

## CHAPTER VII

Father Brunet. A Prisoner in my Stead

*Curam habe boni nominis*

The calumnies of the Reverend Mailloux and Mrs. Brosseau were still ringing in my ears when a new storm burst on my head which would surely have destroyed me had not my merciful God come to my help.

A revival (a retreat) had been preached in Bourbonnais by Reverends Mailloux and Brunet previous to their departure for Canada, and the whole population had been induced to go and confess their sins to those two priests. Among the sins they were asked to confess was that of having gone to hear the address of Father Chiniquy. They were then warned against committing that sin any more by being assured that Chiniquy was an apostate—a monster. To this many times the penitent replied: “We know nothing bad about Father Chiniquy, except that he has left our holy church, but this is his business. We do not want to follow him. How can we promise never to speak to him, when he is in our midst, and that very often our daily business obliges us to meet him for advice and often for help.”

To this the Father Confessor had invariably replied: “Chiniquy is an excommunicated priest; he is a monster, he has set fire to your church and turned it into ashes.”

“But how do you know that it is Father Chiniquy who has set fire to our church?” generally replied the penitent.

“You must believe me, as I am your Father Confessor,” had answered Father Brunet . . . “I advise you even to tell it to your neighbours and friends that they may avoid his company, that he may be forced to leave the place.”

A goodly number of those honest, though cruelly deceived countrymen, left the confessional box indignant at the malice and calumny of their Father Confessor. They spoke to each other of the evident plot of those priests to destroy me, and they came to the honest conclusion that their duty was to warn me.

Remembering that my Saviour, when struck by the coward officer, had answered him: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me" (John 17:23), and that Paul had appealed to Caesar, I felt that it was not only my right but my duty to bring my implacable, cruel and cowardly enemy before my country to ask him to prove what he had said, or to repair the injury he had caused me to suffer. I could not do the work which the good Master had entrusted to my feeble hands without a good name.

The next day more than one hundred carriages were at the door of the parsonage of Bourbonnais in order to accompany Father Brunet in triumph to the depot of Kankakee, where he was to take the train for Montreal. Numberless gay banners were floating to the breeze, with the mottoes: "Honour to Father Brunet," "May God bless Father Brunet," etc.

The good (?), the holy (?) Father Brunet was sitting at a rich table loaded with the most exquisite dishes, and surrounded by many priests and friends gathered there to thank and honour him for the glorious battles he had fought, and the glorious victories he had gained against the infamous apostate, Chiniquy, the last six months. Two o'clock had just struck. It was the moment the choice and excellent desert was being brought before the holy (?) priests.

Suddenly the door of the dining-room is rudely opened, and a tall man, with a most threatening face, steps in. Without saluting anybody, he glances severely over the whole company, and with a stern voice, says: "Is Father Brunet here?"

Who was that strange personage whose rude appearance

and stentorian voice was chilling every heart? It was the Kankakee sheriff, I. Burns.

His first question, "Is Father Brunet here?" having received no answer, he raised his stern voice and said, "Is Father Brunet here?" With a trembling, stammering voice, and with cold drops of sweat rolling on his forehead, Father Brunet answered, "Yes, sir, Father Brunet is here; I am Father Brunet."

Quick as lightning the heavy hand of the sheriff was on the shoulder of the confounded and trembling priest, with this sharp sentence: "You are my prisoner; come at once to the court-house. I will put you into gaol if you do not give me securities for \$10,000 for your appearance at the next court, to show you are not guilty of a great crime which is laid to your charge."

And the worthy ambassador of Rome had to leave there and then his delicious preserves and follow the sheriff to the court-house.

The reader can understand the dismay of the multitude, who had come there with their fine carriages and their banners of triumph flying to the breeze, when they saw their Father Confessor in the hands of the sheriff, taking the road to the gaol. This was an hour of distress and desolation such as the poor Catholics of Bourbonnais had never before seen, and which they will never forget.

To make a long story short, I must say that my prosecution of Father Brunet began the 15th November, 1858, and was ended only the 23rd April, 1861, when he was sent to gaol for having refused to pay the \$4,625 which the jury had condemned him to pay for his lying slanders against me.

He had brought seventy-two witnesses to prove that I had set fire to their church, but it became evident to the jury that every one of those witnesses perjured himself to please and obey his Father Confessor.

When asked the question: "Did you see Mr. Chiniquy

when he set fire to your church?" they all answered "No"; and when asked if they were there on the spot when Mr. Chiniquy destroyed your church, they all said "No"; and when asked, "Where were you when your church was burned?" the greater part of them answered, "We were at home"; and when asked to say if their homes were near the church, they answered "No"; and when asked to say the distance from their home to the church, two answered, "Three miles," and one, "Seven miles." And when the judge himself asked those witnesses how they could swear that Mr. Chiniquy had set fire to their church when they were so far away from the spot, they answered, "We know it because our holy Confessor has told us that it was so and we have sworn that it was because our holy Father Confessor has told us that it was our duty to swear as we have done." The Protestant judge, as well as the members of the jury who heard those testimonies have told me many times since that they would never have believed me, had I told them the degree of ignorance, immorality and dishonesty which are the great result of Auricular Confession.

The fact is that that suit has done more than all my addresses and books to show the people of Illinois that Auricular Confession is one of the masterpieces of the devil to corrupt the hearts of men, enslave their intelligence, and damn their souls.

The day after poor Father Brunet was put in gaol, I was crossing one of the streets of Kankakee city when a Roman Catholic lady met me. She was just coming from a visit to the unfortunate prisoner to whom she had brought some comforting words, I suppose, with a basket filled with comforting delicacies.

Furious with me, she said with a very loud voice, "Shame upon you for sending to goal such a holy priest!"

I answered her, "It is not I who has sent him to gaol, it is the people of Illinois through the judge and the jury."

"Shame upon you," she replied again, "but if you think that you have made that holy priest miserable by you malice, you are mistaken, for he is happy."

"Who told you, madam, that he is happy," I asked.

"He has just told me so himself, yes, as he said to me just a moment ago, 'I am glad to suffer for my holy church, for it is for the sake of our holy religion that I came here to fight against that apostate priest.'"

"Well! well! madam," I replied, "I thank you for that information, it is really precious to me."

Then entering the store of a friend I asked for a pen and some paper to write the following letter:

"Rev. Father Brunet:—

"I am just receiving the news which does exceedingly gladden me. A lady who has visited you has just assured me that you were happy to be where your are. Then allow me to tell you that there are two men very happy, to-day, in Kankakee, for I am also happy to see you there in that very gaol where you wanted to send me, by inventing the calumny that I set fire to the church of Bourbonnais.

"Wishing you to continue to be happy to the end of your twelve years of reflections,

I am, your devoted,

(Signed) C. CHINIQUY."

It appears, however, that the good priest of Rome was not to be very long happy. There was a multitude of rats in that gaol which were troubling his peace during the day and prevented him from sleeping during the night by mercilessly biting him.

He then began to think how he could manage to get out of this new and happy home.

It will be interesting to the reader to know that the order of the Oblats, to whom Father Brunet belonged, had made a successful appeal to the French Canadian Catholics and had received the whole sum of money which he was ordered to pay me by the jury, as an indemnity for his calumnies, but

the order of the Oblats and Father Brunet preferred rather to commit a new crime than to give the reparation ordered by the court to me. They gave the money to a band of Roman Catholic brigands, some say to the sheriff who had succeeded Mr. Burns, and during a stormy night, the doors of the jail were broken and the black bird escaped to Canada, where he published that during a dark night, the Holy Virgin Mary dressed in a white robe had come to the door of his gaol, opened it, and said to him, "My dear son, come out!" and he had gone out in that miraculous way.

Since the day that my merciful God has opened my eyes to the errors of the Church of Rome and given me the evident mission to show the dark system of lies, duplicity, corruption of that masterpiece of Satan, nothing has helped me more to fulfil my mission than the calumnies, the perjuries, the robberies and the ridiculous fables to which Rome has had recourse, to fight her battle with me, around Father Brunet.

There is no exaggeration in saying that more than one thousand honest Roman Catholics are now walking in the blessed light of the Gospel from what they have heard with their own ears and seen with their own eyes in that celebrated suit; for that suit has been a truly celebrated one in Illinois.

And let those who suspect that we are exaggerating, when we say that the action of Father Brunet was endorsed by the Roman Catholic clergy, read in the "Répertoire général du clergé canadien, par Mgr Cyprien Tanguay," page 251, and they will find in a note at the bottom of the page, these very words: "Le père Brunet combatit pour la foi avec un zèle tout apostolique—et ses combats lui valurent six mois d'incarcération dans une prison malsaine des Etats-Unis." Translation: "Father Brunet fought with a truly apostolic zeal and his battles gained him six months confinement in an unhealthy prison of the United States."

Here is a man who invented the vilest calumnies against an old friend, who had seventy-two false witnesses perjure themselves to sustain his calumnies, who used the confes-

sional as means of spreading his calumnies, who got several thousand dollars from him whom he had injured, by keeping the fine to which he had been condemned, who broke the door of the prison where justice held him for his public crimes, and yet this very same man is canonized as a saint and offered as a model of apostolic zeal to the Canadian people!