



CHAPTER II

ROBERT BURNS FLETCHER



EXT morning the storm had somewhat abated. There was no need for the Fletchers to go home until the afternoon, so immediately after breakfast, John, after having carefully read the report of his own speech in the morning paper, went forth to make some inquiries concerning the little foundling who had so strangely come into their keeping. He had slept well all night in the comfortable bed near the warm kitchen fire, and awakened as bright as a bee, still more to entwine himself about Mary's heart.

"Oh, mother," she said, as she watched her stalwart husband striding up the street, "it may be wrang, but I hope John'll hear naething, and that he'll let me keep the bairn. Do you think he will?"

"I shouldna wonder, lassie. John would gie ye the heid off his shoulders if ye but asked it," she said with a slow smile. "But ye had better think well first. If ye tak' the bairn hame to Spitalhaugh, ye hae a heavy responsibility, and, mind you, it's no yer ain bairn, and ye dinna ken what kind o' a fire-