

CHAPTER IX

**The Angel of Mercy and the Manna from Heaven. God is Our Father,
We are His Children**

Miss Rebecca Snowdon was the angel of the mercy of God in the city of Philadelphia. Having inherited a large fortune, which she had almost completely given for the support of the poor, and the different Christian work of the churches, she had an unparalleled influence among the ministers as well as among the people. She was the soul and inspiring genius of a large part of the Christian work of that great city. The poor and the unfortunate from every class were looking to her for help and consolation. At the same time the treasuries of the rich were always open to her calls.

Not satisfied with taking me to her hotel and engaging one of the best doctors to give me his care, she spent several hours of the night with him at my bedside.

At first the doctor feared there were symptoms of sun-stroke in my extreme prostration, and he did not conceal his anxiety. He asked for another physician for advice. But they concluded that my prostration was due only to anxiety of my mind, the want of sufficient food, and too much walking in the burning atmosphere of the city.

Both doctors did all that could be done to restore me, and my merciful God blessed their efforts in a marvelous way.

The next morning they declared that I was well enough to attend the noonday prayer meeting of the next day. Miss Snowdon then said: "As the doctors hope that you will be able to-morrow to attend the union prayer-meeting of the Sansom Street Church, I will go to see Mr. George H. Stuart and ask him to arrange a special meeting of the ministers, and you may trust in the Lord for the rest. Through the

press I have followed your steps since your marvelous conversion with your people. I have secretly written to several ministers in your neighbourhood, and Mr. Stuart has done the same. The best reports about your conversion and your genuine evangelical work are in our hands, as well as the sad history of the complete loss of your crops; Mr. Stuart knows more about you than you suspect. All that can be done by us to help you in your difficult work, will be done. Be of good cheer, and trust in the Lord.

“There are millions of idle dollars in Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and in the cities of New England. By the grace of God some of those idle dollars must be unearthed and go to save your starving people. There are thousands of Christians who will be happy to share with you and your people what the Lord has entrusted to them.”

God only knows what balm these words were to my soul. . . . After she had spoken, I asked her to read the 103rd Psalm of David: “Bless the Lord, O my soul! and let all that is within me bless His holy name.” This she did. After that she humbly knelt and sent to the Mercy Seat, for me and my poor people, one of those ardent supplications as she only could do.

That George Stuart of whom Miss Snowdon had spoken, was known to me only by reputation. I knew he was one of the greatest Christian philanthropists of our time; that he was at the head of one of the rich banks of Philadelphia, and the founder of the Young Men’s Christian Association.

The next day he kindly took me, with Miss Snowdon, in his carriage, to the noonday prayer-meeting of Sansom Street Church, and he helped me to walk to the front pew, for I was still quite weak, and my feet were not yet completely healed.

The pressing invitation sent to all the ministers to attend that meeting had spread the rumour that George Stuart and Miss Snowdon had some very interesting new facts to present about Father Chiniqy and his people. The church was

crowded to its uttermost capacity by the élite of the city. Not less than sixty ministers had come to the appeal.

As soon as the first preliminaries of the meeting were over, Mr. Stuart, having asked and obtained permission to speak twenty-five minutes instead of five, gave the history of our conversion by reading half a dozen interesting letters of ministers who had visited us. And he depicted the spectacle of our sufferings from the loss of our crops with such a burning eloquence that there were no eyes dry in that large audience.

He concluded by saying: "It is one of our wisest regulations not to beg any money in our noonday prayer-meetings, and I will not break that law, but in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ, I ask all the ministers who are here, and those of you my Christian brothers and sisters who can do it, to remain in order to hear from me and Miss Snowdon what we consider to be our duty in this solemn hour."

Only very few left the church after the benediction.

At the invitation of Mr. Stuart, the ministers came to the front. After a fervent prayer from one of them, the assembly was organized into a new one under the presidency of George H. Stuart, in order to put to me the questions they desired about our colony and myself. One of the leading ministers then asked me if I had joined any denomination.

I answered, "No, sir, not yet. After we had accepted Christ for our only Saviour and the Gospel for our only rule of faith, we publicly gave up our allegiance to the Church of Rome and we called ourselves Christian Catholics." "Why did you not connect yourselves with one of our great Christian denominations?" asked that reverend gentleman. "That denomination would have taken you by the hand, and they would have helped you through your present difficulties."

I answered, "The joining of one of your denominations is a more difficult thing than you suspect. You have no idea how your unfortunate divisions look to the eyes of a new

convert from Rome. As you want me to speak plainly, I will tell you the truth on that subject. Your divisions are a frightful scandal to us: they make us unspeakably sad. There we see the grand Episcopal Church so much opposed to what she calls the dissenters, that she will not allow a single one of their ministers to speak in her pulpits, or receive the communion at her altars. Here we find the Presbyterians divided into several camps fiercely fighting against each other. Every one of you knows how the United States are just now filled with the deplorable scandals of the war between the two grand sections of the Presbyterians under the names of Old School and New School. A little further we find the Lutherans with their crucifixes and so many other ways of Romanism, assuring us that they are the best branch of the Church of Christ. But at a little distance further we see and hear the fiery and pious Methodists telling us a very different story. I have many reliable volumes in my library showing me that there are more than 100 different denominations of Protestants, many of them fighting each other like wild cats! How can we find which is the best, the most evangelical, the most really Christian among that multitude of denominations, when they, more or less, condemn each other? Have you ever thought of the amount of study required to know which is the surest, the shortest way to heaven among so many roads which lead into such different, not to say opposite, directions? Do you not see that this is a most intricate, difficult, not to say impossible thing, for a man just coming out from the dark dungeons of Popery? Oh! dear Christian friends, why are you not one? Your divisions, your animosities, your quarrels are a terrible stumbling-block to us. When will come the happy day when the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the Baptists, the Methodists and the Congregationalists, etc., will embrace each other and forget their differences at the dear Saviour's feet! Then the world will be saved. Then and then only this world will

be brought by an irresistible, a Divine power, to the feet of the Lamb who will make the people pure with His blood, and free with His Word!

“You advise me, my dear and venerable brethren, to join one of your denominations! It is my prayerful desire since the happy day I found my dear Saviour Jesus Christ, who washed my soul in His blood. But the more I study your different books of explanations about your peculiar articles of faith, the more I find it difficult, not to say impossible, to make a choice. And the more I think that we, the new converts of Rome, do well to accept for the only rule of faith the answer of our Saviour to the young lawyer who asked him, ‘Good Master, what must I do to have Everlasting Life?’ ‘Love God, My Father, who has so much loved you, that He has sent Me to save you. Love your neighbour as yourself, repent, believe, invoke My name, and you will be saved.’ Is that not the very platform brought from heaven by the Son of God to save the world? My heart is sad when you invite me to join one of your denominations. For I want to join them all. I want to embrace them all and press them all to my heart as equally being the children of God. Beloved of Christ, I do not want to reject a single one of you, so long as you love our Saviour Jesus Christ and believe in His atoning blood to save us. But if I unite with the grand Episcopal Church for instance, will I not then be deprived of proclaiming my Saviour’s love in the other churches? Will it not be a sad necessity to consider myself above the rest of my Methodist, Baptist, or Congregationalist brethren? If I unite with the Baptists, after being immersed, will I not be forbidden to sit at the Lord’s table, as a brother, with the Presbyterians and the rest of the Christians? Will not the rest of the disciples of Christ be as excommunicated, profane men, and strangers to me?

“Are you prepared to tell me that that platform built by the hands of Christ Himself, ‘Love God and thy neighbour, repent, believe in Me, invoke My name’ is not large enough

to keep us all: or that it is not holy enough to save us all?

“But I do not come here to teach you, my beloved and venerable brethren, I come to be taught by you. It is my desire to follow your advice and if possible join with one of your Christian denominations. For I feel that if we do not, our newly converted congregations will soon form, as a new division, a new denomination, under the name of Chiniquy’s church—a thing which we must avoid at any cost. That appellation of Chiniquy’s church has already been given us, to my great distress, by the Roman Catholics. But this choice of the denomination with which we will unite requires a great deal of attention, study and prayer. Please tell us how much time you give us to make that choice?”

The reverend gentleman who had been selected to address me, said, “As you have already read and thought much about that matter, we think that you could give us your choice tomorrow. We answer, I pledge my word of honour, that the denomination you will join will take you and your converts by the hand, and help you to go through the difficulties by which your faith is so much tried.”

And turning his face towards the ministers surrounding him, he said: “Do you not sanction what I have said, and do you not promise Father Chiniquy that you will do all in your power to persuade your church to help him when he will have connected himself with one of our denominations?” They all answered, “Yes! we do promise that.” I then said, “I cannot sufficiently thank you, venerable and dear brethren, for this unexpected, unmerited, and so great kindness towards me. You give me one day to consider which is the most evangelical Christian denomination among you, and if I join that denomination, my dear people and myself will be delivered from the terrible calamity which is upon us! This is very kind, very liberal indeed! But allow me to show you that I am still more liberal than you are. I do presently give you three days to consider and solve that great question of the most evangelical Church.

“If it is an easy task for me, as you say, to find out that great and marvelous secret in one day, it will be more easy for you all to find it in three days. I am here alone, without experience, and without knowledge of the great questions involved in that finding: whilst you will not only be sixty against one to resolve that great problem, but you are among the most learned men of the United States, being also well versed in all the questions and the difficulties involved in that work. Yes! I ask you again, please take three days for your researches, and the moment you unite in finding what I want to know, tell it to me. I solemnly promise here that I will connect with that denomination at once.”

The last word was not yet out of my mouth when a burst of enthusiastic applause shook the very walls of the vast edifice. Every one seemed to be beside himself. They were clapping their hands, striking the floor with their feet, waving their handkerchiefs in sign of approbation, and crying, “Bravo! Bravo! That is right! That is right!”

Mr. Stuart, who had been among the most enthusiastic in applauding, rose, and said, “The lesson Father Chiniquy has just given us, is one of the best we ever had: it is worth a million of dollars. I wish all the echoes of our vast plains and high mountains would carry them over all the Protestant Churches of the five continents. Father Chiniquy has put us Protestants into a bag out of which we cannot escape. Yes! our miserable, ridiculous divisions are a shame! How can we ask him to do a thing which not one of us can do—nay, a thing which cannot be done by sixty, by a million of us! Would to God that we were *one* as our Saviour Jesus Christ wants us to be one, that the world might see that He is really the Saviour of our world. Without that unity, I fear much that our Christianity is a sham! Would to God that our theologians would have kept the Christian nations on that platform on which Father Chiniquy and his people stand to-day!

“I move that no more effort be made to ask him and his converts to come down from that large and divine platform which he has so wisely chosen and on which he so nobly stands! Is he not safe on it? Who will second my motion?” And the whole assembly—ministers and people—were on their feet to second it.

“I move a second motion,” said Mr. Stuart, “which is, that we respectfully ask the ministers and officers of every denomination in Philadelphia to invite Father Chiniquy to address their people every evening of next week, including the Sabbath, and that collections should be taken at each meeting for him and his people to save them from their great tribulation.”

That motion was seconded with thunders of applauding voices. “Here is my third and last motion,” said Mr. Stuart. “I move that just now, a collection be taken by Miss Snowdon and other ladies she will choose, to help Father Chiniquy and his people. I have had small cards put in the pews that you may write your names with the sums you wish to give, if you have not the cash with you; and to give a good example, I put these \$200 into Miss Snowdon’s plate.”

This motion was again seconded by the whole people. The collection was immediately taken by Miss Snowdon and the other ladies, and \$1,500 were put into my hands, in good promissory notes and cash, before I left the church!

The Israelites perishing in the desert from the want of water, were not more filled with admiration and joy when they saw the fresh water coming from the rock at the touch of Moses’ rod, than I was at the strange, unexpected and marvelous spectacle which was before me.

The great Christian, George H. Stuart, had touched the rock, and the fresh waters were coming to quench the thirst and save my dear people. I was unable to speak only with my tears of joy and gratitude. My emotion was too great to utter any intelligent expression.

What I heard and saw that day was as marvelous to me as the manna which had fallen from heaven at the prayer of Moses.

I remained twenty days in Philadelphia addressing the people in seventeen different churches. Then I went to New York, where a still greater success was in store for me. Then to Boston. Three months later, I was invited again, not only by the ministers of those cities, but by those of Chicago, Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburg, Montreal, Toronto, Springfield and many others. The churches were never large enough to hold the people who wished to hear what I had to say of the mercies of our God towards us.

Wherever I went, committees were formed under the name of "Chiniquy's Committee," to raise money enough to pay the mortgages, and buy food and clothing for the people. On my first return home a committee was formed of six of our principal converts of St. Anne, who selected me for the president, and Mr. Staples for the secretary, to correspond with our Christian benefactors, spread, I dare say, over the whole world, for abundant help came from England, Scotland, Germany and even from the Australian colonies.

Before the end of the year, all the mortgages, to the amount of \$56,000, were paid. Two hundred barrels of flour had been distributed, with as many bushels of potatoes, and thousands of pounds of meat necessary to make the people forget the terrible calamities which had struck them.

Besides that one hundred and fifty large boxes of good clothing had been sent to be distributed.

When the last cent of mortgage had been paid, and the numberless cutthroat mortgages given by our dear converts had been torn into fragments, with our own hands, and thrown into the fire; when every one had been fed and clothed and the tears of distress had been changed into tears of joy, I gathered my dear countrymen into their humble chapel, to ask our merciful God to bless our benefactors, and to thank Him for His mercies toward us. With the holy prophet we

sang together, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with food. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"
(Psalms 107.)