades, see the signal waving in the sky;
Reinforcements now appearing—victory is nigh."

My windows were opened; and when these words, gliding over the still waters of the sea, ten times reverberated by the surrounding heights, struck my ear, and when the perfect stillness of the dark night was broken by the melodious verses and tune repeated by several hundreds of powerful voices,

"Hold the fort, for I am coming:
Jesus signals still;
Wave the answer back to heaven—
By Thy grace we will."

my soul was thrilled with such sentiments of surprise, admiration and joy that no words can adequately express.

“What does that mean?” I said to myself. But the voices came nearer and nearer. “Are we not yet seven miles from Sydney? These voices cannot, then, come from that city. Do they come from the near shore around us? Impossible! for on one side is the quarantine hospital, at the feet of which we must remain till we have our clearance, to-morrow morning, from the health officer. Surely, the few unfortunate sick people who are behind the walls of that hospital cannot make the echoes of the night resound with such powerful and melodious tunes. Besides that, the other side of the shore is a perfect wilderness—naked rocks—where no human being can think of passing the night in singing. Evidently that multitude of Christian singers are on a steamer, for I hear the noise of her wheels slowly approaching. There, I see her blue and red lights moving through the darkness towards us.”

The night was very dark, which made the numerous lights of our mysterious visitor look still brighter.

Suddenly the voices stopped, and the whistle of the strange steamer filled the air, to call our attention. When the black hull of the unknown steamship was about fifty feet from us a profound and perfect silence succeeded the noise of the whistle and the songs. Every one on our steamer had their eyes fixed on the dark object which was silently rocking on our leeboard, and every one whispered to his neighbour, “What does it mean?” when a loud voice was heard, “Is not Father Chiniquy on board?” Twenty voices answered, “Yes, Father Chiniquy is on board.”

“Tell him to come on deck; his friends of Sydney want to see him,” rejoined the first voice. “We are here on this steamer to give him an Australian welcome.”

I could hardly believe my own ears. I felt so confounded at such an unexpected and unmerited public expression of kindness that it seemed, at first, as if I were dreaming. But no, it was not a dream, it was a reality. My merciful God had prepared for His unprofitable servant one of the most de-

licious hours of his life. When I was just saying to myself "Is it not a rash and foolish act on my part to have come alone to this distant land, where I have only one friend whom I know? Is it not a want of discretion and wisdom in me to have accepted the invitation of that friend to come and rest from my labours in his house? Will I not be a burden to him and his family? Is it not ridiculous, with the burden of my seventy years, to have crossed the whole hemisphere to come to Australia? Will I not be the first subject of the scorn of the whole world for such a rash action at the very end of my life? Will not God, to punish me for this act of folly, make such a solitude around me here in this distant land that I will weep as I remember the fatal hour when I left my missionary field of Canada to recruit a bodily strength which cannot be recruited at such an age?"

But these fears soon vanished away from my mind, when in the presence of that great mercy of God. The less I deserved and expected so solemn and so great a mark of kindness on the part of my unknown friends and brethren of Australia, the more I felt overwhelmed by it. My emotion was so great that I might have fainted under its burden, had not big tears of joy gushed out of my eyes and rolled down my cheeks, when kneeling for a moment in my cabin to say, "O my God, may Thy name be forever blessed for Thy mercies towards me, Thy unprofitable servant." I was soon on deck to answer, "May God bless you all, noble Christians of Sydney, for your kindness to your old unknown friend, Chiniquy. Here I am to thank and bless you all."

"Do you not recognize the voice of your old friend, George Sutherland?" asked one of the crowd.

"Yes, I recognize your friendly voice, dear and kind Mr. Sutherland, and I bless you, here, again, for all you have already done for my dear missions."

"But it is not enough to hear you; we must see you," said several voices. "Get some light around your head that we may see your face."

These words had hardly been uttered when some of the kind stewards of the steamer brought around me some of their big and bright lanterns.

"Very well! very well!" cried several hundred voices. "We are satisfied. We have heard and seen you. That is all we wanted. To-morrow we will be on the wharf of Sydney, where you will land, to give you another Australian welcome. It is now eleven o'clock. You want some rest after the terrible hurricane of last night. Go and take that rest. Good night. God bless you."

"May God bless you, noble and kind-hearted friends," I replied.

Three rousing cheers were given, and the national anthem, "God save the Queen," was sung to tell us that the noble friends whom God had given me in Australia were as loyal to their queen as they were devoted to their God. It was the signal for the steamer to turn her bow towards Sydney and leave me absolutely overwhelmed with emotions of surprise, joy and gratitude which no human words can express. But some will ask, "Who is that Rev. Mr. Sutherland who seems to be at the head of your friends in Australia?" As this question, which is a very natural one, will give me an opportunity of presenting one of the most admirable and striking evidences that our God is a prayer-hearing God, who never deserts those who put their trust in Him, I will answer:

When, in the spring of 1858, the bishops of the United States and Canada saw that I had definitely broken the iron chains by which I was, like all other poor priests of Rome, tied to their feet, they wanted to make of me such an example of misery and desolation that no other priests would ever dare to follow my example. Not satisfied with excommunicating me publicly in all their cathedrals, in their synodical meetings in their great cities, as well as in the humblest churches of their most insignificant villages, they spread everywhere the most horrible calumnies against my honour and my character. During a whole year a real deluge of de-

nunciation—calumnies of the vilest kinds—were poured on my devoted head from all the pulpits and through all the weekly and daily journals of the Roman Catholic clergy of America. But, not satisfied with these things, they engaged men to drag me before the civil and criminal courts and summoned false witnesses, who accused me of crimes for which I would have been, if not hung, at least sentenced to the penitentiary for life, had they been proved. Though perfectly innocent, I was sure to be found guilty and to be condemned, if I had not defended myself. I had then to engage the best lawyers to defend my honour and to protect my life against my accusers. Among those lawyers was Abraham Lincoln, the martyred President, who fell under the hands of the Jesuits, through their tool, in 1865.

During more than a year I was left alone to fight my battles against the giant power of Rome. No hope could come to me from my old Roman Catholic friends; they were bound in conscience to curse and destroy me. And no help could be expected from the Protestants, whose ears were, from morning to night, filled with calumnies spread everywhere against my honour, and who were under the impression that I was a disguised Jesuit, who intended to deceive them.

Though I was always, by the great mercy of God, enabled to prove myself innocent before the civil and criminal courts, these suits were costing me great sums of money, and my small private resources were soon exhausted. I had even soon to mortgage everything which was mine to pay the witnesses and satisfy the lawyers. When the time came to pay and redeem those mortgages, I was unable to do it. Then the sheriff of Kankakee took everything in my possession, even my bed, my chairs, my last cow, my library, of which I kept only my dear Bible; all was sold by the sheriff at the door of the public court of Kankakee. I was absolutely ruined that day. I had not a pillow on which to rest my head, and that night I had to sleep on the naked floor.

This was a very dark hour indeed in my experience, but I

knew for whom I was suffering all those things, and my hope was that the great Captain of my salvation, under the banner of whom I was fighting, would sooner or later come to my help, for I had put my trust in Him and Him alone.

The very next morning, when I was on my knees, crying to God for mercy and help, a letter was handed to me from Prince Edward Island with \$500 in it "to strengthen my hands and cheer up my heart." That letter was signed, George Sutherland.

So it was that the very same noble-hearted Christian brother whom God had chosen as the instrument of His mercies to strengthen my hands and cheer up my fainting heart in my first struggles against Rome, in 1859, was the very same one whom He had sent there to cheer me up again, guide and protect me in this distant land of Australia, in 1878.

How many times when working in England, Scotland, Ireland, the United States and Canada I have understood that a true friend is the greatest treasure which God can give to man. But how I realized the value of that most precious of treasures when it was again presented to me by the hands of my merciful Heavenly Father, when alone at a distance of ten thousand miles from my home, I was standing on these distant but hospitable shores of Australia.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things: His right hand and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory. He hath remembered His mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth hath seen the salvation of our God. Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together." (Psalm 98.)

Four months having passed since I had landed in Sydney, by the great mercy of God, my bodily strength had been so perfectly restored, that I had given eighty-two lectures and preached fifty sermons since the day of my arrival.

In this strange antipode land everything seems to work

by contrary laws from those of the northern hemisphere. Such a work ought to have put me down, but it was the contrary. There was such an elasticity in the pure air we breathed; there was such an exuberance of life coming from those evergreen forests and those everlasting flowers; there was such a balm spreading from those enchanted gardens, which were bathing in the light and the breeze of an eternal spring, that my threescore and ten years were passing without leaving any of the usual ugly traces of their passage. The only thing that I did not absolutely enjoy was to see and feel the thermometer marking, quite frequently, from 140 to 143 degrees in the sun and 110 in the shade. Such a heat seems almost incredible to my readers, and I would hardly believe it possible, had I not experienced it myself. But, strange to say, that burning state of the atmosphere, which would be intolerable, and which would kill people in Canada, is perfectly bearable there.

However, it was my intention to go to some cooler part of the new continent, and as I had received many kind invitations to visit the great cities of Melbourne, Ballarat, Geelong, Adelaide, etc., in the southern part of Victoria, I intended to avail myself of that providential chance to know something more of our terrestrial globe. Those regions are some 800 miles nearer the eternal ices of the southern pole, and I was told that there the southern breezes of the sea were unsurpassed for their healthy influence on the people who had the good luck to breathe their perfumes.

I purposed to return to New South Wales at the end of the hot days of the Australian summer, which meant that I intended to come back to Sydney at the end of April or May, for one must not forget that there the summer months are December, January and February. The autumn months are March, April and May. The spring months, September, October and November. How upside down the world appeared to the exiled son of Canada.

The short limits of a chapter will not permit me to relate

all that I saw of the visible manifestations of the mercies of God towards several Roman Catholics who attended my lectures in Sydney. I will give only one or two facts.

A well-educated Catholic lady had come, through curiosity, to hear my second address on "Auricular Confession," though her priest had strictly forbidden her to do so. In order not to be known by the spies the priests had at the doors of the hall to report the names of their disobedient children, she had so well disguised herself that nobody could recognize her. She listened with breathless attention from the first to the last words, though she was uncomfortably crushed in her seat by the multitude which was crammed around her. But instead of smiling and laughing with the rest of the crowd, she was weeping all the time; for her personal experience of the abominations of Auricular Confession were almost word for word the awful repetition of what she was hearing.

When she went home she fell on her knees, took a Gospel book and read the chapters which I had cited, and which she had taken down in her note-book. She found what I had said was true, that it was not at the feet of a miserable, sinful man, but only at the feet of the Lamb that sinners had to go to find peace, life and pardon. She did not want any one to tell her that, far from being purified and sanctified by pouring into the ears of her confessor the sad history of her sins, she had always come out of the confessional more guilty and miserable by the questions put to her and the answers she had to make. After a couple of days of anguish, tears and prayers, the voice of God was heard in her soul with such a power that she determined to do what I had advised her, to look to Christ and to Him alone for pardon and peace. With Magdalene, she went to the dear Saviour's feet, bathed them with the tears of her love and repentance, and, like that model of penitents, she heard the sweet voice of Jesus telling her, "Thy sins are forgiven, for thou hast loved Me much." Her joy and happiness were unspeakable at this first experience of her regeneration. There was only one thing which marred her

happiness: "What will my dear Emma say when she hears that I have left the Church of Rome to become a Protestant? That dear sister is so devoted! She is so fond of her father confessor! She is scrupulous to go to mass every morning, and receive the communion every Sabbath and every festival day of the blessed Virgin Mary! How angry she will be against me!"

Such were the fears of our interesting new convert about her younger sister. When, five or six days later, she received her visit as usual, she threw herself into her arms and kissed her with the most sincere affection. But, after a few minutes of conversation, her young sister said to her: "My dear Mary, allow me to ask you the cause of that unusual embarrassment which I notice in you. Though you have received me with your usual love and kindness, there is something strange in your voice and manners which I cannot understand. You look distressed and uneasy. What does that mean?"

"You are not mistaken, Emma, when, for the first time in my life, you find that I am a little uneasy and distressed with you. I have a secret to tell you which I fear will make you feel bad against me. But I have prayed our merciful God to grant you the same favour He has granted me, and I hope He will hear your elder sister and most devoted friend's prayer. I must tell you I am no more a Roman Catholic. I have forever given up that Church in order to follow Christ and Him alone."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Emma. "And how long is it since you have given up the religion in which we were both reared?"

"Since I heard the lecture of Pastor Chiniquy last week I found that what he said of the polluting and damning influences of Auricular Confession was so perfectly like what I know by my own personal experience, that I am sure he was true and honest in all that he said. I have read the Gospel with the utmost attention this whole week. I have so earnestly prayed the Author of every perfect gift to direct and

guide me, that I feel sure to be in the true religion of Christ when I put my trust only in His blood shed and His life given up on Calvary to save my soul."

"May Almighty God be forever blessed," answered Emma, with a cry of joy, and tears trickling down her cheeks. "I was at that same lecture on Auricular Confession, and, like you, I felt and knew by my own sad experience that Auricular Confession is a school of perdition. Like you, I have given up the Church of Rome, and I have found at the dear Saviour's feet a joy and a peace that passeth understanding."

The two sisters fell into the arms of each other, and, bathing each other's faces with the tears of unspeakable joy, they blessed the merciful Saviour who had made them free by His Word, and pure by His blood.