

Choice Literature.

BOB AND HIS TEACHERS

A GLASGOW STORY.

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

CHAPTER XXV.

PHIL MARTIN AND HIS MOTHER—THEIR CONVERSION
MOODY AND SANKEY'S VISIT TO GLASGOW IN 1874.

In 1874 Glasgow was visited with those two great evangelists, Moody and Sankey. They had the advantage of a cordial reception from the most of the ministers of the city who had agreed to stand by those servants of the most High and do their best to make their visit a success. And a goodly sight it was to see the large number of them every night, and even at the mid-day meeting, on the platform ready to take part in prayer and to offer a word of exhortation. Nor was this all. The best voices that could be secured to the number of nearly two hundred, from the various choirs in the city, were secured for the service of song. So encouraged they began their work in Glasgow. Endued with power from on high they were greatly blessed. Whole neighbourhoods were moved by the wave of blessing that followed in their wake, and among these the neighbourhood in which the Martins lived.

Phil succeeded in getting his mother to go with him one evening; and after that she was willing to go every evening. She had been deeply impressed and looked with great interest upon the numbers that remained every day for the inquiry meeting and wondered much whether there was salvation for her. At times she had tried to brush away the impressions, to suppress the better feelings that had been kindled on the altar of her soul, but the longing for salvation would return, the sense of sin lying at her door would come back with increased force and make her miserable. While she was musing the fire burned. While others were rejoicing in a newly found Saviour, her heart was desolate. Then such a house to go to—such scolding and blasphemy!—all the more furious because of those revival meetings and because Phil and his mother were attending them!

At last both Phil and his mother went into the inquiry meeting and told their story which in substance was this:—

"I have long been infidel in my views, but far from being satisfied. I have heard of your meetings and been induced by my son to attend them. I have come day after day and night after night looking for a blessing, but I have got none. I see others rejoicing in a newly found Saviour their sins forgiven, their hearts renewed and established in grace that they are prepared for anything, but all is dark, dark with me; my heart is desolate. I have resolved again and again to begin a new life but nothing comes out of my purposes and plans. I have no power. Soon as I leave your meetings and enter my wretched home I am just where I was. It is power I want."

"Well," said the preacher, "there must be something wrong with yourself—something wrong with yourself, good woman, for there cannot be anything wrong or false or defective with Christ. He is waiting to be gracious; and to every one who yields to His call and takes up His cross in His name and not in their own—the strength will come to that trusting soul and it will enter into liberty. There must be something wrong with yourself, I don't know what it is, but you yourself must know; I don't ask what it is, whatever it is, see that there is an entire surrender to God."

She replied: "There is something wrong, and I may just as well tell you what is wrong. I am the mother of a large family. My husband, formerly a Roman Catholic, is a scolder and a blasphemer and so are some of the boys. They have found out that this one here and myself come to these meetings and there is no end to the ridicule and banter and abuse they heap upon us. And though I wish much to give my heart to God and enter on the new and blessed life of a Christian, I have not the courage to stand up in my own family and be a witness for Jesus there. What I need is power, power from on high."

"Ah," said the evangelist, "there is the difficulty. You have never yet taken up your cross; and so long as there is one duty neglected, everything will be dark. So long as there is one known sin indulged or one felt duty neglected, the blessing will be withheld. You must learn to bear reproach, face scorn, and to count it all joy that you have such an opportunity to witness for God. Have you never heard the words of the Master?"

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Mrs. Martin, from whom I had the whole story, told me that in listening to these statements of the evangelist she was overcome with the truth that even while he was speaking, it took such possession of her that she felt a great change. Her way seemed so clear, Christ so precious and heaven so near, that she was prepared for anything in the way of sacrifice or service; and that she went home with a light step and a heart full of inspiration resolved to be a witness for God in her family whatever might be the consequences. That was the beginning of a new life—a divine life for Mrs. Martin. Now all duties were light and all sacrifices easy, because she had entered into liberty, the glorious liberty of the children of God. The joy of the Lord was her strength!

Now I take this boy with the white teeth and the unkempt head and red bare feet, whom Mabel Brown instructed for two years, won his confidence by her paper cuttings—this boy on whom she spent her dying breath and loving exhortation, that boy that is now a missionary in darkest Africa—to show the encouragement we have to work for the Master even in the most forbidding circumstances.

Oh the good we all may do
While the days are passing by!

Mrs. Martin entered into liberty. How? Not simply speaking from the human side of the question, by the assent of the understanding but by the consent of the will—not

simply by the power of conviction as to the errors of her former life but by resolutely, with full purpose of heart entering upon the new obedience. She took up her cross, such as it was, bearing testimony for Christ in the midst of scorn and contumely and in the growing light of conscience as well as in the growing light of the Holy Spirit she saw all things clearly. Hers was a good illustration of effectual calling. What is effectual calling? That is the thirty-first question of our Shorter Catechism:—

"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby, convincing us of sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel."

Where now the bitter prejudices that had taken possession of her when I saw her first—her hatred of ministers and the ordinances of religion—her delight in novel reading and other vanities? All scattered to the winds, and now no joy was so sweet to her as joy in the Holy Ghost and a hope full of immortality, and no ambition greater than that of standing well with God and being worthy to enter into the holy city.

Now this woman might have refused to take up her cross—might have contented herself with being a secret disciple like Nicodemus of old, for the sake of peace in her own house; but had she done so she would never have entered into such liberty or enjoyed such blessed peace. There are thousands that are troubled from time to time with fears as to their future—as to their acceptance—as to whether they are saved—and, indeed, are all their life time subject to bondage just because there is some sin still lying at their door, some plain duty neglected—in short, because they refuse to be out and out witnesses for Christ in the homes in which they dwell, in the churches in which they worship. The high and blessed state into which Mrs. Martin entered was the result of her full consecration to God, quietly, humbly accepting the situation and steadily fighting the good fight of faith, day by day, patient in tribulation, rejoicing in hope, often greatly oppressed, but never casting away that faith which has great confidence of reward.

There is no royal road to this blessed peace of which I have been speaking, no external rite or ceremony, no sacrament or symbol by which the weary spirit can make itself right with God except this: "To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." And there is no really acceptable service but that which has its roots in submission, acceptance of the divine will, and this service day by day shows itself in honest, earnest and sincere work for Christ's sake—a service which under the blessing of God makes for righteousness and the establishment of all those graces which are well pleasing in His sight. If you have the consciousness that there is something in your relations towards God—the consciousness of an unsettled controversy, the Church cannot help you unless you first help yourself. No priest or penance, no service or self denial however mortifying can bring you one inch nearer God or the blessed life which this poor woman enjoyed unless through patient continuance in well doing, unless you make the journey yourself, carefully retracing your steps day by day. But open your heart to receive the love of God, start out in obedience to His will to observe the plain practical duties of the new life and you can use the Church as a prop to hold you up and minister to you the counsels and the comforts of the Gospel, and every day a brighter light will shine upon your path and a richer experience will spring up in your soul till, in the beautiful language of Scripture, your peace will be as a river and your righteousness as the waves of the sea.

Some years ago, it is said, that a fair English child was kidnapped by certain Indians that had been seen lurking around the neighbourhood—that the family long searched and mourned after her in vain, that finally her brothers reaching man's estate resolved on making a more extensive search among the various Indian tribes that roam through these forests and that at length they came upon her traces and found her. The memory of her early home still haunted her and there were times when she longed to return, and when she saw the white men and heard from their lips through the Indian interpreter that she was their sister, her surprise was great. Those brothers had no difficulty in recognizing the family likeness notwithstanding the change of fortune and the shadows of long years that had fallen upon her. They asked her to return with them, urged her to return, and at first she was disposed to do so, but when she looked at her husband and her children, she said:—

"No, I am a squaw—a squaw in language and in habits. Everything about me is Indian. I am better where I am. Leave me and go your way;"—and so with a heavy heart they turned their steps homeward.

So there are many on the downward path upon whom we come from time to time so degraded that they have no desire for anything higher. They have wandered from God and they have no desire to return to God. They have had many an offer, many a pressing remonstrance, but in vain. Their mind is made up, their purpose fixed to reject the great salvation—to stop their ears against every warning—to flee the means of grace, to trample upon the purest blood of the universe and to count it an unholy thing—in short, to hold on their awful way like the mad prophet whose ass stumbled before the gleaming sword of the angel—till all is lost and gone—the dumb animal rebuking the prophet, but rebuking him in vain. Such a case was that of John Martin, the father of Phil the protégé of Mabel Brown.

CHAPTER XXVI.

BOB IN LONDON—LETTER TO THE CHURCH.

Here I must to a great extent give Bob's first letter since he left for London:—

My dear friends, you have been much in my mind this last week. I have seen many grand people since I came here and sat at many a bounteous table but never shall I meet with truer friends than you and never shall I eat meals with a heartier relish than those of the old time.

How about Rover (his dog) and do you ever see Miss Carruthers or that villain that she suffered so much from in the Sunday school. I mean Pat Heenan? He may be a changed youth from what he once was, but I tell you he was the greatest scamp I ever knew. I never told you that it was he who cut the square piece out of my jacket with his knife one day so cunningly that I never knew till I got home, and that it

was he who hid my cap on another; I may say, stole it, for I have never seen it from that day to this.

But the Sunday school—how can I ever forget it? And Miss Carruthers who took such an active hand in establishing it and keeping it open summer and winter—and how long ago lovingly she bore with such characters as Pat Heenan—ready like the Master to repeat again and again the lessons of the past! It makes me furious to think how that ruffian treated her, and the plots and pranks he resorted to in order to break up the school.

And there is another reason that makes me often think of that Sunday school, and that was that there was a fair young face that deeply interested me there—the face of Mabel Brown, who always appeared to me as a lily among the thorns, and who on one occasion, at least, suffered no little annoyance at the hands of Pat Heenan, who, but for her intercession, would certainly have been taken up and sent to prison. My intention was to give the scoundrel a thrashing the first time I met him, but, to tell you the truth, I had some doubts as to my ability, for you don't know what a fiend he is when roused. At all events I gave up the idea, better thoughts began to prevail.

I was of little use in that school, though I was one of the teachers, for teaching is not my vocation. But if I did not teach much I learned much and I have carried away memories from that school that will always be green—memories that will follow me through life and like ministering angels will speak to me in measures and in ways past finding out.

Very pleasant in some respects were those days, those meetings in the Sunday school, and those visits to the Browns, and other friends. They are gone now—gone never to return and, I may say, in a different sense from Cowper:—

But they have left an aching void
This world can never fill.

I was a teacher in that school, but far more was I a scholar. The most instructive pages are not those of an open book—but faces—open faces that reveal the workings of the soul within—its sympathies, affections, aspirations. I can think of faces now, that seem to me "angel faces that I loved long since and lost awhile" and one of these is Miss Carruthers, whom that Sunday school was so much indebted to; another is that of my mother, and another is one dearer still, of if I had only once spoken to her and told her all that was in my heart!

Oh for the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still.

This London is a great place—a world in itself. There are more people in it than in all broad Scotland and thousands upon its streets whom you may meet once and never see again. But though there be so many people in it I feel lonely. I never felt more lonely than I did the first night I spent within its borders. The clank and clatter and roar of men and carts and carriages is deafening. The restless ebb and flow of the human tide that surges into the city every morning and recoils every evening is indeed very much mechanical, due to a large extent to the great law of necessity—the urgent questions of what shall I eat and drink and wherewithal shall I be clothed. But beneath this restless roar for existence, there is a sort of hush about midnight—a silence, but rather a subdued sound like that of many waters at a great distance—the continuous undertone of a strong will, as if all the streams of thought and feeling in London were still flowing on like the pulse of a mighty giant in his slumber. This sound, so subdued as it seemed to me, was touching. It was oppressive. Why? Because it was not mechanical, but human—not like the distant falls of Niagara, but it was the great tides of the human heart beating, beating in sympathy with my own. Between the solemn hush of midnight that I here note and the pulsation of my own heart there is what? I cannot tell, but something kindred.

I am getting on very well here with my work; and yet I have plenty of time and opportunity for seeing the great sights in London, one of which I had often heard about, the Dorset gallery and the great pictures there on exhibition, and I had resolved to gratify myself in this respect on an early day. It is indeed a great treat to see those pictures of Doré—all of a Biblical character—such as the daughter of Jephthah going forth with her maidens, with timbrel and song to meet her father returning from victory—the brazen serpent in the wilderness, exhibited on a pole for the sake of those that had been bitten with the poisonous reptiles with which the country was then infested, but the picture which impressed me most of all was Christ leaving the Pretorium. The Roman soldiers are on hand with their halberds and battle axes keeping the crowd at bay—all men of brawn and muscle—giving one the impression of men who had won their laurels on many a hard fought battle field—looking on the scene rather with an expression of wonder than indignation. And there too may be seen the fierce ecclesiastics, the leading Scribes and Pharisees whom Christ so unsparingly denounced again and again—their strong Jewish faces wearing a very different expression from that of the Roman soldiers, and there too in the distance may be descried Caiaphas the high priest and the leading authorities of the Sanhedrim around him with their backs against the light so that the figures are shaded, but not so shaded as to conceal the look of secret satisfaction with which they contemplate the scene. And there too may be seen mingling in the crowd, Peter and James and John, the blanched cheek and the furtive eye revealing their agitation, their sympathy and fear. And there too may be seen the three Marys, and, conspicuous of all, Mary the mother of Jesus, keeping near, though jostled with the crowd and the rough soldiers. The artist with great judgment has placed her fully in the light and given her a face in its main features like that of Christ, and such a face of sympathy and tender grace! But that which solemnizes everyone that enters those exhibition rooms is the central figure, the Christ of God with His seamless robe, descending the steps of the Pretorium—the sandalled foot lifted up and just taking its place in the step below while the other is in the corresponding attitude. The pose is wonderful. I never saw anything inanimate so like like. And then the face! How can I describe it! My dear old friends, there is no sermon that I ever heard—no tale of sorrow I ever read, made half the impression on me that that grand majestic figure on His way to Calvary did. It has given me a memory that will ever be green—that will never be obliterated—that will follow me through all the coming years, years be granted, freshest of all in the last sad hour when lover and friend will be removed into darkness, like Jacob!