

A Son of Erin

strange, uplifted look as he turned away alone, while John accompanied his master to the garden gate where his well-trained horse was tethered.

The desire of his heart—if it had not actually come to him—was within his grasp. Some strange prevision of the stormy years in store—years destined to prove him to the uttermost, to test his strength and manhood, to teach him many things—came to him as he stood in the sweet-scented garden that April night under the shadow of Halliwell Hill.

"Well, lad, it's queer how things come about, is it no?" his father said, and his voice also was quiet and restrained, as if he felt the stress of the moment.

"I can hardly believe it—to go to Ireland, father! It's the very hand of Fate."

"Of Fate! There is no fate," said John Fletcher, sharply. "It's Providence that shapes our ends though we rough hew them sair enough. Mind this, Robin, if ye follow sic blind leadin' you'll come to grief, an' that only they have perfect peace that have their hearts stayed on their Maker."

Rob Fletcher long remembered the look in the good old man's face as he uttered these words. When he thought of his blameless life, of his pure heart, which harboured nothing but gentle thoughts, of the songs he had given to his country, songs that would live after more meretricious contributions were forgotten, he felt what an inestimable privilege had been his to live in intimate relation with him, and to have called him father.



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