

The success of one or two literary ventures, with the Appletons and other well-known publishing houses secured him the necessary means, and on the 11th of December, 1866, he left New York for San Francisco, intending to pursue his journey in the first China-bound steamer. But the dates were unpropitious; and returning overland in the winter of 1867, he finally left New York for Europe in June of that year. This, his last great journey, occupied twenty-nine months during which he travelled through the greater portion of North and South America (traversing the route of the proposed ship canal across the Panama Isthmus between the Gulf of Darien and the Pacific) as well as much of the interior of Japan, China, India and Egypt. The complete distance travelled during this tour was 58,000 miles.

In 1869 Mr. Hall being then in Egypt was honored with the confidence of the Khedive and his illustrious ally, Mons. Ferdinand de Lesseps, and with the British delegation was present at the grand opening of the Suez Canal of which great work he had contributed to the British and American daily and periodical press exhaustive accounts under the title of "Inter-oceanic Short Cuts," &c.

Since 1870, our traveller has resided in England and principally in the neighbourhood of London. "My Sketch Book in China and Japan" appeared in 1872-3, and the "Picturesque Tourist Round the World" in 1877. He is still actively engaged in literary pursuits but devotes his pen mainly to the subjects of Social and Sanitary Reform, his last work being the "Rise, Progress and Prospects of Coffee Taverns, Cocoa Homes and Coffee Palaces," just issued by Messrs. Partridge & Co., the well-known temperance publishers of Paternoster Row.

### WIKKEY—A SCRAP.

Mr. Ruskin has it that we are all kings and queens, possessing realms and treasures. However this may be, it is certain that there are souls born to reign over the hearts of their fellows, kings walking about the world in broad cloth and fustian, shooting jackets, ulsters, and what not—swaying hearts at will, though it may be, all unconscious of their power; and only the existence of some such psychological fact as this will account for the incident which I am about to relate.

Lawrence Granby was, beyond all doubt, one of these royal ones, his kingdom being co-extensive with the circle of his acquaintance—not that he was in the least aware of the power he exercised over all who came in contact with him, as he usually attributed the fact that he "got on" with people "like a house on fire" to the good qualities possessed by "other fellows." Even the comforts by which he was surrounded in his lodging by his landlady and former nurse, Mrs. Evans, he considered as the result of the dame's innate geniality, though the opinion entertained of her by her underlings and by those who met her in the way of business was scarcely as favourable. He was a handsome fellow too, this Lawrence—six feet three, with a curly brown head and the frankest blue eyes that ever looked pityingly, almost wonderingly, on the small and weak things of the earth. And the boy, Wikkey Whiston, was a crossing-sweeper. I am sorry for this, for I fancy people are becoming a little tired of the race, in story-books at least, but as he was a crossing-sweeper it cannot be helped. It would not mend matters much to invest him with some other profession especially as it was while sitting, broom in hand, under the lamp-post at one end of his crossing that he first saw Lawrence Granby, and if he had never seen Lawrence Granby I should not be writing about him at all.

It was a winter's morning in 1869, bright as it is possible for such a morning to be in London, but piercingly cold, and Wikkey had brushed and re-brushed the pathway—which scarcely needed it, the east wind having already done half the work—just to put some feeling of warmth into his thin frame before seating himself in his usual place beneath the lamp-post. There were a good many passers-by, for it was the time of day at which clerks and business men are on the way to their daily occupation, and the boy scanned each face in the fashion that had become habitual to him in his life-long look out for coppers. Presently he saw approaching a peculiarly tall figure, and looked at it curiously, tracing its height upwards from his own stunted point of view till he encountered the cheery glance of Lawrence Granby. Wikkey was strangely fascinated by the blue eyes looking down from so far above him, and scarcely knowing what he did he rose and went shambling on alongside of the young man, his eyes riveted on his face, Lawrence, however, being almost unconscious of the boy's presence till his attention was drawn to him by the friend with whom he was walking, who said, laughing, and pointing to Wikkey, "Friend of yours, eh? Seems to know you." Then he looked down again, and met the curious, intent stare fixed upon him.

"Well, small boy! I hope you'll know me again," he said.

To which Wikkey promptly returned, in the shrill, aggressively aggrieved voice of the London Arab. "I reckon it don't do you no harm, guvner; a cat may look at a king."

Lawrence laughed, and threw him a copper, saying, "You are a cheeky little fellow," and went on his way.

Wikkey stood looking after him and then picked up the penny, holding it between his

cold hands as though it possessed some warming properties, and muttering, "It seems fur to warm a chap to look at him!" and then he sat down once more, still pondering over the apparition that had so fascinated him. Oddly enough, the imputation of cheekiness rankled in his mind in a most unusual fashion—not that Wikkey entertained the faintest objection to "cheek" in the abstract, and there were occasions on which any backwardness in its use would betray a certain meanness of spirit; for instance, towards the natural enemy of the race—the Bobby—it was only right to exhibit as much of the article as was compatible with safety. Indeed, the inventor of a fresh sarcasm, biting in its nature yet artfully shrouded in language which might be safely addressed to an arm of the law, was considered by his fellows in the light of a public benefactor. The errand-boy also, who, because he carried a parcel or basket and happened to wear shoes, felt himself at liberty to cast obloquy on those whose profession was of a more desultory nature and whose clothing was scantier—he must be held in check and his pride lowered by sarcasms yet more biting and far less veiled. These things were right and proper, but Wikkey felt uncomfortable under an imputation of "cheekiness" from the "big chap" who had so taken his fancy, and wondered at his own feeling. That evening, as Lawrence walked briskly homeward after his day's work, he became aware of the pale, wizened face again looking up in his through the dusk, and of a shrill voice at his side.

"I say, guvner, you hadn't no call fur to call me cheeky; I didn't mean no cheek, only I likes the looks of yer; it seems fur to warm a chap."

Lawrence stopped this time and looked curiously at the boy, at the odd, keen eyes gazing at him so hungrily.

"You are a strange lad if you are not a cheeky one," he said. "Why do you like the look of me?"

"I dunno," said Wikkey, and then he repeated his formula, "It seems to warm a chap."

"You must be precious cold if that will do it, poor little lad. What's your name?"

"Wikkey."

"Wikkey! Is that all?"

"No, I've another name about me somewhere, but I can't just mind of it. They allus calls me Wikkey."

"Poor lad!" Lawrence said again, looking at the thin skeleton frame sadly visible through the tattered clothing. "Poor little chap! it's sharp weather for such a mite as you. There! get something to warm you," and feeling in his pocket he drew out half-a-crown, which he slipped into Wikkey's hand and then turned and walked away. Wikkey stood looking after him, with two big tears rolling down his dirty face; it was so long since any one had called him a poor little chap, and he repeated the words over and over as he threaded his way in the darkness to the dreary lodging usually called "Skim-midge's," and kept by a grim woman of that name.

"It seems fur to warm a chap," he said again, as he crept under the wretched blanket which Mrs. Skimmidge designated and charged for as a bed.

From that day forward Wikkey was possessed by one idea—that of watching for the approach of the "big chap," following his steps along the crossing, and then, if possible, getting a word or look on which to live until the next blissful moment should arrive. Nor was he often disappointed, for Lawrence having recently obtained employment in a certain government office, and Wikkey's crossing happening to lie on the shortest way from his own abode to the scene of his daily labour he seldom varied his route, and truth to say, the strange little figure always watching so eagerly for his appearance began to have an attraction for him. He wondered what the boy meant by it, and at first naturally connected the idea of coppers with Wikkey's devotion; but he soon came to see that it went deeper than that, for with a curious instinct of delicacy which the lad would probably have been quite unable to explain to himself, he would sometimes hang back as Lawrence reached the pavement, and nod his funny "Good night, guvner," from midway on his crossing, in a way that precluded any suspicion of mercenary motives.

But at last there came a season of desolation very nearly verging on despair. Day after day for a week—ten days—a fortnight—did Wikkey watch in vain for his hero. Poor lad, he could not know that Lawrence had been suddenly summoned to the country and had arranged for a substitute to take his duty for a fortnight; and the terrible thought haunted the child that the big chap had changed his route, perhaps even out of dislike to him—Wikkey's attentions, and he should never see his face again. The idea was horrible—so horrible that as it became strengthened by each day's disappointment, and at last took possession of the boy's whole soul, it sapped away what little vitality there was in the small fragile frame, leaving it an easy prey to the biting wind which caught his breath away as he crept shivering round the street corners, and to the frost which clutched the thinly-clad body. The cough, which Wikkey scarcely remembered ever being without, increased to such violence as to shake him from head to foot, and his breathing became hard and painful; yet still he clung to his crossing with the pertinacity of despair, scanning each figure that approached with eager, hungry eyes. He had laid out part of Lawrence's half-crown on a woollen muffler, which at first had seemed a marvel of comfort, but the keen north-easter soon

found its way even through that and the hot pies on which he expended the rest did not warm him for very long; there came a day, too, when he could only hold his pie between his frozen hands, dreamily wondering why he felt no wish to eat it, why the sight of it made him feel so sick. A dreadful day that was. Mechanically Wikkey from time to time swept his way slowly over the crossing, but the greater part of the time he spent sitting at the foot of the lamp-post at either end, coughing and shivering, and now and then dozing and starting up in terror lest the "big chap" should have passed by during his brief unconsciousness. Dusk came on and then lamp-light, and still Wikkey sat there. A policeman passing on his beat saw the haggard face and heard the choking cough. "You'd best be off home, my lad," he said, pausing a moment; "you don't look fit to be out on a night like this;" and Wikkey taking the remark to be only another form of the oft-heard injunction to "move on," seized his broom and began sweeping as in an evil dream—then sank down exhausted on the other side. It was getting late, later than he usually stayed, but something seemed to warn him that this might be his last chance, and he remained crouching there, almost too far gone to be conscious of the cold, till on a sudden there came, piercing through the dull mist of returning unconsciousness, a voice saying—

"Hullo, Wikkey! you are late to-night."

And starting upwards with wild, startled eyes the boy saw Lawrence Granby. He staggered to his feet and gasped out—

"You've come, have you? I've been a watching and a waiting of you, and I thought as you'd never come again."

Then the cough seized him, shaking him till he could only cling to the lamp-post for support till it was over, and then slip down in a helpless heap on the pavement.

"Wikkey, poor little chap, how bad you are," said Lawrence, looking sadly down on the huddled-up figure; "you oughtn't to be out. You—you haven't been watching for me like this?"

"I've been a watching and a watching," Wikkey answered, in faint, hoarse tones, "and I thought you'd taken to another crossing and I'd never see you again."

"Poor little chap—poor little lad!" was all the young man could find to say, while there rose up in his heart an impulse which his common sense tried hard to suppress, but in vain. "Wikkey," he said at last, "You must come home with me;" and he took one of the claw-like hands in his warmly gloved one and walked on slowly out of compassion for the child's feeble limbs; even then, however, they soon gave way, and Wikkey once more slid down crying on the pavement. There was nothing for it but for Lawrence to gather up the child in his strong arms, and stride on, wondering whether after all it were not too late to revive the frozen-out life. For one blissful moment Wikkey felt himself held close and warm, and his head nestled against the woolly ulster, and then all was blank.

To say that Lawrence enjoyed his position would be going too far. Whatever might be Wikkey's mental peculiarities, his exterior differed in no way from that of the ordinary street Arab, and such close contact could not fail to be trying to a young man more than usually sensitive in matters of cleanliness; but Lawrence strode manfully on with his strange burden, choosing out the best frequented streets and earnestly hoping he might meet none of his acquaintances, till at last he reached his lodgings and admitted himself into a small, well-lighted hall, where, after calling "Mrs. Evans," he stood under the lamp awaiting her arrival, not without considerable trepidation, and becoming each moment more painfully conscious how extraordinary his behaviour must appear in her eyes.

"Mrs. Evans," he began, as the good lady emerged from her own domain on the ground-floor, "Mrs. Evans, I have brought this boy"—then he paused, not knowing well how to enter upon the needful explanation under the chilling influence of Mrs. Evans' severe and respectful silence.

"I dare say you are surprised," he went on at last in desperation; "but the poor child is terribly ill, dying, I think, and if you could do anything—"

"Of course, Mr. Lawrence, you do as you think proper," Mrs. Evans returned, preserving her severest manner, though she eyed Wikkey with some curiosity; only if you had mentioned when you engaged my rooms that you intended turning them into a refuge for vagabonds, it would have been more satisfactory to all parties."

"I know all that. I know it's very inconsiderate of me, and I am very sorry; but you see the little fellow is so bad—he looks just like little Robin, nurse."

Mrs. Evans sniffed at the comparison, but the allusion to the child she had so fondly tended as he sank into an early grave, had its effect, together with the seldom revived appellation of "nurse," and her mollified manner encouraged Lawrence to continue.

"If you wouldn't mind getting a hot bath ready in the kitchen I will manage without troubling you."

"I hope, Mr. Lawrence, that I know my place better than that," was the reply, and forthwith Mrs. Evans, who, beneath a somewhat stern exterior, possessed a really good heart, took Wikkey under her wing, administered warmth and restoratives, washed the grimy little form, crop-

ped and scrubbed the matted locks, and soon the boy, dreamily conscious and wondrously happy, was lying before a blazing fire, clean and fair to look on, enveloped in one of Mrs. Evans' own night-dresses. Then the question arose, where was Wikkey to pass the night, followed by a whispered dialogue and emphatic—"Nothing will be safe" from the lady of the house. All of which the boy perfectly understanding, he remarked—

"I ain't a prig; I'll not take nothink."

There was no touch of injured innocence in the tone, it was simply the statement of a fact which might easily have been otherwise, and the entire matter of factness of the assertion inspired Lawrence with a good deal of confidence, together with the cough which returned on the slightest movement, and would effectually prevent a noiseless evasion on the part of poor Wikkey. So once more he was lifted up in the strong arms and carried to a sofa in Lawrence's own room, where, snugly tucked up in blankets, he soon fell asleep. His benefactor, after prolonged meditation in his arm-chair, likewise took himself to rest, having decided that a doctor must be the first consideration on the following morning, and that the next step would be to consult Reg—Reg would be able to advise him; it was his business to understand about such matters.

A terrible fit of coughing proceeding from the sofa awoke Lawrence next morning, startling him into sudden recollection of the evening's adventure; and when the shutters were opened Wikkey looked so fearfully wan and exhausted in the pale grey light that he made all speed to summon Mrs. Evans, and to go himself for the doctor. The examination of the patient did not last long, and at its conclusion the doctor muttered something about the "workhouse—as of course, Mr. Granby, you are not prepared." The look of imploring agony which flashed from the large, wide-open eyes made Lawrence sign to the doctor to follow him into another room, but before leaving Wikkey he gave him an encouraging nod, saying—

"All right, Wikkey, I'll come back. Well!" he said, as they entered the sitting-room, "what do you think of him?"

"Think! there's not much thinking in the matter; the boy is dying, Mr. Granby, and if you wish to remove him you had better do so at once."

"How long will it be?"

"A week or so I should say, or it might be sooner, though these cases sometimes linger longer than one expects. The mischief is of long standing, and this is the end."

Lawrence remained for some time lost in thought.

"Poor little chap," he said at last, sadly. "Well, thank you, doctor, good morning."

"Do you wish any steps taken with regard to the workhouse, Mr. Granby?" asked the doctor, preparing to depart.

Wikkey's beseeching eyes rose up before Lawrence, and he stammered out hastily—

"No—no, thank you, not just at present—I'll think about it," and the doctor took his leave, wondering if it could be possible that Mr. Granby intended to keep the boy; he was not much used to such Quixotic proceedings.

Lawrence stood debating with himself. Should he send Wikkey to the workhouse? Ought he not to do so? What should he do with a boy dying in the house? How should he decide?—certainly not by going back to meet those wistful eyes.

The decision must be made before seeing the boy again, or, as the soft-hearted fellow well knew, it would be all up with his common sense. Calling Mrs. Evans, therefore, he bade her tell Wikkey that he would come back presently; and then he said timidly—

"Should you mind it very much, nurse, if I were to keep the boy here? The doctor says he is dying, so that it would not be for long, and I would take all the trouble I could off your hands. I have not made up my mind about it yet, but, of course, I could not decide upon anything without first consulting you."

The answer, though a little still, was more encouraging than might have been expected from the icy severity of Mrs. Evans' manner (was she also making her protest on the side of common sense against a lurking desire to keep Wikkey?).

"If it's your wish, Mr. Lawrence, I'm not the one to turn out a homeless boy. It's not quite what I am accustomed to, but he seems a quiet lad enough—poor child!" the words came out in a softer tone; "and as you say, sir, it can't be for long."

Much relieved Lawrence sped away; it was still early, and there would be time to get this matter settled before he went down to the office if he looked sharp; and so sharp did he look that in little more than ten minutes he had cleared the mile which lay between his lodging and that of his cousin, Reginald Trevor, senior curate of St. Bridget's East, and had burst in just as the latter was sitting down to his breakfast after morning service. And then Lawrence told his story, his voice shaking a little as he spoke of Wikkey's strange devotion to himself, and of the weary watch which had no doubt helped on the disease which was killing him, and he wound up with—

"And now, Reg, what is a fellow to do? I suppose I'm a fool, but I can't send the little chap away!"

The curate's voice was a little husky too. "If that is folly commend me to a fool," he said; and then, after some moments of silent thought—"I don't see why you should not keep