

CHAPTER VI

The Temptation

I was not a little surprised, when, at the beginning of the second week of November, 1858, on opening my door to some one that was knocking, I found myself face to face with the Rev. Mr. Mailloux, the grand vicar of the Bishop of Quebec, who had led Bishop O'Regan to our town on the never-to-be-forgotten third of August of the year before.

After the preliminary exchange of expressions of common politeness, he asked me if we were so absolutely alone that he could give me a confidential message from the Bishops of Canada. I gave him the assurance that we were absolutely alone, and that nobody would hear him, beside our God, myself, and our guardian angels. "Then," he said, "I feel happy to be the bearer of a message which I hope will put an end to the awful scandals and sad divisions of the last two years. . . .

"You have not forgotten how dear you were to those Bishops, nor how kind they were to you. After the Bishop of Quebec had put you at the head of the two most important, beautiful and rich parishes of his diocese, Beauport and Kamouraska, the Bishop of Montreal gave you the greatest favour ever given to priests by allowing you to go and work in his whole diocese, whenever you liked, in union with his curates. That same Bishop of Montreal, after having obtained from the Pope the magnificent crucifix you keep as a public token of the personal esteem of the vicar of Christ, has given you the official title of 'Temperance Apostle of Canada,' not only that, but it is from his advice that the city of Montreal has given you the gold medal you carry on your breast.

"Well, these venerable Bishops, who have overwhelmed you

with honours and dignities, when you were working with them, have sent me with the promise that they will do still more for you, if you come back and submit as a dutiful priest to our holy church! Oh, do not rebuke them. Do not rebuke me, for I am still your friend, as I was when you were in our midst. Forget and forgive what may have been wrong in what the last Bishop of Chicago, as well as myself, may have done against you. Come back, dear Father Chiniquy, to that Catholic Church of Canada, which has taken you in triumph from the lowest parts of the St. Lawrence river, to the shores of Lake Huron. We are ready to do still more for you! Come and dry the tears which are flowing on so many cheeks. Come back and rejoice so many friendly hearts which are so sad on account of your separation from us."

When saying these last words, he took my hands into his, pressed them in the most friendly way, and bathed them with his tears.

I would not be honest were I to deny that his words and his tears made a profound impression on me. My poor human and sinful heart was not indifferent to the honours, dignities and riches which were there in store for the rest of my life, if I would only accept the message of peace from the Roman Catholic Bishops of Canada. I would have fallen a prey to the Tempter had not the dear Saviour come to my aid. But He was there to succour and save His poor, weak, half-conquered servant. In that moment, a grand, solemn, divine spectacle struck the eyes of my soul. I saw my Saviour "on the summit of that high mountain, where the devil had taken Him to show Him all the kingdoms and the glory of the world." It seemed to me that I was hearing the devil's voice, saying, "All these things I will give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But the answer which I had heard from the lips of Jesus, thrilled my soul: "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." As a flash of lightning it passed through my whole body, trans-

forming me into quite a new being. I felt strong as an unconquerable giant, though I knew that the strength was not my own strength, and I answered: "My dear Mr. Mailloux, I am much obliged to you for the interest you show me, and I appreciate the sincerity of your motives in bringing that message from the Bishops of Canada. I would surely accept your friendly offer, if I had left the Church of Rome from any worldly motives. But my God knows that it is only for His sake and to obey Him, that I am what I am to-day. Please pardon me the disappointment I give you. Tell the good Bishops of Canada that I am very grateful for this last friendly effort they make to persuade me to return to the Church of Rome; but tell them also that though they should offer me all the dignities and the incalculable treasures of the Church of Rome, I would not take them in exchange for the treasures I have found in the Bible." And when saying these last words, I presented him with the Divine Book.

My last words had hardly fallen from my lips when his head fell into his hands, and he wept as a child for a few minutes which seemed to me an hour, for I felt exceedingly sad at such a strange and unexpected grief.

After he had eased his feelings of disappointment with his tears, he raised his head and looked at me. But his look was not the same as before, his face was like the face of a furious Iroquois (I have been told since that there was Iroquois blood among his grandmothers). That Mr. Mailloux was by nature one of the most ugly specimens of humanity which can be seen. His lips, naturally too thick and large for a man, were rendered still more repulsive by a large black piece of raw flesh on the right part of the upper lip; his eyes were unsettled, and his very smile was nothing but an idiotic grimace.

Rising suddenly on his feet, he made a step towards me and brandishing his fists near my face, he said: "Miserable apostate! You sign your sentence of death by refusing the message of peace I have just delivered to you. You know

the rights, the laws, as well as the duties of our holy Church. Our best theologians tell us that you have no right to live from this fatal hour. And our holy Popes in the compendium of our most sacred laws, in our *Jure Canonico*, tell us that it is neither a murder nor a sin to take your infamous life. If you have forgotten those laws, there will be someone who will make you remember them very soon. You have not ten days to live!"

And his rage was such when uttering these threats, that there was foam on his lips. I answered him, "I am not more shaken by your bloody threats than I was by your glittering promises of human glory and honour. I am the servant of a God who can protect me against the malice of all the Popes, the priests, and the slaves of Rome. If it is His will that my blood should be mixed with the blood of the millions you have already slain, I am ready to shed it for the cause of the Gospel."

He was out of the house before I had uttered my last words. Taking his hat and cane he had left at the double quick, and he soon disappeared.

Though I might write a volume to tell what I felt when alone after that dark hour, those who have never passed through such an awful experience could never understand me.

When alone I fell on my knees to pray for more wisdom and courage at the approach of the terrible impending conflict. On the table was the ninth volume of the theology of St. Thomas. I opened it and read that the Roman Catholics had as much right to kill me now, as to kill a wolf which was crossing their fields to eat their sheep! A little farther on, on the same table was the "*Jure Canonico*" where the Church of Rome says that it is neither murder nor a sin to kill me now; nay, I read that it was such a holy action to take away my life that the sins would be forgiven to the Roman Catholic who would risk his life in taking away mine.

The next day, just when going to take my dinner, two of our dear converts came to tell me, "Dear Mr. Chiniquy, a rumour is spreading this morning against your character, more quickly and more disastrously than the prairie fires which came so near destroying the village some years ago. You must stop it at once; if you cannot do it, we come to tell you in the name of many that you will have to leave the colony."

"What is the rumour"? I asked.

"You know, we suppose," they replied, "that when Mr. Mailloux left you yesterday, he went directly to John Bélanger's to spend the night and say his mass and preach to his people, this morning. Well, the few Roman Catholics of the place went to spend the evening with him; they remained till twelve o'clock hearing the most shameful and scandalous stories against you. Among other things Mr. Mailloux told them that you had many illegitimate children in Canada; that you had been interdicted and forced to leave the country on that account. Those who were there last evening, to the number of thirty, are publishing that story this morning against you. It goes with the rapidity and destructive power of a hurricane. As soon as we heard it, we thought it was our duty to come and acquaint you of it. Now you know what you have to do through respect for yourself and your numerous friends here." I answered them, "Dear Mr. Mailloux is very hard on his old friend! He ascribes to me gross immoralities. Yesterday he told me that I should soon be murdered. Now I see that before taking away my life the Romanists wish to take away my honour. With the help of God, we must show to the Roman Catholic ambassador, once more, that he is not in the land of the Holy Inquisition, where injustice and cruelty have full sway against those called heretics. There are laws here to protect our honour as well as our life. Please, come with me to John Bélanger's, where we shall probably find Mr. Mailloux, and then we shall see what we have next to do in the matter."

Five minutes later, we were face to face with the Rev. Mr. Mailloux, whom we found, as we expected, in the company of John Bélanger.

Before any salutation, I said, "Mr. Mailloux, please tell me, before these two witnesses and Mr. Bélanger who is here, if you know that, when in Canada, I had a great number of illegitimate children and if you have ever told that story anywhere." At this question he became as pale as a dead man and with a trembling voice, he replied, "No, sir, I have never said such a thing. I know that you were a good priest and that you never committed such crimes." These words were hardly uttered when John Bélanger, with a terrible oath, said, "Mr. Mailloux, are you not ashamed to deny such a thing? Last night in my presence and in the presence of about twenty witnesses you said that Father Chiniquy had about twelve illegitimate children in Canada." Mr. Mailloux then replied, "I did not say that he had, I said that I had been told that he had."

Bélanger, with another oath, said, "No, sir, you did not say that you were told, but you affirmed that it was so. You ought to be ashamed to deny it, this morning. Go away, and never put your foot in my house any more." "Now, Mr. Mailloux," I replied, "Tell me before these people if you believe or know that I have been guilty of such crimes in Canada as you allege." He answered, "No, sir, I do not believe that. I believe you were a good, honest priest." "Now, sir, can you say in my face that I have been interdicted and turned out of Canada by the Bishops?" With a voice half suffocated with shame, he said, "I cannot say that, for I know the contrary. I know the Bishop has given you, as a token of his esteem, a silver chalice to say mass." Then Bélanger again said, with another oath: "You are a d—— liar, for you told us last night that the Bishops had turned Mr. Chiniquy out of Canada." "Then," I said, "that is all I want to know. Good-bye, sir."

When coming back with my two friends, they advised me to prosecute him, saying that they could find at least thirty

witnesses who had heard him say it. "No, my friends," I answered, "this is not the Christian way to act with my enemies. I prefer to follow the advice of Christ—to forgive.

"Besides that, such calumnies of my enemies do not injure me at all. They do more harm to their cause than to ours. Those calumnies bear their refutation with themselves and they bring disgrace only to their authors. You see how he was confounded and trembling in my presence, and how he has been turned out from the house of his best friend."

Just four days later the judge of Manteno, a town six or eight miles north of Bourbonnais Grove, came to visit me. "I think it is my duty, my dear Mr. Chiniquy," he said, "to come and tell you that there is a formidable conspiracy among the priests and the Catholic people of Bourbonnais to take away your honour. Yesterday, I was, in my capacity of judge, the witness of a fact that proves it. You know Madam Brosseau, who has the reputation of being the handsomest lady of the town? Well, yesterday when her husband came home for his dinner, he found his wife in tears in her parlour. 'What is the matter with you, my dear, are you sick?' 'No, my dear husband, I am not sick but I am sad,' she answered. 'I have on my conscience a burden which is heavier than a mountain. I ought to have revealed it to you long ago, but I never dared. You remember when you were in California some years ago, Father Chiniquy was our priest in Bourbonnais, and I had to go to confess to him. But instead of acting with me as an honest priest, he did things which I am ashamed to repeat: but now that he is an apostate, and tries to destroy our holy religion, I think that it is my duty to reveal the truth.' Brosseau of course was furious against you. He said to his wife, 'I must have that infamous Chiniquy punished. I am just going to Judge Baby to know the best way to prosecute him.'

"When with me Brosseau related the story he had heard from his wife. I told him he was doing well to punish you as you deserved, but, I said, 'I must go with you to get the deposi-

tion of your wife.' When with her, in the presence of her husband, she not only repeated what she had told him, but she added many things more. I congratulated her on her courage, and I said, 'Madam, I will now write down your deposition in the presence of your husband. Give the details of Chiniquy's infamous conduct, for it will be necessary to have that presented to the court.' And I began to write. I covered three sheets with the most infamous acts that a man can do and that a woman can reveal. Then I took from my pocket this Bible, and I said, 'Now madam, you must swear on this Bible that what you have just said is the truth, for, as a Justice of the Peace, I must have your oath before taking another step in this matter.' Looking at me with a distressed countenance, and trembling from head to foot, she exclaimed: 'Is it possible that I will have to swear to these things?' 'Yes, madam, we cannot take another step in this matter without your oath.'

"Then bursting into tears and concealing her face in her hands, she exclaimed, 'I cannot swear that.' 'Why not?' I replied. 'Because it is a lie from beginning to end,' she said. With a terrible imprecation, her husband said, 'Why have you told us such abominations against Father Chiniquy when it is not true?' 'Because my Father Confessor, the last time I went to confess, asked me to do that,' she said.

"Now, Mr. Chiniquy," said the judge, "if I had any advice to give you, it would be to prosecute the priest at once."

I answered, "No. I prefer to follow the advice of my Saviour. When I left the Church of Rome, I knew the cost. The prophecy of Christ must be fulfilled in me as it has been in those who have fought Rome before me. Our Saviour warned us of these things when He said:

"'Blessed are ye when men shall revile and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they all the prophets which were before you.'"