

Choice Literature.

BOB AND HIS TEACHERS.

A GLASGOW STORY.

BY REV. DUNCAN MORRISON, D.D., OWEN SOUND.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BOB AT HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE—STRANGE FANCY FOR A CHILD AS TO THE LOCALITY OF HEAVEN—THE RESURRECTION.

On his return to Glasgow Bob took an early opportunity of visiting his mother's grave. At this time the chief burying ground was that in connection with the old parish church, St. Mungo's, or the "Hie Kirk," as we called it, but this burying ground becoming gorged with graves—the graves of the rich and poor, the young and the old—the city was compelled to seek for a more extensive area and this they found on a neighbouring hill on the summit of which stood the monument of John Knox with his Bible in one hand, and the other as if in the act of expounding its truths; and near to this monument, in the direction of the north, was that of McGavin, the famous Protestant champion that did so much to stem the tide of Romanism in his day.

This hill, called the "Necropolis," or city of the dead, was separated by the Mollindinar Burn from the burying ground of the "Hie Kirk," but over this burn was thrown a bridge consisting of one heavy arch, called "the bridge of sighs" from the fact that so many mournful processions pass that way to bury their dead, and so the two burying grounds, the old and the new, are practically one and the same; but the former was the original burying ground of the old parish church of St. Mungo, the patron saint of Glasgow, concerning whom the ballad runs:—

St. Mungo was a famous chiel,
And a merry chiel was he,
And he drank o' the Mollindinar burn
When better he could na pree.

Here—I mean in the new portion of the grounds, the Necropolis—Mrs. Armstrong slept in a lonely grave, for the body of her husband drowned at sea many years ago had never been found. Here her remains had rested in a pine coffin for nearly seven years, and it was not thought expedient to disturb them or touch the sacred spot with its becoming marble slab and its simple epitaph which the hand of affection had traced when Bob awoke to a full sense of his bereavement. All the change he made was to enclose it with a neat iron rail in keeping with the plain character of this, her very humble resting-place, and make arrangements for its being kept clean and in good order. What more could Bob do?

Now hear how he speaks concerning his mother in a letter to a friend—I only give that part of the letter bearing upon her:—

"It was a time of reminiscence with me. I went back in thought to the earliest remembrance of my mother, and sought to call back in long review the whole history and deep concern for me which she daily lavished upon me, little thought of by me at the time, but the memory of it—how pleasant! I think few persons have had such a training as I have had, and I am sure few have passed through life who had a more intense faith in things unseen than she—a more realizing sense of the eternal world, the solemnities of the judgment day, the continuous presence of the great Silent Witness

Who is writing now the story?
Of our thoughts and actions too.

Her conscientiousness was great and her daily concern for me lest I should deviate from the path of rectitude was correspondingly great. A little innocent frolic she did not mind, but on the contrary rather liked; but the least divergence from truth or the path of rectitude—any little peccadillo, that another would readily excuse, was to her a grief, a sting, I believe, that went deeper than I had any conception of at the time.

"I remember especially one such occasion—how unknown to her I went one evening to the theatre in old Dunlop Street to hear a Star that was to play Richard III. It was at the solicitation of a companion in the shop who took a great delight in theatricals and was never done telling me of the charms of such entertainments. I did not tell my mother I was going to the theatre that night, but that I was going to a concert, trying to satisfy my conscience on the score of the music connected with the play as well as the acting. I made bad work in giving in my report to her next day and stumbled upon several falsehoods in answering her questions. At length, I had to make humble confession and say that it was the theatre and not simply a concert that my companion and I had attended.

"She was silent for a time, at least, said but little, but I saw how deeply the iron had entered her soul. It was nothing that I tried to assure her that I got no harm at the theatre but rather good, and that a great many respectable people and even ministers go to the theatre, and that religion was not worth much if it would not hold up a man at such a time even if there was danger. The conversation at the time ended with her telling me a story which I have often thought of and which has done me good many a time.

"The story is, that once on a time a saint, strong and self-confident in his strength, ventured on a scene of temptation, and there the devil found him and was wrestling with him for his destruction. Just then an angel of light passed by and said:—

"That is one of the saints of God; let him alone."

"Whereupon the devil said:—

"Well, if he is one of the saints of God, what right has he to come on my ground?"

"Ah me! what a place the grave is for tender reminiscence and humble confession! To think that I ever grieved my mother, in word or temper preferring my own coarse and stubborn way to hers is a grief to me now, although at the time I considered that I did well to be angry. And then to think of her so calm and patient meanwhile—quietly waiting till I would come to myself again—all that makes the grave a solemn place to me—a sort of confessional that is not altogether without solace. No one will ever know how much I

owe to my mother. Her life was indeed a life of faith in which Calvary had a great place and in which righteousness was the great aim. I never heard a word drop from her lips which was not consistent with the fact that to be religious was unspeakably more important than to be rich or learned or great.

"While I was musing I noticed a little boy with his nurse passing, and that both seated themselves beside a new made grave hard by. The child looked enquiringly at me as if he expected me to say something to him:—

"At length I said: 'Are you looking for anyone?'

"I am looking for my mother," he said.

"Where is your mother, my child?"

"In heaven, sir. They told me she was in heaven."

"But this is not heaven, my child."

"Oh, it is heaven, we saw her laid here on the day she was buried."

"Did you ever hear anything of heaven?"

"Yes, mother often spoke to us of heaven and the angels and (his eyes sparkling) pa, and Jim and Ned. They're all here."

"Well then how can this be heaven—this narrow bed where she sleeps so still and cold?"

"The child, (looking up to his nurse) was silent."

"Tell me this, dear child, will your mother always lie here still and cold?"

"No, no, she will rise again."

"How do you know?"

"She told us."

"When is she going to rise?"

"I don't know. I came here yesterday and to-day and when I saw you I thought you would have some message from her."

"What like was your mother? Beautiful?"

"Oh she was," said the child with his eyes sparkling, "butful, butful! Her face was white as the snow. I told her so, but she said that was nothin'—that she was going to be like the angels, and that she would rest in the grave till the 'ection."

"Then you think your mother is resting in the grave?"

"Yes," he replied, "just as we do in the night, but mother said 'the morning cometh.'"

"Then don't you see, dear child, that the grave is only the resting place of the body?"

"No, no, sir," he said, "it is heaven, and pa lies there and Ned and Jim and when the morning cometh they will all come, hand in hand, to meet me in their shining robes; and mother said the morning may come at any time."

"If this grave is heaven where are the angels? There are no angels here, my child."

"Oh yes," said he, "there are angels in every grave—one at the head and one at the foot; mother told us."

"It was in vain to argue with the child, like Wordsworth's, he would have his way and I did not care to disturb his fancy. The grave to him was heaven because his mother was there, and all that was wanting to make it golden was 'the morning'—the Sun of Righteousness to arise with healing in His wings."

"Marvel not at this, saith the Lord, for the hour is coming in which all that are in their graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. What a morning that will be! What strange reverses! Many that were first in this world shall be last, and many that were last like my mother shall be first. Here now is one reported to be worth millions, but hard, selfish and sordid to the bitter end. He lived in splendour. He was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day! He filled a large space in the public eye and down to the grave he came at last, enclosed in a golden coffin and followed by a long procession bearing the badges of woe. But passing through the portals of the grave he had to leave all behind—for strait is the gate and narrow is the way; and now rising up on the other side he enters upon an eternal career of unprovided nakedness, seeking death and will never be able to find it. But here is another, and oh, how wondrous is his beauty and his fragrance! See how, as he passes into the other life, the golden gates are thrown open and angels come flocking to meet him—how the radiant vista opens to receive him; how in the centre He that is chief, rises and says: 'Welcome, welcome home!' Who is this that has met with such a grand reception? A crowned sovereign? Some great scholar or statesman on whose lips listening senators hung? No! he was a poor man. He never owned an acre. He had to rise early and sit late and eat the bread of sorrows, and to him were appointed weary days and weary nights in which he spent his all. He came to the grave in a pine coffin and was hastily buried in a corner appointed for strangers. His was a hard lot, but still, accepting the position which God had assigned him, he early gave himself to the Lord, grew in grace, laid up treasure in heaven which he knew would be safe, and, having finished his course, he laid himself down to die, wearing a smile, cheered with hopes full of immortality. And here is another and another, emerging from the darkness of time, like the stars of night till the whole firmament is aglow! How varied their history; their experience, their original situation and circumstances—some from lowly places and humble homes, the princely merchant, the wise statesman, the devoted pastor, the learned sage—thousands whose names were splendid even here below, but who learned to cover themselves with true honour and renown thousands who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the firmament and as the stars forever and ever."

(To be continued.)

NEVER BE IDLE.

Never sit down idle. If you have an hour, or ten minutes, or five minutes to wait between duties, take up a book, and learn something which will be of use to you, or take the time to do some little bit of work that needs to be done, or to write a letter that ought to be written. Learn thus to fill every moment of time, not allowing even a minute to go to waste. Then you will form a habit which will go all the way through life with you, and enable you to make your years really twice as long, and your life worth really twice as much to the world as if you should go along dropping and losing the fragments of precious time all the way.

JOY.

I saw her once, not for a day or hour,
But through the years that fled so soon away;
My cup was full; my lips refused to pray
For further good, so rich, so rare the dower
Of faith and love and song that then was mine;
She poured her magic into every day;
The night was noon, and all the year was May,
And everything was perfect and divine.

The vision passed; and now it looms afar
Upon the dim verge of uncertainty;
Now seen, now hidden, like some distant star,
As flit the clouds athwart sweet memory;
But when these rugged ways my feet have crossed
Joy will be mine once more, and never lost.

—Matthew Richey Knight, in *The Week*.

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

THE MORAVIAN MISSION AMONG THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS.

Among the flora of the Himalayas not the least interesting is the *juniperus excelsa*, the "pencil cedar," a tree held sacred by the Tibetans, who use it for their sacrificial fires. Clinging to the merest crevices, thriving on almost precipitous declivities, it roots itself with a firmness that acknowledges alone the superior power of the avalanche. Evergreen in life and when felled furnishing most valuable timber, it is of amazingly slow growth. A century may elapse before a seedling from it deserves the name of tree. Yet it can and does attain noble proportions, its trunk sometimes measuring from nine to twelve yards in circumference. To the juniper of the Himalayas the mission of the Moravian Church among those mountains has been compared. Planted in an almost inaccessible region and in the face of gravest difficulties, its progress has been slow. Yet faith foresees a day when the hardy evergreen shall flourish like a cedar of Lebanon. Possibly, as by the botanist, the *juniperus excelsa* is regarded with peculiar interest, so also for the friend of Protestant missions the story of this undertaking, which involves a residence for Europeans at an elevation a couple of thousand feet higher than the famous St. Bernard Pass, and journeys through mountain defiles far above the level of the summit of Mount Blanc, may in like manner possess attractions.

Invited, in 1850, by the well-known apostle to the Chinese, K. F. A. Gutzlaff, to send missionaries to the western portion of that great empire, the Mission Board of the Moravian Church called for two volunteers. Thirty responded. Two of these, Edward Pagell and A. W. Heyde, both laymen, having been selected and sent to Berlin for a course in medicine, in the summer of 1853 proceeded to India. The original plan had been to seek Mongolia via Russia, but the Czar's fidelity to the traditions of the Orthodox Greek Church negatived a request for permission to take this most direct route. At Kolghur, a station of the Anglican Church, on the Sutlej north of Simla, the resident missionary rendered them every assistance in his power, and a beginning was made in the study of Hindustani and Tibetan. When somewhat familiar with the latter an attempt was made to enter Tibet. But the boycott was most effectually employed to defeat this. Hardly was Pagell a few days' journey within the Province of Tsotsi when he realized that starvation faced him. Not even could parched barley-meal be bought. Water was to be obtained only on condition of a withdrawal from the country, and even after a promise to this effect had been given not more than one day's allowance of barley-meal could be procured by the missionary's attendants.

Lama-ridden Tibet being thus barred shut, the best that could be done was to seek Mongolia by way of Ladak, a former Tibetan province, now tributary to Kashmir. Here also jealousy of Europeans drew forth a peremptory order to return across the border.

Satisfied that for the present an advance was impossible, the missionaries then found a permanent home in Kyelang, a village of Lahoul, within the limits of British sovereignty. Here, 150 miles from Simla, and the same distance from Leh, the capital of Ladak, at a height of 10,000 feet above sea-level, in the midst of a population prevaillingly Tibetan and Buddhist, they began their labours in 1856.

Before long they were joined by the Rev. H. A. Jaschke, a scholar pre-eminent in linguistic abilities, who had resigned his co-directorship of the classical college of the Moravian Church in Germany that he might share their labours.

In 1865, still keeping in view their ultimate purpose of carrying the Gospel into Chinese territory, they founded a second station at Poo, on the Sutlej, about a hundred miles north-east of Simla, and therefore on the very confines of Tibet. Yet endeavours to invade the land from this point also failed, even though the people were willing enough to send for the missionary to inoculate multitudes against the small-pox in a time of distress from that scourge. The very lamas and nuns anxiously availed themselves of vaccination, and honours were shown to the missionaries such as only men of high rank receive; but the work of vaccination over, he was significantly reminded that he belonged to the other side of the border. Nay, at a later time, so recently as 1884, when another trial was made, friendly officials gave assurance that it would cost them their heads if they permitted a European to pass.

Nevertheless, one barrier has since then broken down.