

## "MOTHER MET ME AT THE DOOR."

Mother met me at the door,  
The dear old face seen off before,  
When from the ways of travel come,  
I stepped within the porch at home.  
There on the threshold, tall and fair,  
The light upon her lovely hair,  
She stood, her child to greet once more—  
Mother met me at the door.

Mother met me at the door:  
A look of love her sweet face wore,  
Her smile was softened by the dew  
That in her eyes its fountain knew:  
The gentle hand, the dear old hand,  
Took mine, and every feature scanned,  
Her heart of love ran o'er and o'er—  
Mother met me at the door!

And oh, where'er my steps may fall,  
In lowly cot or splendid hall,  
Where none come forth to greet with joy,  
Or where warm welcomes all employ—  
How grand or humble be the place,  
There lacks one secret, holy grace,  
Which in one spot is always sure—  
Mother met me at the door!

I cannot think of that, no more,  
When she'll not meet me at the door!  
When through the world's dark ways I'll go,  
Nor find her smile, the kiss I know:  
When, e'en though all the world forsake,  
Her love would only brighter wake,  
True, though my fortune sink or soar—  
Mother met me at the door!

Mother met me at the door:  
O! the sweet thoughts of times of yore,  
And present hours, but sad the days  
When I must lose her from my gaze,  
And I shall think with throbbing heart,  
How hard it was for us to part!  
May heaven keep this for me in store—  
Mother met me at the door!

E. B. RUSSELL.

## WIKKEY—A SCRAP.

### II.

The following evening Lawrence found a letter from his cousin on his table.

"From what you tell me," Reginald wrote, "I should say that Wikkey must be taught through his affections; that he is capable of a strong and generous affection he has fully proved, so that I advise you not to attempt for the present much doctrinal instruction. ('Doctrinal instruction!' mentally ejaculated Lawrence: 'what does he mean? as if I could do that; then he read on.') What I mean is this: the boy's intellect has probably, from the circumstances of his life, been too strongly developed to have left much room for the simple faith which one has to work on in ordinary childhood, and having been used chiefly as a weapon, offensive and defensive, in the battle with life, it is not likely to prove a very helpful instrument just now, as it would probably make him quicker to discern difficulties than to accept truths upon trust. I should, therefore, be inclined to place religion before him in a way that would appeal more to his affections than to his reason, and try to interest him in our Lord from, so to speak, a human point of view, without going into the mysteries connected with the Incarnation, and if possible without, at first, telling the end of the Gospel narrative. Speak of a Person—One Whom you love—Who might have lived for ever in perfect happiness, but Who, from love to us, preferred to come and live on earth in poverty and suffering (the poor lad will appreciate the meaning of those words only too well)—Who was all-powerful though living as a Man, and full of tenderness. Then tell of the miracles and works of love, of His continued existence—though for the present invisible to us—of His love and watchfulness; and when Wikkey's interest is aroused, as I believe it will be, I should read from the Bible itself the story of the sufferings and death. Can you gather my meaning from this rough outline? It seems to me that it is intended that Wikkey should be led upward from the human to the Divine. For others a different plan of teaching might be better, but I think this is the right key to his development; and, moreover, I firmly believe that you will be shown how to use it."

Lawrence remained for some time after reading his letter with his elbows on the table, and his head resting on his hands, which were buried in his thick brown hair; a look of great perplexity was on his face. "Of course, I must try," he thought; "one couldn't have it on one's conscience; but it's a serious business to have started." Looking up, he met Wikkey's rather anxious glance.

"Is anything amiss, Lawrence?"

"No, Wikkey—I was only thinking;" then plunging on desperately, he continued: "I was thinking how I could best make you understand what I said last night about Someone Who sees everything you do—Someone Who is very good."

"Cut on, I'm minding. Is it Someone as you love?"

Lawrence reddened. What was his feeling towards the Christ? Reverence certainly, and some loyalty, but could he call it love in the presence of the passionate devotion to himself which showed in every look of those wistful eyes?

"Yes, I love Him," he said slowly, "but not as much as I should." Then, as a sudden thought struck him, "Look here, Wikkey, you said you would have liked to have me for a king; well, He that I am telling you of is my King, and He must be yours too, and we will both try to love and obey Him."

"Where is He?" asked Wikkey.

"You can't see Him now, because He lives up in Heaven. He is the Son of God, and He might always have stayed in Heaven quite

happy, only, instead of that, He came down upon earth, and became a man like one of us, so that He might know what it is. And though He was really a King, He chose to live like a poor man, and was often cold and hungry as you used to be; and He went about helping people, and curing those who were ill, because you know, Wikkey, He was God, and could do anything. There are beautiful stories about Him that I can tell you."

"How do you know all about the King, Lawrence?"

"It is written in a book called the Bible. Have you ever seen a Bible?"

"That was the big book as blind Tom used to sit and feel over with his fingers by the area rails. I asked him what it was, and he said as it was the Bible. But, bless you! he weren't blind no more nor you are; he lodged at Skimmidge's for a bit, and I saw him a reading of the paper in his room; he kicked me when he saw as I'd twigged him;" and Wikkey's laugh broke out at the recollection. Poor child, his whole knowledge of sacred things seemed to be derived from—

"Holiest things profaned and cursed."

"Tim was a bad man to pretend to be blind when he wasn't," said Lawrence, severely. "But now, Wikkey, shall I read you a story about the King?"

"Did He live in London?" Wikkey asked, as Lawrence took up the old Book with the feeling that the boy should hear these things for the first time out of his mother's Bible.

"No, He lived in a country a long way off; but that makes no difference, because He is God, and can see us everywhere, and He wants us to be good."

Then Lawrence opened the Bible, and after some thought, half-read, half-told, about the feeding of the hungry multitude.

Each succeeding evening a fresh story about the King was related, eagerly listened to and commented on by Wikkey with such familiar realism as often startled Lawrence, and made him wonder whether he were allowing irreverence, but which, at the same time, threw a wonderful vivid light on the histories which, known since childhood, had lost so much of their interest for himself; and certainly, as far as awakening first the boy's curiosity, and then his love, went, the method of instruction answered perfectly. For Wikkey did not die at the end of the week, or of many succeeding weeks; warmth and food, and Mrs. Evans' nursing powers combined, caused one of those curious rallies not uncommon in cases of consumption, though no one who saw the boy's thin, flushed cheeks, and brilliant eyes could think the reprieve would be a long one. Still for the present there was improvement, and Lawrence could not help feeling glad that he might keep for a little while longer the child whose love had strangely brightened his lonely lodgings.

And while Wikkey's development was being carried on in the highest direction, his education in minor matters was progressing under Mrs. Evans' tuition—tuition of much the same kind as she had bestowed years before on Master Lawrence and her sweet Master Robin. By degrees Wikkey became thoroughly initiated in the mysteries of the toilette, and other amenities of civilized life, and being a sharp child, with a natural turn for imitation, he was, at the end of a week or two, not entirely unlike those young gentlemen in his ways, especially when his conversation became shorn of the expletives which had at first adorned it, but which, under Mrs. Evans' sharp rebukes, and Lawrence's graver admonitions that they were displeasing to the King, fast disappeared. Wikkey's remorse on being betrayed into the utterance of some comparatively harmless expression, quite as deep as when one slipped that gave even Lawrence a shock, showed how little their meaning had to do with their use.

One evening Lawrence, returning home to find Wikkey established as usual on the sofa near the fire, was greeted by the eager question—

"Lawrence, what was the King like? I've been a thinking of it all day, and I should like to know. Do you think He was a bit like you?"

"Not at all," Lawrence answered. "We don't know exactly what He was like; but—let me see," he went on, considering, "I think I have a picture somewhere—I had one;" and he crossed the room to a corner where, between the book-case and the wall, were put away a number of old pictures, brought from the "boys' room" at home, and never yet re-hung; among them was a little Oxford frame containing a photograph of the Thorn-crowned Head by Guido. How well he remembered its being given to him on his birthday by his mother! This he showed to Wikkey, explaining that though no one knows certainly what the King is like, it is thought that He may have resembled that picture. The boy looked at it for some time in silence, and then said—

"I've seen pictures like that in shops, but I never knew as it was the King. He looks very sorrowful—a deal sorrowfuler nor you—and what is that He has on His Head."

"That has to do with a very sad story, which I have not told you yet. You know, Wikkey, though He was so good and kind, the men of that country hated Him, and would not have Him for their King, and at last they took Him prisoner and treated Him very badly, and they put that crown of sharp-pricking thorns on His head, because He said He was King."

"Was it to make game of Him?" asked Wikkey, in a tone of mingled awe and distress.

Lawrence nodded gravely, and feeling that this was perhaps as good a moment as any for completing the history, he took the Book, and in low reverent tones, began the sad story of the betrayal, captivity, and Death. Wikkey listened in absorbed attention, every now and then commenting on the narrative in a way which showed its intense reality to himself and gave a marvelous vividness to the details of which Lawrence had before scarcely realised the terrible force. As he read on his voice became husky, and the child's eyes were fixed on him with devouring eagerness, till the awful end came, and Wikkey broke into an agony of weeping. Lawrence hastily put down the Book, and taking the little worn form into his arms tried to soothe the shaking sobs, feeling the while as though he had been guilty of cruelty to the tender sensitive heart.

"I thought some one would have saved Him," Wikkey gasped. "I didn't know as He was killed; you never told me as He was killed."

"Wikkey, little lad—hush—look here! it was all right at the end. Listen while I read the end; it is beautiful." And as the sobs subsided he began to read again, still holding the boy close, and inwardly wondering whether something like this might have been the despair of the disciples on that Friday evening—read of the sadness of that waiting time, of the angel's visit to the silent tomb, of the loving women at the sepulchre, and the joyful message, "He is not here, He is risen," and lastly, of the parting blessing, the separating cloud and the tidings of the coming again. A look of great relief was on Wikkey's face as Lawrence ceased reading, and he lay for some time with closed eyes, resting after his outburst. At last he opened them with sudden wonder.

"Lawrence, why did He let them do it? If He could do anything, why didn't He save Himself from the enemies?"

The old wonder—the old question—which must be answered; and Lawrence after thinking a moment said—

"It had to be, Wikkey. He had to die—to die for us. It was like this:—People were too wicked, always doing bad things, and nobody that was bad could go to Heaven, but they must be punished instead. But God was very sorry that none of the people He had made could come and be happy with Him, so His Son Jesus Christ, our King, became a Man, and came down on earth that He might be punished instead of us, so that we might be forgiven and allowed to come into Heaven. He bore all that for each of us, so that now if we believe in Him and try to please Him, we shall go to be with Him in Heaven when we die."

Lawrence was very far from guessing that his teaching had become "doctrinal." He had spoken out of the fulness of his own conviction, quickened into fresh life by the intensity of Wikkey's realisation of the facts he had heard. "It was good of Him—it was good," the child repeated again and again, with a world of love shining in his eyes, till, worn out with his emotion, he fell asleep, and was gently laid by Lawrence in his bed. But in the middle of the night sounds of stifled weeping aroused Lawrence.

"What is it, Wikkey boy?" he asked, groping his way to him. "Are you worse?"

"I didn't mean for to wake you; but I wish—I wish I hadn't boned them coppers off Jim; it makes me feel so bad when I think of the King saw me," and Wikkey buried his face in the kind arm which encircled him, in uncontrollable grief. It needed all Lawrence's assurances that the King saw his repentance, and had certainly forgiven—yes, and the prayer for pardon which the young man, blushing red-hot in the darkness at the unwonted effort, uttered in husky tones, with the child's thin hands clasped in his own—before Wikkey was sufficiently quieted to sleep again. Before going down to the office Lawrence wrote to his cousin—

"I can do no more; he has got beyond me. He loves Him more than ever I have done. Come and help us both."

So Reginald came on such evenings as he could spare, and Wikkey, no longer averse, listened as he told him of the Fatherhood of God, of the love of the Son, and of the ever-present Comforter; of creation, redemption and sanctification, and all the deep truths of the faith, receiving them with the belief that is born rather of love than of reason; for though the acuteness of the boy's questions and remarks often obliged Reginald to bring his own strong intellect to bear on them, they arose from no spirit of antagonism, but were the natural outcome of a thoughtful inquiring mind. Sometimes, however, Wikkey was too tired for talking, and could only lie still and listen while Lawrence and the curate conversed, the expression of his eyes, as they passed from one to another, showing that he understood far more than might have been expected. One evening, in the middle of March, after he had been carried up stairs, the cousins sat talking over their charge.

"I have been considering about his baptism," Reginald said.

"His baptism! Do you think he hasn't been christened?"

"No, I don't think so," returned the other, thoughtfully. "I cannot bring myself to believe that we have been working on unconsecrated soil; but still we do not know. Of course I could baptise him hypothetically, but I should like to know the truth."

"Baptise him how?" Lawrence asked, with a frown of perplexity.

"Hypothetically. Don't be alarmed, it isn't a new fad of mine; it means baptising on the supposition that there has been no previous baptism, for you know our Church does not allow it to be done twice. I wonder if anything could be learnt by going down to the place named in the book."

"Cranbury! I looked in Bradshaw for it, and it seems to be a small place about an hour and a half from Euston station. I might find a day to run down, though I don't quite see when; and now if I were to find a heap of relations wanting the boy, I could not spare him now, you know."

"Scarcely likely. Wikkey has evidently never seen a relation for, say, ten years, or he would recollect it, and it is hardly probable that any one will be anxious to take a boy in his state whom they have not seen for ten years. Besides, he couldn't well be moved now."

"No, he couldn't; and I sincerely hope that no affectionate relatives will want to come and see him here; that would be a most awful nuisance. What do you think of a tearful grandmother haunting the place?"

"The idea is oppressive certainly, but I do not think you need fear it much, and you have established a pretty fair right to do as you like about the boy. Look here, Lawrence, supposing I were to run down to this place; I believe I could spare a day better than you, and a breath of fresh air would do me no harm."

"I shouldn't think it would," said Lawrence, looking at his cousin's pale face—all the paler for the stress of his winter's work. "Do, Reg; and for pity's sake, bring a root of some flower if you can find one; it is sickening to think of a child dying without ever having had such a thing in his hands."

"All right, then, I will go to-morrow; for," Reginald added gravely, "there is no time to be lost."

"I know there is not; I know it must come soon. Reg, I couldn't have believed I should have grown to care for the boy as I do."

"No, you have prepared a wrench for yourself, old fellow, but you will never be the worse for it, Lawrence. You know all about that better than I can preach it to you."

There was a silence, and then Lawrence said—

"Ought he to be told?"

"Well, that puzzles me; I feel as if he ought, and yet there can be no need to frighten the child. If it came naturally, it might be better for you to tell him gently."

"I" exclaimed Lawrence, agitated.

"Yes, it must be you; he will take it better from you than from any one else; but wait and see, you will be shown what to do."

The result of the curate's mission to Cranbury was very satisfactory. On being directed to the solitary remaining inhabitants of the name of Wilkins, Reginald learnt that Sarah Wilkins had been the only daughter of his brother, that she had married a ne'er-do-well of the name of Whiston, who deserted her shortly before the birth of her child, that she had followed her husband to London as soon as she was able to travel, and after a while had been lost sight of by her family. The old man seemed but slightly interested in the matter, and Reginald saw that no interference need be feared from him. On further consulting the parish register, he found recorded the marriage of Thomas Whiston and Sarah Wilkins, and a year later, the baptism of Wilkins, son of Thomas and Sarah Whiston, in 1856.

"So, it is as I hoped, the child is one of the Flock," the curate said to himself. "And that mite of a boy is thirteen years old! And he returned to London triumphant, bringing with him, besides the information he went to seek, a root of primroses with yellow-tipped spikes ready to burst, and an early thrush's nest, containing five delicate blue eggs. This last treasure Reginald displayed with intense pride."

"I found a boy carrying it on the road, and rated the young rascal soundly for taking it, but I'm afraid the shilling I gave him made more impression than the lecture. Isn't it a beauty? I wonder when I last saw a nest?" he went on, touching the eggs with loving fingers. "Hardly since our old bird-nesting days, eh, Lawrence! Do you remember the missel-thrush in the apple-tree?"

"Ay, and the licking you got for splitting your Sunday jacket up the back," and the two "working men" laughed at the recollection, as they carried the prize to display to Wikkey, with a comical anxiety, almost amounting to dread, lest it should not produce the effect they intended. No fear of that! Wikkey's eyes dilated as he gazed into the nest, and after some persuasion, took one of the smooth eggs into his hand; and from that moment he could not endure it out of his sight, but had it placed morning and evening beside his sofa or bed, near his other treasure, the Picture of the King, on the other side of which stood the primrose, planted in one of Mrs. Evans' tea-cups.

As the spring advanced, Wikkey became visibly worse, and all saw that the end could not be far off. Reginald, coming in one evening, found him asleep in Lawrence's arms, and was startled to see how great a change had taken place in him during the last four and twenty hours. In answer to his inquiring look, his cousin said, speaking very low—

"Since this morning, he is much worse; but better now than he was."

Sitting down, on the opposite side of the fire, Reginald thoughtfully contemplated the two. What a contrast! Lawrence, all health and strength, with the warm light gleaming on the thick waves of his hair, and deepening the ruddy