

Choice Literature.

ROB AND HIS TEACHERS.

A GLASGOW STORY.

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CHAPTER XIX.—Continued.

Wasted with weariness and sickness to the last degree, she longed to depart and be with Christ which is far better; and feeling that her hour had come she spoke many kind words to her foster father, David Brown, knowing his sceptical turn of mind, words that he could never forget, though with delicacy she offered him no counsels but only spoke of her own happiness; and in her last interview she sang with touching effect: "I have a Father in the promised land." And Phil—she must see Phil once more—and to him she spoke like a mother and on him spent her last breath: "Mind, Phil, Christ is your Friend,—your Redeemer! He has bought you—paid a great price for you and you are all His by right, and you are to glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are His. Your father will leave you and I will leave you, but He will never leave you and never forsake you. He will always be near, when you lie down at night, when you rise in the early morn, or when you wake up in the darkness, He is at hand, looking on. Never be ashamed of Him, Phil, stand up for Jesus! Wherever you go by land or sea, be a witness for Him, a witness till your dying day. Oh Phil, dear Phil, He will never be ashamed of you but will delight in you and at length will confess your name before His Father and the holy angels."

Poor Phil was greatly moved by such a charge. His heart was like to break, for rich were the hours in blessing which she had spent with him, and her teachings and her talks with him, so full of tenderness and grace—yes and so sprightly withal—how could he ever forget them?

"Never did I feel so soft a hand on my head, never did I hear so sweet a voice in my ear! And there was such a light in her eye! She surely saw something I could not see. She was not like common folks and the other fine ladies I've seen. You would forget when beside her that she was sick at all, there was such sprightliness and happiness in all her movements."

This is the way Phil spoke of her in after years. She had reached that young boy's heart and he had opened up under the sunshine of her presence like a flower in the desert. Her teachings, her parables and pictures and illustrations of unseen things had made the great saving truths of the Gospel plain to his dark mind, and Her life under the divine Spirit had vitalized them so that they became like a fire in his bones. Very pleasant had the hours been he had spent with her and the memory of them was pleasant. Little wonder that he remembered Mabel Brown—that he early took Christian ground and cast in his lot with the people of God. Where is Phil now? In darkest Africa, a missionary proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. Her death was a wonderful scene. No one who had the privilege of being present can ever forget it, or could fail to have received a blessing. Her foster parents, who had rejoiced in her light for a season, were especially blessed. Knowing the sceptical turn of Mr. Brown's mind and how much he prided himself in mere morality—cold and beautiful as a crystal, she, looking to him with loving concern, but without saying anything, sang:—

Not in mine innocence I trust,
I bow before Thee in the dust,
And through my Saviour's blood alone
I look for mercy at the throne.

In this way she spoke and sang till her voice failed. Then she lay in silence for a few minutes—her large brown eyes looking upward as if she saw the King in his beauty and her face shone with supernatural light as if a beam of glory had fallen from the Upper Sanctuary. "Oh the glory!" she at last exclaimed.

Silence again for about ten minutes. Then a gasp and all was over!

It was my privilege to be present in the solemn hour of her departure—hour never to be forgotten. The snow was falling fast at the time but the snow was not whiter than the cheek of that dying girl. Sweetness and majesty of soul and faith in God had given her a matchless beauty, and the sculptor that could have caught the outlines of those features and frozen them into stone would have made himself immortal. Mabel was lovely in the hour of death—lovely beyond that of nature, and let it not be thought a thing incredible that she was—that her death was a euthanasia—that a "light such as never fell on the land or on the sea" came into her eye in that glorious, elate hour—that a glimpse of the glory to be revealed should be vouchsafed to her in her passage to the eternal world, for the Spirit must have a great work to do in the last hour—a great work even in the best of us, removing the last traces of sin, scattering prejudices, removing errors, lifting the affections like morning flowers.

We have often read of the limitations of our visionary power and how that there may be times when that power is greatly increased. One thing is pretty freely established in this line is that light comes in waves and that these waves vary in length, indicated by the colour. An object throwing off waves of light half an inch long of course is very conspicuous, even one throwing off waves only $\frac{1}{1000}$ part of an inch is very conspicuous; but when the wave comes to be only the $\frac{1}{10000}$ of an inch it is scarcely visible, and lower than that it ceases to be visible. But we are not to conclude that when we fail to see an object it has no existence. We are not to conclude that what dying saints sometimes see are mere fancies. No, such deaths as Mabel's and Frances Ridley Havergal's, which indeed were more like translations than ordinary departures, are neither few nor far between, and the question is: Are all such to be set down as the fruit of a disordered fancy—the marvels of the imagination? Or to brighter visions of the soul—the soul that has been long in converse with God and that has been quickened to a higher degree by the last great work of the Holy Ghost? Has He not promised that "in the evening time there shall be light?" Even now in this gross, cold world, there are times of exaltation when we have "visions and revelations of the Lord"—when we can see what at ordinary times we cannot see. Such was the case with Daniel

on the banks of the Chebar; with Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom, and many others. "Oh that the eyes of the young man were opened!" was the prayer of the prophet concerning his servant who was trembling for his own safety and the safety of his master. Suddenly the whole mountain was filled with horses and chariots of fire. Then it was that the youth cried out with ecstasy: "Those that be for us are more than those that be against us."

Let it not, then, be thought a thing incredible that in the last act, when the soul is on the boundaries of two worlds, there should be seen and heard things of which we would gladly hear more. Only let the sense of sight be increased a few degrees and what visions would burst upon our astonished view! or the sense of hearing intensified and what harmonies from apparently dead nature would break upon the ear! And when the soul is purified from all the remains of sin, when the divine Spirit has finished His work in its golden fulness, cleansed the soul from every trace of sin and quickened the intelligence with sacred truth, what may we not expect? In Thy light, shall we see light.

CHAPTER XX.

BOB TREATED TO A SUPPER AND WINE ON THE EXPIRY OF HIS APPRENTICESHIP. HIS CONDUCT AS A TOTAL ABSTAINER. HE BREAKS DOWN IN HIS SPEECH.

On the expiry of his seven years' apprenticeship, Bob, according to the custom of the times, was treated to a supper which both masters and men favoured, and Bob knowing that he was to be the guest of the evening and to be addressed in complimentary terms both by the one and the other of the parties made great preparations for a comely reply. It was his first effort in the way of speechmaking and so his anxiety in the way of preparation was intense. Both masters and men were present in full force, and not only so, but their wives and sisters and other friends.

Bob, of course, had his friends also, among whom were the Chubbs, the Browns and Miss Carruthers, but the idea of having to face such an assembly met to do him honour was not fully realized by him till the grand hour came. His ideal of the performance due on his part was very high and he did his best to come up to it. He had reduced his speech to writing and conned and conned it till he thought he had it fairly mastered. Then he would see room for making changes, deleting one word and interjecting another, altering this and that word and reconstructing whole paragraphs, till, as it appeared to him, the speech was perfect. Moreover he had memorized it so that he was ready at a moment's notice to crack it off like a pistol.

It was with such feelings that Bob set out on this grand night to face the assembly of his friends that were to meet to do him honour. But it is one thing to be confident as to one's powers when alone and quite a different thing when such powers are to be put to the test as his were that night. This Bob felt as soon as he entered the hall. His confidence fell and he wished himself a thousand miles away.

The supper was a very fine affair, and this Bob expected, but when the tables were drawn and the speeches began he felt himself shrinking into nothingness. He felt that his speech was altogether too pompous and flowery for the occasion, still he was resolved to go through with it the best way he could. He was greatly moved by the kind words of both masters and men, but he was thunderstruck to see that those speeches were to be followed with a presentation—Chambers' Encyclopedia in nine large volumes, a work in much repute in those days.

Poor Bob, so unused to such splendour and such complimentary address, was entirely overcome and when his time came for a reply he was speechless. His blank look and embarrassed manner too plainly revealed the burden that was upon his heart and that his feelings were too strong for utterance. He tried in a low tone to begin—opened his mouth but the word stuck in his throat. Then came the painful silence as if everyone was dumb, lasting for a minute or two, when every friendly heart was touched with sympathy, but helpless in the way of lending him aid. Finally Bob sat down without uttering a word and buried his face, crimsoned to the ears, in his hands, shedding many tears.

The occasion was one of great embarrassment to Bob and one that he could never think of afterwards without emotion; and as for the speech itself on which he had spent so much time and conned with so much care, it was laid aside amongst his archives as a matter of curiosity.

Bob sat down in his chair entirely overcome with the kindness of his friends, but on the other hand, they taking in the situation, poured forth their sympathy and good wishes for his future all the more tenderly. Then came on the music and mirth and song to the great relief of Bob and the great enjoyment of all.

Brown, the foster father of Mabel, was present that night, and, meeting Bob next day, took him to task thus:—

Brown: "What was the matter with you last night?"

Bob: "Oh don't ask."

Brown: "Why did you not give your speech?"

Bob: "Because I could not, the words stuck in my throat."

Brown: "Stuck in your throat?"

Bob: "Yes, stuck in my throat. Have you never in a dream tried to speak and could not—tried to shout and could not? That was my case last night and a most distressing case it is. I have not got over it yet."

Brown: "Well I can understand that it was distressing, still I would have blundered out my thanks in some shape or other."

Bob: "I dare say a man of more nerve than I and one used to such things might have done so, but I could not."

Brown: "That's not it. It is not so much a thing of usage and nerves after all. I'll tell you what it is. You have set up in your mind a very high ideal as to how such a thing should be done—an ideal that can be barely reached when everything is favourable, and so when anything *outré* takes place you get dashed and break down. It is easier to carry a cup of wine half filled without spilling than one brimming full."

Bob: "Yes I see what you mean. I was aiming too high."

Brown: "Exactly. That's the mistake that a great many make in such things. Now would it not be better hereafter to lower your standard? Execution with ease and grace on a

lower level is a finer thing than a shaky, nervous performance on a very high plain."

Bob: "I see that plainly now. Had I contented myself with a few simple sentences and expressed them quietly and modestly as it became me, and not worried myself with an elaborate address that took away my sleep and my appetite, how much better the results!"

Brown: "You see this, that in respect to a very high ideal you can barely reach it under any circumstances without straining, and straining is never a graceful thing. But in respect to a comparatively low ideal, you can reach it with ease and, it may be, surpass it, and the effect is delightful."

But that was not the only trouble into which Bob fell that night. For the purpose of drinking Bob's health, wine was brought in during the night—the understanding being that one glass and one only was to be used. Waiters passed to and fro bearing wine and cake to every guest; and though the total abstinence principle was common in the neighbourhood and has been for fifty years, masters and men partook of the beverage that night, and even the ladies with the view of doing honour to the guest of the evening.

In our time a youth declining to take wine at an assembly of this kind would not be deemed remarkable, but in those days, when almost everyone to some extent indulged, such a spectacle would certainly be deemed strange, especially seeing the wine had been introduced for the purpose of doing him honour. What did the Alexanders, his former masters, at whose expense the wine had been called, think when they saw their favourite apprentice giving the sign to the waiter to pass on? What did his companions think that he met with every day in the office? What did the ladies think who had so tenderly sympathized with him an hour before when he broke down in his speech and took his seat at the table where Chambers' Encyclopedia in nine splendid volumes still lay?

It was known by some, at least, that Bob was a teetotaler, and all eyes were turned to him to see how he would act upon the occasion. There were those that predicted failure on Bob's part—that when the tempting glass was placed before him and his heart was warm with gratitude to his friends, ready to respond to their wishes, his pledge like an untempered sword in the hand of the assailant would break to pieces at the very time it was most needed. But Bob was fortified for that hour or any other hour. He came off a conqueror and more than a conqueror.

It was indeed a trying ordeal through which he had to pass, and, coming so close upon that which we have just described, it is a wonder that he was not carried away with the wave—that he could stand the pressure that was brought to bear upon him; and had he yielded—had he tasted just to show that he was not insensible to the honour of having his health drunk in wine, he would not have been without friends that would have defended his action and maintained that he was justified in the circumstances.

Did Bob hesitate as to his duty that night? Was there any debating going on in his mind as to whether on this occasion he might not yield or conform to the prevailing custom? No, no! The man or the woman that gives way to hesitation and doubt and debate in the hour of temptation is weak and will not be able to stand the strain of a great pressure. The pure man, the true man, fortifies himself beforehand. His mind is made up, his purpose fixed, his path is plain, and so when the testing time comes there will be no room left for doubt or debate or hesitation. This was the case of Daniel in Babylon in reference to the daily portion of the king's meat and the wine which he drank sent to him and certain other captives. When tempted to partake and conform to the prevailing custom he could not forget the lessons of his childhood—the lessons he had learned in Leviticus about things clean and unclean; and so when the temptation came—when companions all around were yielding—he felt that there was but one course for him to pursue and that was to keep his conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. This was Daniel's case and this was Bob's case too; and that night in retiring to his quiet room he felt comforted in the thought that he had been true to God—that though he had blundered in the matter of his speech he had not blundered in the matter of his pledge, and he gave thanks to Him that he had been enabled to be a witness for Him in the trying ordeal through which he had to pass.

This same thing did not escape David Brown who in the interview referred to above—an interview which took place the following day—said:—

"Well, Bob, there was one thing which pleased me greatly last night and that was your conduct in the matter of total abstinence."

Bob: "I am glad that I have your approval."

Brown: "Oh yes, I was delighted that you had the courage to act as you did act, quietly waving away the temptation. It must have been a great trial. I trembled for you last night."

Bob: "It was a trial. I think I must have been divinely sustained. I don't know what the Alexanders will say. It was so kind and generous of them to provide wine to drink my health; but I trust I'll never forget the words of the Master, 'Whosoever is ashamed of Me or My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed before His Father and the holy angels.'"

Brown: "After last night you will be able to face any temptation of that kind, and after one or two more victories you will be unassailable on that side of your character."

Bob: "But we must always watch and pray lest we enter into temptation."

Brown: "You have read, I dare say, how that all that are in heaven passed through a probation similar to ours in this world. This it appears was the case with the angels; some stood firm in their integrity and are now lifted above the power of temptation. So with the spirits of just men made perfect. They had their sins and sorrows and made their way to glory through much tribulation, but they overcame through the blood of the Lamb and they are now established in righteousness far removed from danger."

Bob: "Christ was tempted and suffered in being tempted."

Brown: "True, but how did temptations come upon Him? As drops of water on the red hot stove which are instantly dissipated into steam. The Prince of this world, He saith, cometh but he findeth nothing in Me. There was no door of entrance, no feeling or faculty that he could use in order to violate the Holy of holies. How different was the case with Adam around whose ears the temptations lingered and "who brought death into our world and all our woe."

(To be continued.)