

TAILLEFER AND THE BANNER OF THE SACRED HEART

Here is a slight episode in the history of Canada which proves that among the friends of the Sacred Heart there are others besides « vulgar bigots. » It was in 18 when the great Pius IX was the object of his enemies' insults and his States were being taken from him. The Catholic people of Canada, like those of Europe, were moved on hearing the news and were anxious to show their love for the common Father of the faithful. Several hundred young men enrolled themselves in the Papal zouaves and crossed the sea to defend the Holy Father.

They embarked at Marseilles, with the banner of the Sacred Heart at their head. The wharf was crowded and while these new soldiers of the Pope were proceeding to the steamer, some impious Italians insulted them by hurling their favorite epithets at them. It was unfortunate for them. The command had been given to Taillefer, that hero who from that time became celebrated in our history. He was worthy of his name for he was gigantic in stature and his strength was in proportion to his size.

Captain Taillefer thought it was his duty to avenge the insult to the flag. After enduring patiently four or five minutes, he went straight to the chief insulter and said to him : « What have we done to you that you should insult us ? » — « I am not hissing you or your comrades, the Italian replied, but your flag. » At these words Taillefer drew himself up. « Ah ! he said, you insult our flag. I could have forgiven an insult to myself personally but an insult to our flag is another thing. You must apologize. As he said this he laid both his immense hands on the shoulders of the insolent Italian, he crushed him down by his weight and forcing him on his knees, he called out in thunderous tones « Apologize to the Sacred Heart. » And as the stupefied individual hesitated he called out a second time : « Apologize to the Sacred Heart. » The impious man saw that he must ; he did so as best he could and disappeared in the crowd without saying a word.

« Not only military men, observed a Marseilles newspaper, but all honorable men without distinction of creed or opinion, agree in saying that it was quite natural for the Canadian Zouaves not to allow their flag to be insulted when they had to maintain the name of their country and the honor of their cause in a foreign land. »