

A Son of Erin

dinna think you should hae brocht it in, Mary, lass; maybe you'll find yourself saddled wi' it a'thegither."

"Weel, I'm sure I'm no carin'," said Mary. And by this time she had entered the cosy little kitchen, and sitting down on a chair close to the fire, she unwound the shawl from the child, Mrs. Middlemas standing curiously by, regarding her with a mixture of surprise and disapproval.

"It's a fine bairn," she said, critically, feeling because she had brought up ten that she was competent to give a conclusive opinion. "A laddie, nearly twa year auld I should say, and weel dressed. Noo, I wonder what is the meanin' o't?"

At that moment the child opened his eyes, and seeing the bright light, and perhaps the kind, tender face bent above him, smiled, and uttered one of those mysterious sounds which were his only way of expressing his satisfaction.

"Bless him!" said Mary Fletcher, tenderly. "I dinna ken how any woman, mother to sic a bairn, could leave him as she has done."

"It takes a' sorts to make a world, my woman," observed Mrs. Middlemas, wisely. "Suppose we try him wi' a drink o' milk. Now, I wonder if John will find the police, or get any clue to the woman that left him."

At that moment they heard the outer door open, and his feet on the little passage, where he paused to knock the snow from his boots and remove his wet overcoat. Mrs. Middlemas threw open the kitchen door so that the light fell across the passage.

"I suppose ye didna see anybody?" she asked, eagerly.

"Not a livin' soul, mother," answered John Fletcher.

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