

## Choice Literature.

### BOB AND HIS TEACHERS.

A GLASGOW STORY.

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

#### CHAPTER I.

##### EARLY MANIFESTATION OF GENIUS' CHALK DRAWINGS.

About forty years ago in the city of Glasgow, and in one of the back streets there, I spent a good deal of my time in the exercise of my vocation. The families living in the district in which I was concerned were chiefly Roman Catholics, with a sprinkling of Scotch Presbyterians and a very considerable proportion of nondescripts; some of them very poor and several very degraded. For example, I may mention the case of Madame Nants and her daughter as an illustration. This woman, who lived very much alone, was, at the time referred to, on her deathbed, and few were they that came to see her; but among the few was this daughter, who had come again and again with the view of obtaining forgiveness for some offence she had committed years before. There had been a long estrangement, but the daughter, it seems, could not think of her mother dying and not absolving her from her offence. I was present on the last occasion of her visit, and never can I forget the sad spectacle. There was the daughter on her knees pleading for pardon, and there the mother lay all but speechless, but the set of the mouth, the hardness of the expression, showed how her thoughts were running, and how vain every appeal must be.

"No! No!" was the only response.

I took the candle and looked into her face, and saw that the end was near. I urged her to forgive her daughter. I reminded her that she herself needed forgiveness, and that she could not look for forgiveness unless she granted forgiveness. The last answer I could get from her, scarcely audible, was:-

"No, never! God may forgive her, but I, never!"

She died that night, but remained relentless, cruel, implacable to the bitter end. I could do no more. I came away greatly moved; but in descending the rickety stair—in breathing once more the balmy air of that sweet October evening, and in looking up to the silent sky all aglow with stars and the moon walking in her brightness, I was still more so, and could not help saying to myself: "Welcome, ye silent stars; roll on in your dutiful paths of obedience, and shed down your beauty on this sin-blinded world. You are, indeed, beautiful, but not one of you half so beautiful as that which shines in the constellation of Isaiah. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee, for My ways are not your ways, and My thoughts are not your thoughts, but high as heaven is above the earth, and distant as the east is from the west, so are My ways above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts."

Very different was the character of a Mrs. Armstrong, a widow who, with her son, Bob, lived hard by. How did I come to get acquainted with her? The answer is that in my rounds among the families I had noticed again and again pictures of animals, cocks and hens, horses and cows and cabs with their drivers sketched in chalk upon the walls, doors, sills and smooth flags of the pavement all around his mother's house. Wherever a smooth surface could be found in that neighbourhood there Bob was sure to leave some trace of his presence. Those drawings in chalk, or rather outlines, were numerous; you would meet them everywhere; but it was not their number so much as their excellency that attracted my notice. In this respect they were wonderful. They were so accurate, truthful and commanding in their bold and easy outline that one could not look upon them without feeling that the hand of a master had been present. But how could a master hand find time to spread his sketches all around the lane in this fashion? Why should he seek in this obscure way to bring himself into notice? On making enquiry I was led to the very humble abode of Bob and his mother, and found that Bob, a mere child of ten years, was the artist whose sketches had filled me with admiration. Why did he scatter them about in such profusion? Is that what you say? Why does the canary sing and pour forth his song unheeded? Why does the orator love to speak, and cannot sit still when the occasion comes? Why does the poet tell out the deeper truths which warm his heart in those grand elate hours when he sees all things clearly? You may chain the eagle's wing so that he rise to heaven no more. You may seal the mountain spring, but you cannot restrain the deeper thoughts of the soul—the workings of genius—the ideals of beauty and grace that flit before the mental eye and seek for form, outness, visible expression.

Bob was a natural painter. It was a matter of great importance to him; but bread and butter was more so, at least in the estimation of his poor mother. He was employed in a neighbouring foundry; and what with the trifle he received as wages—long hours, beginning every morning at six—and with the pittance she herself obtained by working out—washing, scouring and other chores, she managed to make out a living for her little household. Very careful was her training and very exemplary her walk, and yet Bob fell beneath the power of temptation. It was in this wise: pieces of copper and lead, rejected castings and couplings, and such like were being carried away by the boys that worked at the foundry and sold for a trifle. Such was a sort of income to the little spendthrifts, and they had often high times. Bob, seeing all this going on with impunity, thought to try his hand at the same game. He did so, and the very first day he was caught. Those little pilferings had been going on at a great rate recently, and so the janitor had been charged to keep a sharp lookout, and Bob's pockets, bulky beyond ordinary, betrayed him. There was nothing for it but to go to prison, and to prison he did go. And who will describe the feelings of that barefooted child as the gaoler handed him to the turnkey, and the turnkey opened and closed the heavy iron door of the cell and withdrew? In that little cell he was to spend thirty weary days and nights, breathe the fetid air of the prison, and hear the groans and curses of those that neither feared God nor regarded man.

A gaol-bird! A child swept away by the passing wave—swept into the criminal ranks, because forsooth he has picked up on his way some rejected pieces of cast-iron and brass couplings to sell in company with other boys! Where is the God that watches over innocence? Where the prayers of his godly mother? Is there any God at all? Is there any profit in prayer? Does not one event happen to all—to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not? That is exactly what might have been said over the fate of Joseph when he was thrown into prison in Egypt. Had the narrative stopped just there our faith in Divine providence had been shaken; but God was not done with Joseph then, and He was not done with the poor child of whom we now write when he was left in that lonely cell. What does He do? He raises sympathy in his behalf.

And is that all? No! God watches over the fatherless child and raises up friends in his behalf, and thus He did in the case of Bob. old Chubb, the cobbler, who lived quite near his mother.

What was it that led him to take such an interest in this poor child in the day of his distress, and, when his mother died, to take him into his family? There was no obligation on the part of old Chubb, and there was no feeling on his part that he was doing a grand thing in thus befriending Bob. It was to him the most simple and natural thing in the world. The only answer to such questions is—sympathy—natural sympathy. What can this sympathy mean? How came it that old Chubb was so drawn towards this child? How came it that Pharaoh's daughter was drawn towards the lovely infant that she rescued from the dangers of the Nile—drawn as angels are drawn towards the world in their ministry—drawn as Christ Himself was drawn towards the lost? What is the source of this sympathy, the token of which I see on every hand—homes for the poor, hospitals for the sick, refuges for the fallen? Surely it must be from above—the fruit of that good Spirit that is in communion with all true hearts as the sun is in communion with all the streams in the world. It must be divine. Pitiless nature does not teach it. There is no sympathy in the forces of nature, cold, stern, inexorable. Her iron wheels grind on forever, pausing neither for mother's cry nor orphan's moan. Then whence is this compassion for another's woe? Is it not a token of man's kinship with angels—his kinship with the Christ of God?

#### CHAPTER II.

##### BOB IN PRISON VISIT OF THE CHAPLAIN HIS RELEASE AND WELCOME HOME—A MOTHER'S LOVE.

There was no sleep for Bob that night, for his heart was breaking; but the next night he did sleep. Wearied out he laid himself down on the hard bunk and dreamed. It was about his mother. He fancied himself loaded with chains—irons on his hands, irons on his feet, irons on the doors, and that she was standing by his side—her voice, her touch soft as an angel's—in short, that she had come for his rescue; and how that she took the irons from off his hands and feet, ready to open doors that he could not open and thread passages that he could not thread—and how that at length she brought him forth into the bright, free air of heaven, far away from danger and all the frowns and fetters of the gaoler.

What a blessing this sleep is! How strange the cordial which it pours into every joint, into every part of the exhausted frame! What a boon to thousands the mere bliss of unconsciousness—the periodic escape from self—the flight from care and weariness and shame into the shadowy world of dreams! Very pleasant is thy dream, my little boy, but this will only make thine awakening the more terrible—the renewal of the dread reality with all its shame and unutterable distress. And very pleasant is the dream of life to thousands that have never felt the power of the world to come. They dream, and are never disturbed in their dream till they wake up in the eternal world—wake up to the great realities of which we have so many shadows in the present life. The sleep of the prisoner does not change the doom of the prisoner, but simply makes him unconscious of the doom and the danger before him.

The old Greek tragedian described the spirits that had departed this life and that "had shuffled off this mortal coil" as having become oblivious of the past—that having drunk of the Lethean stream they were done with all the sad memories of the years that were—that they were done with all the hateful past forever—done with it as if it never had been, and that on reaching the remoter shore they entered on an entirely new existence, and entered upon it as pure as angels, bright and strong as if they had never sinned. They became not only oblivious to the past, but cleansed in the stream—cleansed from all the filthiness which they had contracted here below.

So far as the immortality of human life is concerned, they were not astray; but as regards our connection with the past how sadly astray! We may be asleep now, but we are destined to awake—to awake to the great realities of the eternal world, and if unchanged, uncleansed—id unforgiven, to awake in that strange other world to which such are hastening on with giant step; where the prison door never opens, where no friendly step is ever heard, no balmy rest is ever enjoyed, and no cup of intemperance to be found to lull the soul unto a state of unconsciousness. Bob wakes from his dream, but he finds that he is not done with the hateful past; that as soon as he awakes that awful past with all its crushing and terrible reality is still before him, crying out like the lightnings of Job: "Here we are!"

The next day was Sunday, the day on which the Protestant chaplain made his weekly visit. Gladly he heard his step in the corridor, stopping at each cell door as he passed in which a new prisoner had made his way since his last visit, and making such enquiries as the following:—

"Well, how is it with you? How did you come to be here?"

Prisoner: "Oh, false swearing; quite innocent, I assure you, as you'll see in a few days."

Next cell: "Well, what's the matter? How came you here?"

Prisoner: "Oh, it was only a little row on the street. I happened to be there. They took the wrong man. The blackleg got off."

Next cell: "What's the trouble with you? Is there any charge against you?"

Prisoner: "Yes, they say it is sheep-stealing, but there was

no sheep-stealing about it. I am a farmer, and some of my sheep had gone astray, and I found them in another man's field, twenty miles off. I took them—certainly I took them—and when I was driving them home they came after me and threw me in prison for sheep stealing—that's what they have done, but it will come right at the trial, and I'll make somebody smart for it."

Next cell, Bob's: "Well, my boy, what brought you here? Are you a criminal too?" Whereupon Bob at once confessed, and, bursting into tears, said: "I stole pieces of copper out of the foundry, and they put me in here for thirty days. Oh, minister, I am lost! I am lost now! Can you do anything for me?" "Yes, my boy, I can do much for you. I can tell you of One who came to seek and to save the lost, and He has sent me here to-day to search for such. And you are the first that I have met to-day saying he is lost. All the rest that I have spoken to in this corridor are very good men, very innocent men, and very far from answering the description of those that Christ came to seek and to save. They have nothing to confess and nothing to fear, and so Christ is nothing to them, but He is something to you." And thereupon the chaplain spoke words of good cheer to him, and told him "the old old story of Jesus and His love." The chaplain asked him many questions, read suitable passages of God's Word to him, and promised that he would go and see his mother, and he succeeded in conveying to him not a little strength and comfort; and much he needed comfort, for the prisons were not so comfortable in those days as now. Sometimes they were very cold; so cold was this one that on one night this poor child had his toes frozen, the results of which followed him for many a day.

Meanwhile, having heard of what had taken place, I called on the boy's mother, Mrs. Armstrong, for the purpose of ministering to her the sympathy and the cheer she so much needed. I was greatly pleased with the spirit in which she bore her crushing trial. Her face was pale, her heart was sore, and a heavy sigh ever and anon rose sometimes between her words, like the sullen wave that breaks upon the shore, which tells of the storm that is raging far away, a sigh that told how deep was the grief through which she was passing. "I am perplexed," she said, "but not in despair, cast down but not destroyed, and I know that all this will work for good both to me and mine, for God knows how to bring light out of the darkness. Oh, my poor boy, my poor boy (wringing her hands), if I could only see him from day to day the trial would not be so hard, but oh, to think of him lying there! No such shame as that ever fell on any of his kith or kin. I only hope that that good man, the chaplain of the gaol, will continue to minister to him as he has been doing. It was so good of him to come and see me and speak to me about my poor child, and give me such comfort and strength."

The day of deliverance came—the day earnestly longed for by the son and no less by the mother. Both she and I were waiting to receive him at the entrance of the dingy old gaol, that stood at the west end of the green, and that has long since disappeared to make way for one of grander dimensions. She still believed in her child. Her love had faded, her confidence in his restoration had not given away. Though that limping boy that had gotten his toes frozen in goal was only a waif, and might be regarded as a gaol-bird in the estimation of the world, he was all in all to her. Was there anything in the house too good for him? The daintiest morsel, the softest place was cheerfully provided for him. Is there anything more beautiful in this sad world than a mother's love? It does not depend on the child. She loves him if he does well, and she loves him if he does ill. If he do well she is proud of him, if he fail she pities him; if he gets into disgrace she pities him still more, and finds all manner of excuses for him, and is willing to share with him in his misfortunes and make any sacrifice in her power towards his restoration. It takes a great deal in ordinary cases to wear out the affection of a mother's heart. It does not fade with years. Not till the eye grows dim—till the "silver cord is loosed," does this flame, which has been kindled by God, cease to send forth its warm rays. It survives all changes, shines out through all the storms of life, shines out brightest of all at the last, as in the case of the dying patriarch blessing his sons around his bed. And yet a mother's love, the purest and the best this world knows—the grandest thing that has survived the Fall, is only a dim shadow of the great Father's love which shines on and on amid the smoke of all our abominations like the great bright stars forever. He loved man before he fell, and He loved man after he fell. He so loved him in a state of innocence that He put him into a garden of surpassing beauty and made all things a ministry to his happiness; and He so loved him after he fell that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life. His love does not depend on us, but on Himself; if it did we might well despair, but seeing that it is He who loves—what an inspiration! It is the nature of the mother to love. She cannot help herself; and it is the nature of God to love just as it is the nature of the sun to shine or the river to flow. There are different kinds, to be sure, but I am not careful here to distinguish them—to point out the kind of love that shines upon the angel—the saint in heaven—that on the believer—that on the prodigal, and so on. It is enough to me to learn that God is love, and that over all the world to-day His voice, sweeter than an angel's, is addressed to the guiltiest of all, saying: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy, and our God, and He will abundantly pardon."

(To be continued.)

#### SPEAKING ONE'S MIND.

Many honest persons, without stopping to think, commit the grievous mistake of speaking their mind on all occasions, under all circumstances, and often to the great mortification of their hearers. In many cases it might be a proper thing to do; for instance, any one would be justified almost any time and under almost any circumstances, in speaking his or her mind freely in regard to Beecham's pills, the sure remedy for all nervous and bilious disorders. This wonderful medicine is the most popular panacea in the world for sick head, ache, weak stomach, impaired digestion, constipation, disordered liver, etc. B. F. Allen Co., 365 and 367 Canal St., New York, Sole Agents for the United States, will mail a box of Beecham's Pills on receipt of the price, 25 cents, if your druggist does not keep them.