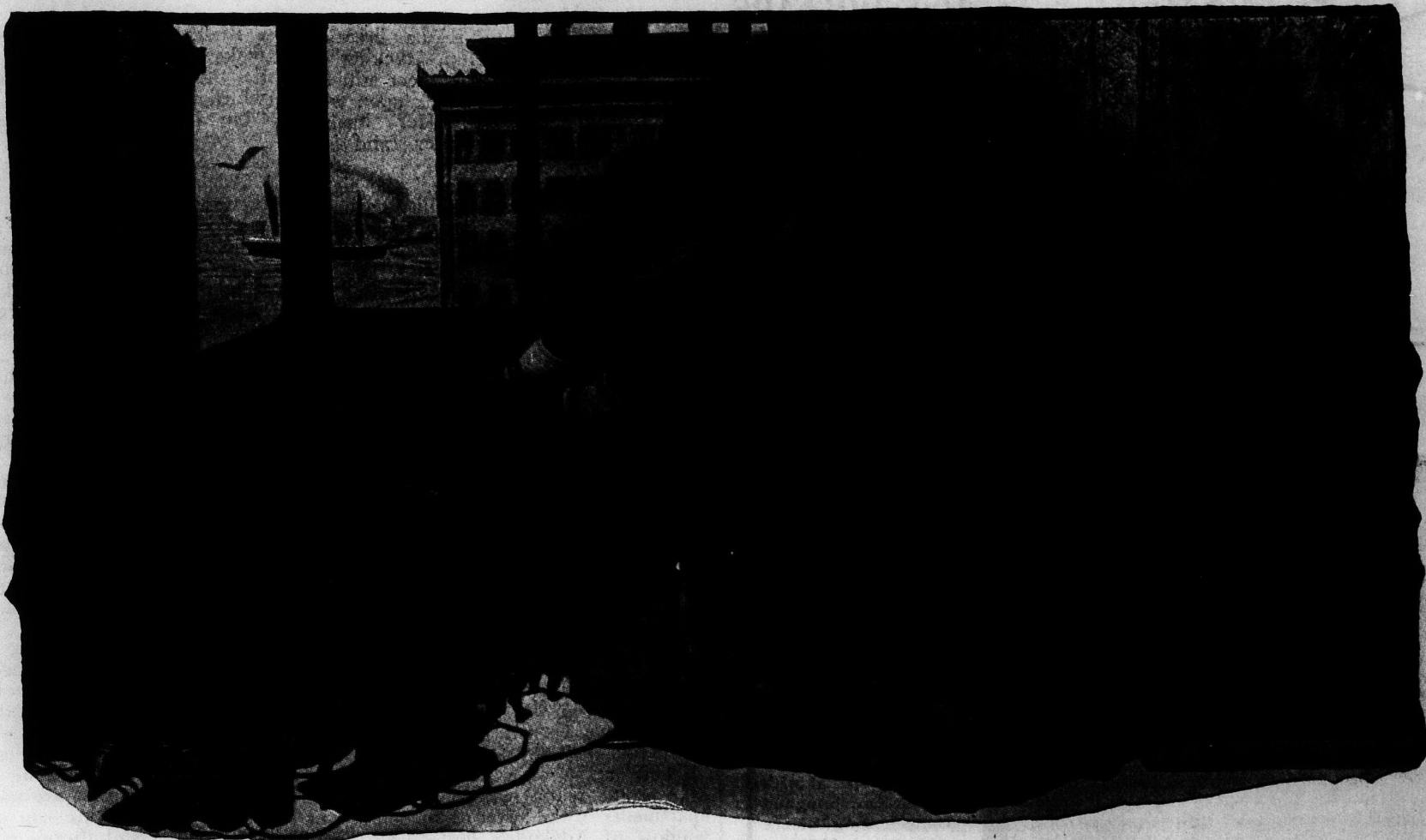


Buddie—The Story of a Child

By Zoe Anderson Norris



"At first Buddie stood for hours at this window, looking out at the river and the ships, Adelaide by his side, her arm around him."



WHEN Adelaide Leighton first saw Buddie he was sitting flat in the brown-yellow dust on the road to Cos Cob, digging and tossing spadefuls of loose earth into midair and laughing as they came down. He was about as beautiful a bit of humanity as ever dug in the dust of a country road to Cos Cob or elsewhere.

It happened that Adelaide was driving by in a runabout with her husband. Buddie turned and, fling-

ing her a golden glance from under his mat of curls the color of the sun, again dug.

He was four years old about, not more.

Adelaide laid hands on the reins. "I want him," she cried.

"Borrow him," suggested her husband. "I suspect there are more about here cut on his pattern. I think he is to spare."

A near-by cottage nestled close to the ground. It was Buddie's home. Adelaide alighted and running to the door, knocked. The door was presently opened by Buddie's mother, a faded little woman to whose skirts hung

fringes of children, all pretty as pictures, with the rosy black-eyed beauty common to Italians; but none was so beautiful as Buddie.

There was some slight demur, not much, a few preliminaries accompanied by leave-takings followed, and Buddie and his little bundle of ragged clothing were lifted into the runabout and driven away.

Adelaide Leighton had been married for ten dreary, childless years. So all the pent-up longing for children of her own now found relief in the love she lavished upon Buddie. She cared for him herself. She bathed him. She dressed him. Taking him to the shops

with her she bought him rich clothing, filled with pride of his beauty and the attention it attracted.

"To-day," she said to her husband one evening after dinner, "as Buddie and I were walking along Broadway a handsome woman got out of her carriage and came up to us."

"What a lovely child you have," she said, and bent down and kissed him.

"And there I stood, pretending he was mine!" She rose and continued: "Come and look at him before you go away; he is so beautiful," and taking him by the hand she led him, tiptoeing, into the little room which she had converted into a nursery for the boy.

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