

• • • • •  
• **NORA, KIDNAPER** •  
• • • • •

By Horace Bright.

(Copyright by W. G. Chapman.)

"Sure, Mrs. Flaherty, there be a child crying in the basement. You can hear it if yez listen when you be passing," said Mrs. Grady to little Mrs. Flaherty, the carpenter's wife.

The two women were residents in the same tenement house in the city.



Sat Beside the Bed in Fear and Trembling.

It was not a squalid part, though the congestion made it an unhealthy one. It was clean enough, and Mrs. Flaherty's deft fingers kept the interior of her four rooms almost spotless. But Michael had been out of work for six weeks, owing to the business depression, and cleanliness was about all that Nora Flaherty could manage. She could not provide more food for the four hungry little mouths.

Day by day Michael tramped the

streets in search of work. And every evening the bread and milk somehow seemed to go less far. The children were growing thin. Bridget, the oldest, was five, and the rest followed a regular graduations down to Phil, the baby of ten months.

"If it wasn't for the children, Nora," Michael would say wistfully, "you and me could start out on the tramp and do chores in the country."

That had always been their longing—a country home. But it seemed more remote than ever, now that there were six mouths to feed.

Nora Flaherty listened as she stood at the entrance to the tenement house. Sure enough, she heard the pitiful cry of the child. She had seen him once—a thin little boy of six or seven years. The father was a Pole. He drank away his money every Saturday night, and returned home mad with liquor. Then he would beat the little boy, who lay neglected all day in the dark cellar-like place.

She heard him cry, and the mother instinct overflowed in her. Softly she crept down to the basement. It was quite dark, except for the faint illumination from a small, dirty window near the ceiling. She turned the handle. The door yielded. Upon the floor, crouched on a pile of rags, the little boy lay. He was thin and emaciated, and he stared at her in terror like a little wild animal.

The good woman's indignation brought a storm of angry words to her lips. The child, thinking they were meant for him, began to whimper again. Nora hurried upstairs and stood looking at the remnants of the loaf of bread and the thin milk in the pitcher. There was just enough for that night. Perhaps it would go round—if one of them did not eat. And Nora's appetite was not very large just now.

With a half-guilty manner she cut a thick slice of bread, poured out a cupful of milk, and carried the food down to the boy in the basement. When she saw him fall upon the food