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SELECT POETRY.

THE CANDIDATE.

A worthy citizen, whose name was Brown,
Bethought himself, one day,
That every lane must have its turn,
And every dog his say.
So to himself, at once he said:
"Me thinks I'll try my fate,
And for some office and the spôils,
I'll be a candidate"

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "Brown stock shall rise;
It will raise a clamor high,
When BROWN,
My name shall be in every eye,
And every tongue shall speak it,
And fame herself shall burst her cheeks,
As through her trump she'll squeak it."

He told his wife, and from her face
Quick vanished every frown,
She smiled to think that soon she'd be
The *Honble* Mrs. Brown.
The little Browns all ceased their play,
And said that they expected
"No longer petticoats to wear,
But pants, when PA's elected."

So Mr. Brown, he went at once
To the sovereigns of the nation,
And soon persuaded them that he
Should have the nomination.
And quick his name on every wall,
On fence, on post, through town,
In mammoth capitals was seen,
Till all was Brown! *Brown!!* Brown!!!

This made Brown happy, but, "alas!
Who can control his fate"—
He'd yet to learn the trials of one
Who is a candidate.
Reports were soon abroad that he
Had taken what wasn't his'n,
And that, at one time of his life,
He'd spent some years in prison.

One party swore his marriage bed
He'd ne'er been bless'd by parson;
Another one could easy prove
He'd once committed arson;
A fourth knew him a murderer,
Which raised at once a bobbery;
A fifth could swear that he besides
Had done a highway robbery.

The natives said that he was born
In Ireland's Isle so green;
While others said in Hindostan
The light he first had seen.
Adopted cits, quite the reverse,
At "Know-Nothing" him did call;
And one man bet that he could prove
He wasn't born at all.

Brown bore it well, but 'twas no use;
He felt beneath these shocks;
He could'nt steer his bark at all,
Among so many rocks.
So he ten, drove half mad with rage,
He hung himself at sundown,
Left Mrs. B a widow, and—
Was ne'er lately *done* BROWN.

SELECTED STORIES.

MY HUSBAND'S PATIENTS.

BY MRS. MADELINE LESLIE.

In a little angle or nook, formed by a cessation of the bold bluffs, rising abruptly from the sea, snugly nestled a small cottage, it such it may be called, where from morn till eve, and from eve till morn, may be heard the voice of God saying to the great waters, 'Thus far, but no further.' In this quiet retreat lived little James McDonald, with his mother and sister; and though at a distance from any other habitation, yet they were not afraid. When the storm raged, and the ocean roared, they only kept closer within their neat and cheerful abode. They felt safe under the protecting care of Him who giveth 'to the sea his decree that the waters should not pass his command.' When the long days of summer came, then would Jamie lead his little sister carefully down the low bluff upon which their home was built, and, gently lifting her from stone to stone, would soon reach the smooth, hard beach, which lay for a mile in extent before the cottage door. Here their merry children were never tired of playing, sometimes collecting a quantity of clean shells, and carrying them to a rock out of the reach of the coming tides, and using them for plates, with which they could set out their noonday repast; sometimes building houses of the fine, clean sand which covered the beach.

Jamie and Lottie had never known another home; and they loved the bright waves which ever kept rolling and breaking in white surf upon the shore. They could hardly have known how to sing and shout, as they did from morning till night, without the accompaniment of the breaking billows. They grew to be as experienced as mariners in calculating the ebb and flow of the tide, and the length of time before the waves would rise to their land-marks.

But let us leave Jamie and his sister standing with bare feet just out of reach, as they think, of the next wave, running backward and shouting with great glee, as it leaves their tiny shoes, and return to the cottage, where Mrs. McDonald is busy with her work.

A year or two before Jamie was born, Jane McDonald, with her young husband, left their native land, in the North of Scotland, and came to find a home in this free country. True it was that they had but an indistinct idea in what that freedom consisted; but wondrous reports had reached them from kindred and friends, who had come to find their fortune in America; and their ties to their father land being one by one cut off, as father, mother, and sister were taken to a heavenly country, then it was that they determined to seek a new home in this western world.

Immediately upon landing, they were cordially met by a near relative, and received into a neat comfortable abode, which in its many conveniences, formed such a contrast to their transatlantic home, that they looked about them with wondering and admiring eyes. After they retired for the night they held a long converse upon the probability or even possibility of their ever being equally well situated. When they arose in the morning, refreshed and invigorated for new duties, hope quickened each step and lighted each eye.

For a time everything went on smoothly. James McDonald was active and strong, and soon entered into an engagement with a farmer, who found in his new workman a trusty and faithful hand. Jane remained with her cousin, and proved herself of great assistance in the business by which the worthy Mrs. Dame increased the wages of her husband. The clothes were never so thoroughly washed, nor so nearly pressed as when Jane 'was to the fore.' Thus they continued until autumn, when James was thrown out of employment for the winter; and from this time poor Jane dated the beginning of her troubles. I cannot stop to relate all the trials made by James to obtain permanent employment, that he might have a settled home, which he could call his own; no, nor the reserve and sourness which gradually changed his once bright and happy countenance.

My story is more of little Jamie than of his parents. But I will just say, that though his good wife did not fail to sympathize deeply with her husband in every fresh disappointment, yet she always endeavored to lead him to feel that they were in the hands of One who knew all their wants, and who would guide their little bark at last into a safe port. Though James McDonald dearly loved his wife, yet on one point they widely differed. Jane had been blessed with a pious mother, who had early taught her not only to fear the Lord, but to trust him in all her ways. The good old lady used to say, 'It's no use to go to God with your troubles, and then turn to anither help when storms betide; but trust him alway, and bind your auld mither's words, "He'd ne'er forsake you."' Jane used to repeat this to her husband, and try to inspire him with new hope; but he gradually gave up more and more until almost their entire support depend upon her exertions. This was so gradual, however, that Jane had removed to the little cottage where we found her, and which was given to her for a merely nominal rent, and her sweet Jamie had come, a rich boon to the warm-hearted mother, before the father wholly despaired of becoming rich, and shipped as a sailor on board a merchant vessel going out from a neighboring port. The young wife felt very sad when she found her husband was really intending to leave her alone in a strange land, especially as, somewhat effected by the thought of the separation, James had renewed his former kindness and affection toward her, and she had begun to look forward to brighter days.

He went, however, and until the opening of our story he had returned but twice. Each time he returned completely tired of a seafaring life, and determined to pursue it no farther. But each time, also, after remaining at home a few months, he grew weary of the monotony of his cottage life, for he sought no employment; and declared that even the life of a sailor was better than this, and took the first opportunity to leave.

In the meantime Jamie had been delighted to welcome a little sister to their seaside home. Mrs. McDonald was well known, and esteemed by all the neighborhood, and had been able, during the watering season, when fashionable visitors resorted to the place, to obtain a good support by taking in nice washing. Besides the regular pay for her work, so prompt and faithful was she to her employers, that many of them became her fast friends, and for many of the comforts he cottage contained, she was indebted to their kind benefactions. Her neat cottage, with its bright flowers before the door, became increasingly a favorite resort for the lovers of the sea; and generally, on a pleasant afternoon, some invalid who had resorted to the salt water for the benefit of his health, might be seen sitting beneath her humble roof, looking out upon the mighty expanse of water, and counting the white sails in the distance.

In this way summer and winter passed.—Busied in her work, and contented in the society and affections of her children, Mrs. McDonald had long since ceased to mourn at the absence of her husband, though she never retired to rest nor commenced the duties of a new day without kneeling beside her little ones, imploring God's blessing upon the wanderer, and asking her heavenly Father to preserve him from the dangers of the deep, and above all, from the temptations of his unrenewed heart. This daily prayer was so connected in the mind of little Jamie with his father, that he often called Lotty, and said, 'Come, sisy, now mama's going to ask God about papa.'

Mr. McDonald had already been absent for more than two years; and during that period, his wife had never heard from him. He had not previously been absent so long at a time; and Jane used to awake during a storm, and hear the thundering of the billows, and fancy that, above the war of the sea, she could hear her own James calling for help; and then she would draw her children close to her breast, and pray that God Almighty would be the protector of her absent husband, and bring him safely to his home.

One day when Jamie and his sister, tired of play, returned to the cottage, they were surprised to see a man in the small sitting-room, bending their mother upon his knee. Jamie did not remember his father; and Lottie had not seen him since she was a baby; so the children stood in the door-way unperceived, yet wondering at the sight of their mother's joy, when she discovered them, and said, 'Jamie, my boy, don't you remember your own father?' Jamie hung down his head, and walked bashfully forward to take the extended hand, while his mother, catching up Lotty exclaimed, 'See James, ha-n't the baby grown to a fine size?' The father expressed great pleasure at the growth and improvement of the children.

When supper was prepared, Jamie gave up to his father the the seat at the head of the table, which he had occupied ever since he could remember, and waited for him to say grace. But when he saw his father help himself, and about to commence eating, his little face turned very red, and he looked at his mother in great distress.

'Papa,' he said in a very solemn tone, 'won't you ask God to bless this supper?'

'Mr. McDonald laughed, and said, 'what a little Methodist you've made the boy!'

'Papa,' said the boy earnestly, 'won't you please to pray?'

'Why,' said Mr. McDonald, 'who prays when I'm gone?'

'I do.'

'Well, then, pray now, only be very quick about it; I'm desperate hungry.'

In a very serious manner, Jamie folded his hands, and asked God to bless his food, and make them all good, and make papa good. Afterwards they ate their simple repast. Many a mouth had passed since James had heard the the voice of prayer, and he seemed impressed by the seriousness and earnestness of the child; and as Jane made no remark, the supper was rather a silent meal.

When the time came for their evening prayer, James had [illegible] to keep his little ones into the inner room, and there knelt with them, and thanked God for preserving her husband, and bringing him to his home in safety. Then she poured out her whole heart in prayer for his soul, that he might become a child of God and an heir of immortal glory. Jamie looked very wistfully at his mother as she arose, and wiped the tears from her eyes with his apron. But she kissed him and his sister, and having heard their prayers and hymns, laid them in their bed.

Not many days passed before the inmates of the cottage had entirely changed. Mrs. McDonald was not long in discovering that her dear husband, for whose return she had so earnestly prayed, had become a drunkard; and when intoxicated he was shockingly profane. When sober, a kind of respect for his wife's feelings had hitherto prevented him from swearing in her presence. But poor Jane wept bitter tears as she thought of her husband's wickedness, and also of the dreadful influence he would have upon her beloved children.

At first Jamie appeared completely stunned by the volley of oaths which his father poured out; but on recovering himself, he began to tell him it was very wicked to talk so, and that God wouldn't let him live if he did. James was beside himself with rage; and catching up a chair threw it at the child, telling him he'd teach him to stop his impudence.

But the frightened mother had snatched him away; and, with her children in the small bedroom, she wept as if her heart would break. She looked back one week, and thought of the happy, peaceful life she then led, with her children by her side, and her Jamie learning so fast to read that she was looking forward to the time when he would be able to read a chapter in the Bible, which had been her mother's, and which had been so carefully preserved. But Jane wept still more bitterly as she thought of that blessed mother's advice to her, not to marry a man who did not fear God; and she felt that her punishment, though long delayed, had now come; for though she had not married in positive disobedience to her mother's commands, yet she knew that she had done so contrary to her often expressed advice and warning. The very wretchedness her mother feared, had now fallen to her lot. Poor Jane knelt and prayed anew for wisdom and strength to bear the affliction which her own willfulness had brought upon her. Truly she had need of strength; for now that his family had witnessed his degradation. James seldom came home sober; and, when intoxicated, his wife and children soon learned that their only safety was in flight. Sometimes, however, they could not escape him, and the children would scream with fright as their father cruelly beat their dear mother, or threw her heavily to the side of the room.

Once Jamie started from his hiding place under the table, and stood directly before his angry father, and said, 'Papa, you mustn't beat my mama so; I can't let you; it's very wicked.'

It was a strange sight to see the angry man with a chair or stool raised over his head to strike; but he was arrested by the voice of his child pleading for his mother. Sometimes the plea would succeed; and he would mutter angrily to himself and slink away to bed. But at other times he would seize the boy by his arm or leg, and throw him to the other side of the room. At such seasons Mrs. McDonald suffered far more on account of her children than for herself. She began to consider what she ought to do for the security of their lives and persons. Some of the neighbors, hearing of the troubles of their esteemed friend, came to advise her to complain to the public authorities, and to have him taken up.

But it so happened that the day on which the kind neighbor visited her, James had returned from the village sober. He had obtained a job of work, and had brought to the cottage some food for his family. Jane now thought her prayers were answered; and her heart was buoyed up with hope of brighter days. 'Oh!' said she, 'It's not now that I would have the heart to complain of him, and he so kind the day.' She related to her sympathizing neighbors the unusual kindness of her husband. For a day or two, until the job was finished, James continued quite sober; but then intending to make up for lost time, he came home so furious, that Mrs. McDonald catching her children in her arms, fled down the cliff toward the sea, and there hiding with them behind a sheltering rock, she gave way to the most passionate grief.

All her bright hopes were now dashed to the ground. Unconscious of the lateness of the hour, she still sat until she found herself in a great chill. She instantly arose, and stealing like a criminal beneath her own roof, she found her husband, as she had expected, lying unconscious on the bed. She took in the children, and giving them their supper, she heard them say their prayers, and put them into bed and lay down beside them. Jamie seemed unusually wakeful, and tried to comfort his mother.

'Mama,' he asked, 'Don't I grow some every day?'

'Yes dear.'

'Well, so in I shall be a man, and I'll take you away where papa can't come, and then we'll be happy again just as we were before he came, only mama, I wish we could live here. It's so pleasant to hear the land sea. What makes papa so wicked and beat us so?'

'It's rum Jamie; *its rum*, does it all. Before he drank rum he was very kind to us.'

Jamie crept closer to his mother, [illegible] drink any; will you?' 'What could sisty and I do without you?'

Poor Jane comforted her boy with the promise that she never would taste of it; and then she told him as she had often done before of that bright world where there is no drunkenness, no sorrow or crying, but where all tears will be wiped from every eye. Jamie asked God to please to take them all to heaven. Oh! how often did the heart broken mother think of that earnest prayer.

After some time the poor weary wife lost the remembrance of her sorrow in sleep. But not long. She was suddenly awakened by a shrill cough; and she started at once to her feet. She well knew the sound, and sprang to relieve her sick child. She administered to him such remedies as she had at hand, but to no effect.

She then tried to arouse her senseless husband. 'Jamie is dying! *Jamie is dying!*' she cried in his ears! But she was obliged repeatedly to go to her suffering boy, when he would instantly fall back into unconsciousness.

One remedy after another she tried, and wrung her hands to see how ineffectually for his relief. At length, rendered desperate by despair, she succeeded in awakening James. She implored him to lose no time in bringing the Doctor. James was really frightened at the distress of the child, and willingly started off on his errand.

When the Doctor arrived, the poor little fellow was somewhat relieved; but was still dangerously ill. The physician remained with him until morning, when he left his patient asleep.

But to the croup succeeded an attack of lung fever; and the Doctor was, before many days, obliged to acknowledge to the heart-broken mother, that her Jamie, her first born, must soon leave her. The sweet boy himself was aware of this, and calling his mother to the bed-side, he held out his burning hand and said, 'Mama, I'm going to die; and I'm not sorry except for you. But who will take care of you when I am gone? If papa comes home angry who will tell him it's wicked?'

Poor Jane could only answer in tears. James soon came in and the little finger beckoned him to a seat at the bed-side.

'Papa,' said he in a feeble voice, 'You know I'm going to God; I can't stay here any longer, be good when I'm gone, so that mama will have somebody to take care of her.'

James could not resist the pleading of his dying boy; he began to weep, drawing his coarse sleeve across his eyes.

Seeing his father weep the dear child continued, 'Dear papa, won't you be good and not beat mama any more? Every body's father don't beat every body's mother.'

James cried aloud.

'Don't papa,' said Jamie, 'please don't cry so, because I have a great deal to say to you.' But the poor child began to cough so violently that he could say no more at that time. Mrs. McDonald took him in her arms, and rocked him gently after having administered his medicine. He soon fell asleep, while James went out before the door, and sitting upon the step, wept long and bitterly because he was about to lose his boy. Thoughts of other days came crowding into his mind, and he struck his head with his hard hand, wishing he had never left his father land. Here he sat alternately weeping and thinking, until his wife called him to supper.

After tea, he took a seat near the bed, and sat looking with great tenderness upon his suffering boy. He was not wholly hardened by years of profaneness and crime.

Jamie slowly opened his eyes to see his father gaze tearfully upon him.

'Dear Papa,' said the little fellow, 'I would not have slept, if I had known you were here. Will you please to take me up, I want to talk, and it don't hurt me so much when I am up.'

James with unwonted tenderness put the comforter around the sick boy, as he had seen his mother do, and sat down with the child in his arms. Poor Jamie missed the tender arms of his gentle mother, but he said nothing. His little heart was bent on doing his father good, and bringing happiness back to the home he was soon to leave.

'Papa, said he, laying his head back on his father's arm so that he could look him in the face, 'Mama says you were kind to her, and loved her very much, and when you came home she used to run out to meet you, instead of hiding away. She says it's only rum, *naughty, wicked rum*, that makes you beat us all, and say such awful words. Now papa, I'm going away from here, and you won't have any little Jamie; and mama won't have anybody to take care of her. 'Dear papa,' continued the child, putting up his hand to brush away the tears that were pouring down his father's cheeks, 'won't you please to be good to her as you used to be, and never drink any more rum? Then when you die you can go to Heaven and see me there, and I'll show you where Jesus is, because I shall be there a great while perhaps before you go. '*Will you, dear papa?*' The last word could hardly be distinguished. The pale sufferer lay with closed eyes and throbbing breast, entirely exhausted.

'He looked so much like death that James in affright called out, 'Jane, come quick; Jamie's going?'

His mother was instantly at his side. Indeed she had not been far away. She had laid on into a seat back of the rocking chair; and there she had eagerly listening to every word her swelling heart darling child, while ready for every wish of [illegible] in her apron.

Without removing him from his father's arms, Jane held camphor to the nostrils of her dying boy; and when he slowly opened his eyes, wet his parched lips with drink which the Doctor had left him.

In his earnest desires for his father, the boy had exausted his remaining strength, and lay panting for breath. Just at this time the physician entered; and taking his sweet little patient from his father, whose strong frame was so agitated and shaken with the violence of his feelings, as to prevent a proper care of the dear boy, laid him gently in bed, propping him up with pillows.

Mr. McDonald rose to leave the room; but Jamie cried feebly, 'Papa,' and putting out his hand motioned for his father to sit by his side Though not able to speak he looked at him with the utmost tenderness as the bowed head of his father was buried in the pillows, while his broad breast heaved and fell with the violence of his emotions.

After taking some medicine from the Doctor he was relieved; and again turning to his father, said, 'Did you say you would, papa?'

The Doctor looked inquiringly. He saw that a scene of uncommon interest had taken place, and he determined to await the result.

Poor James! The fountain of his feelings was broken up. The hard shell which drunkenness, and profanity and other crimes had formed around his soul was fractured, and an arrow from the Divine quiver had penetrated it, though directed by the feeble hand of his infant child. As the words, 'Did you say you would papa,' fell on his ear a new purpose was formed within him.

He arose from his seat; with a great effort he stifled his sobs, and falling on his knees, said, 'Jamie, my own dear boy, I will promise. May God help me to keep the vow I now make to my dying child, that I never, *never* more will taste of rum!'

A fervent 'amen burst involuntary from the Doctor, while Jane fell upon her knees to thank God for the unexpected answer to her prayers.

A heavenly smile played on the sweet countenance of the sufferer while he calmly folded his little hands on his breast as if in prayer. His work was done. He was now ready to be offered. A gasp, a sigh, drew them all quickly around the bed. The dying eyes passed lovingly from father to mother who stood holding his beloved sister in her arms, and then resting for a moment upon his kind physician, they were slowly closed, never to be opened until the morning of the resurrection.

James McDonald arose from the bed side of his Jamie a new man, with hopes and resolutions filling his soul, to which he had hitherto been a stranger, and when in after years the home which Jamie had loved to become their own, and another little Jamie had been given to them, these parents never forgot, when at night or morning they bowed before the family alar, to bless God for their dear first little Jamie who was now an angel in heaven.

In a quiet little knoll, but a hundred yards above high water mark, lies the body of the little subject of this simple sketch, where the rolling waves which he so much loved are ever swelling a requiem to the memory of the departed.

A FAMILY DINNER.

MY FRIEND'S STORY.

"But, really, Mrs. Robinson is a very excellent lady. You certainly must have given her some cause of offence."

My friend laughed. "You are right," he said; "she is, as you say, a very excellent lady, and I am as sincerely sorry for having offended her as a man can be; but I did offend her a good many years ago, and irrecoverably sank in her estimation. Mrs. Robinson has never forgotten the offence, and I verily believe never will forgive it. On my word, I am sorry, but it cannot be helped."

"And the offence?"

"Was a very innocent one on my part, I assure you; though I can scarcely think of it now without a blush at my superlative simplicity. It taught me a lesson though."

"Which was—"

"Never to accept a gentleman's invitation to a family dinner. I'll tell you all about it," said my friend; and forthwith he told the following tale:

——

It was several years ago, as I told you, and I had been some days in London—a place, by the way, that I hate like poison. I had business to transact with Robinson, and called at his office about noon.

"I dine at two precisely," said he, when our business was concluded, "and if you'll look in and take dinner with us quite in a family way—"

Now Robinson, you know, is an old friend of our family; and that, one might have said was sufficient warrant for his invitation. Moreover, I had been paying him money, and that, perhaps might have been considered a second warrant. And at the back of these, Mr. and Mrs. Robinson had spent a week, only the summer before, at my father's house in the country, where they had been entertained with his accustomed hospitality. So, taking all things into consideration, I was weak enough to clinchs the invitation with an acceptance, before I knew what I was about.

I was rather vexed directly afterwards, though that I had not refused; for the truth is, I was [illegible] rooms in the city.

Now, if there is one redeeming feature in London, it consists in its facilities for eating and drinking. The very beau ideal of dining is to be attained only in a London dining room. I don't care what you may think of my taste; but for good meat and well cooked, comfort, and freedom from all ridiculous ceremony, a London dining house against all the world.

It happened that on that day I had planned my dinner to a fraction—where to dine, what box to occupy, what joint to fix upon, what vegetables, what pudding, what cheese. I had deferred reading the morning paper that I might look at it there at my leisure. I had foreordained my afternoon engagements also. And all this I was weak enough, as I said before, to set aside, to oblige friend Robinson, by taking a family dinner with him.

Well, as I left his office the church clock opposite struck one, and I had an hour upon my hands. I had a call to make two or three miles away; but to go there and return punctually to Robinson's at two o'clock precisely, was out of the question; so I had no resource but to saunter away the tedious hour that intervened.

I passed my dining rooms with a sigh of resignation, stared in at the shop windows, walked down to Cheapside, entered St. Paul's Churchyard, looked up at the clock, and found that a quarter of an hour had lately been consumed. To while away the succeeding half hour, I passed up the steps, and entered the north door of the cathedral, deposited the demanded twopence in the out-stretched hand of the janitor, and sauntered among the monuments—timing my proceedings so well that on retracing my steps and reaching the door of Robinson's private residence, the clock was on the point of striking two.

"So far, well," I thought; "I shall not be accused of keeping the family dinner waiting at all events; though I dare say my friend Robinson is got in by this time. He said two precisely, I remember." And I boldly rang the bell.

"Mr. Robinson is in, I suppose?" I asked of the servant, who answered the summons.

"No, sir, he is not at home,"

"Oh, he soon will be in, I dare say; he said he should be at home by two. Is Mrs. Robinson within?"

"Yes, sir. What name, sir?"

And after these formalities were duly gone through with, I was ushered into a small parlor, and informed that Mrs. Robinson would "be down" directly.

Well, I sat and sat, and could not avoid hearing a hurrying and skurrying along the passages, up stairs, and down stairs, and, for anything I know, in my lady's chamber. At length, after a quarter of an hour's delay, during which time I had been nervously fidgeting about and longing every moment to hear friend Robinson's ring of the bell, and foot in the passage—the door slowly opened, and in walked Mrs. Robinson. She had evidently—or rather as I guessed, though rightly—been caught in dishabille, and has been occupied ever since my arrival in setting herself to rights, or whatever else the ladies may call it. Of course, this did not tend to make me welcome, though, to do the lady justice, she was too well bred to show any particular signs of displeasure.

On the contrary, indeed, she received me with tolerable cordiality—was glad to see me, and so forth—inquired how long I had been in London, how friends were in the country, how long a stay I intended making, and all that sort of thing.

"This is all very well," thought I, "but it says nothing about dinner, and I am half famished. What can Robinson mean by not keeping his appointment?"

Five minutes, perhaps—and perhaps ten—passed in this sort of talk; and the lady, I could perceive, began to grow mighty fidgety. "Ten to one," thought I, "Mrs. Robinson was on the point of serving up the *family dinner* as I came in, and she is afraid of the roast being overdone, or some other catastrophe of like nature. How shall I manage it to set her feet and hands at liberty, and her heart at rest?"

"I hope I am not detaining you madam?" I stammered at last for want of something better to say. "If you will allow me, I will take up a book and amuse myself till—"

My lady could scarcely repress a start of astonishment, which plainly said, what on earth does the man mean? She did not say this verbally, however, but supplied its place with "Did you wish to see Mr. Robinson particularly?"

"Why, my dear madam," I replied, with a faint attempt at a smile. "I certainly did expect to see Mr. Robinson; he told me that two o'clock precisely was his dinner hour."

This time there was no disguising her real feelings—Mrs. Robinson's brow darkened like midnight. It was plain enough now—what I had only surmised before—that Mr. Robinson had not thought it necessary to give his lady due notice of his expected guest. Perhaps he had forgotten the invitation he himself had given two hours before. Most likely so, I thought, for the hands of a dial on the mantel were pointing to half past two, and no Mr. Robinson.

"I am afraid, my dear madam," I said "that there has been some slight mistake. Mr. Robinson certainly asked me to dine with him at two o'clock; but perhaps it is not convenient. And he as probably has been detained?"—and I arose and put my hand on my hat. I had better left this unsaid; it put the caping stone on my forfeiture of Mrs. [illegible] faithfully at all times.

"Pray, don't think of such a thing as leaving," Mrs. Robinson exclaimed with a grim smile. "Most happy to see you at our poor table. I dare say Mr. Robinson will be in soon; most likely, as you say, he has been detained in his office; he often is. Perhaps you *will* be so kind as to excuse me for a few minutes. Mr. Robinson won't be long, I am sure." And without waiting for a reply, the lady disappeared more hastily than she had entered the parlor.

Thinks I to myself, "Here's a pretty mess! If I could but make my exit unseen, I would." And I blushed to my fingers' ends, till they fairly tingled. "Hang all family dinners, and the men who invite their friends to them!" I unconsciously ejaculated, as I resetated myself in a mood of desperate resignation.

Friend Robinson's house was not a very large one, and it was not long before I heard distinctly enough, the opening and shutting of doors, not over and above gently. The street door was opened too and shut, and opened and shut again; but no Mr. Robinson. Soon afterwards, from the region below, I fancied I heard the sounds of fizzing and frying, or something akin to it. Then in the dining-room adjoining the parlor in which I sat—not a couch of roses, by any means—I heard the creaking of an uplifted table flap, the rattling of plates, the clattering of knives, forks and spoons, and the jingling of glasses.

"Come," thought I; "it will be all right at last. But that Robinson—where can the man have got to?"

Thanks be praised! the door bell rings at last—a loud, sharp ring, which none but the master of the house is privileged to give—and enter Mr. Robinson.

"Ha, you have been here before me, I see," said he, trying, as it struck me, to look unconcerned; "I have been detained, but, better late than never;" and he applied his hand to the bell.

"Tell your mistress that I am come in, Sarah," said he, when the girl entered, fiery red in the face. "Dinner is ready, I suppose?"

"Mistress says I am to tell you that it will be ready in a quarter of an hour, sir," said the damsel.

"Bless me! Does your mistress know what time it is?" exclaimed Mr. Robinson, looking at his watch, which, as well as the dial, pointed to a quarter of three.

Mistress wants to see you, sir, for a minute, if you please," continued the girl, evading her master's question, as altogether beside the mark.

Mr. Robinson was obedient to the summons, and disappeared.

It is no use—if people will talk loud, it's absurd in them to expect other people will put their fingers to their ears. I told you just now that friend Robinson's house was not a large one. And it was a very sonorous one. Now, these circumstances put together, will exonerate me from the charge of listening—which I did not. The fact is, I could not help hearing—

First, a gentle murmuring in a female voice, from some place below stairs—sounding very much like a remonstrance, but the import of which I could not, and I did not particularly wish to make out; though I might possibly guess at it.