

The Unbolted Door.

An aged widow sat alone
Beside her narrow hearth:
Her silent cottage never heard
The ringing laugh of mirth.
Six children once had sported there, but
now the churchyard snow
Fell softly on five little graves that were
not long ago.

She mourned them all with patient love
But since her eyes had shed
Far bitterer tears than those that dewed
The faces of the dead.
The child which had been spared to her,
her darling and her pride,
The woeful mother lived to wish that she
had also died.

Those little ones beneath the snow,
Not lost but gone before,
Faith taught her all was well with them
And then the pang was o'er;
But when she thought where Katie was,
she saw the city's glare,
The painted mask of bitter joy which
Need gives Sin to wear.

Without the snow was thick and white,
No step had fallen there;
Within she sat beside her fire,
Each thought a silent prayer.
When suddenly, behind her seat,
unwonted
roise she heard,
As though a hesitating hand the rustic
latch had stirred.

She turned and there the wanderer stood
With snow-flakes on her hair—
A faded woman, wild and worn,
The ghost of something fair.
And then upon her mother's neck, the
withered brow was laid—
Can God and you forgive me all? for I have
sinned, she said.

The widow dropped upon her knees
Before the fading fire,
And thanked the Lord, whose loving
hand
Had granted her desire.
The daughter knelt beside her too,
tears streaming from her eyes,
And prayed, God help me to be good to
mother ere she dies!

They did not talk about the sin,
The shame, the bitter woe;
They spoke about those little graves,
And things of long ago.
And then the daughter raised her eyes,
and said in tender tone,
Why did you keep your door unbarred
when you were quite alone?

My child, the widow said, and smiled,
A smile of love and pain;
I kept it so lest you should come,
And turn away again;
I've waited for you all the while—a
mother's love is true—
Yet it is but the shadowy type of Him
who died for you!

SELECT STORY.

The Poor-House Girl.

(CONCLUDED.)

APPY in the love of her husband
and children, Earnestina did not
forget the sorrows of the sick and
needy.

Many desponding hearts were made
lighter by her kindness, and many des-
tute ones were clothed by her hands.
One day a friend mentioned to her
the very pitiful case of an elderly woman
who lived in one of the wretched tenement
houses in the lowest part of the city.

Poor, sick, and apparently friendless,
her case appealed to the sympathy of all.
Earnestina made minute inquiries of
her friend, and the next day went to see
the destitute woman, being accompanied
by a servant carrying a variety of things
needed by the sufferer.

She mounted the ricketty stairs, and
entered the poor, mean room.
Everything bespoke poverty in the
harsh, coarsest aspect, and the woman
stretched on a wretched pile of straw,
in one corner, was, indeed, a pitiable ob-
ject.

Little could be done to render her
comfortable until a bed and a fire could
be procured, but Earnestina approached
the woman, and made her presence
known.

A sorrow-stricken, wrinkled face was
turned to her, and she started back in
wonder.
Despite the changes which fifteen years
had wrought, she recognized the worn
face.

It was her former mistress Mrs. Rich-
ards.

Truly, times change, and fortunes
change.

Mrs. Richards did not dream that the
bright, beautiful lady, who bent over her
so sympathizingly, was the insulted, ab-
used Van, the poor-house girl.

Mrs. Thorne, nobly forgiving the past
caused the poor woman to be removed
to more comfortable apartments, and
placed under the best medical care, but
nothing could prolong her life.

Care, anxiety, and disease, had done
their work too thoroughly.
Mrs. Thorne sat beside her bed, short-
ly before her death, and pointed the dy-
ing woman to the Saviour of sinners.
It is too late—too late, was the de-
spairing moan. I have sinned beyond

forgiveness. I have spent all the best
years of my life in tryin' to hoard up
money for myself and children. I've
been hard, close, and wicked, that I
might gain a little more money. Willie,
my baby, my pet, died, and I mourned
over him; but it would have been better
if all my children had died then. When
'Lisha died, they all tried to see which
should get the biggest share of the prop-
erty. I might have held the use of a
third, you know, but they scolded, cheat-
ed, abused, and insulted me, till I was
glad to get away from them by giving
up everything. Then I came to the city
and managed to get along somehow till
I was taken sick, and I believed I should
have starved to death if you hadn't
come to me. My own children have de-
serted me.

Earnestina's tears fell fast at the re-
cital.

The sick woman asked for some cor-
dial, and then went on with her story.
It seems hard and cruel, doesn't it,
ma'am? But I know I deserve it all,
I had a poor orphan girl bound out to
me once, and I treated her worse than
my children treated me. Finally, I got
angry at some little thing, and beat her
till I almost killed her. Next day she
took sick with brain fever, and some la-
dies took her away from me as soon as
she was able to go. I've done many
cruel things in my life, but that has
weighed on my conscience more than all
the rest. If I could only ask her to for-
give me, I believe I should die a little
more easy.

Mrs. Thorne held out the pencil
sketch of Van.
Do you recognize this sketch Mrs.
Richards?
That's her! That's the girl—Van, Do
you know her?
The feeble woman lifted her head off
the pillow in her anxiety.
I am the original of that picture. I
was once Earnestina Van Dalsein, the
poor-house girl, and I forgive and pity
you from the bottom of my heart, said
Mrs. Thorne.

You—you, Van? It cannot be; yet
it is her eyes and hair. Then it is Van
who has taken care of me when my own
children would not take me in. Oh you
must hate me!

Yes, I am Van; but I cherish no
hard feelings against you. I forgive you
as freely as I hope to be forgiven.

You forgive me? You, whom I have
wronged? Will God forgive?
Much more was said, and, after an
earnest prayer, Mrs. Thorne left her.

When next she saw her, she was wrapped
in the cold embrace of death.
Her last words were,—
Forgive!—forgive!

Mrs. Thorne assisted the nurse to
robe the dead form in the habiliments
of the tomb.
She has sinned, suffered, and been
forgiven, said she, tenderly.

In the corner of the cemetery gleams
a plain, white stone.
On it this inscription,—
Sacred to the memory of Abigail
Richards. Aged 64.

The Rival Sisters.

WAS sitting quietly by the win-
dow, gazing abstractedly out at the
heavy banks of iron-grey clouds that
were wheeling tumultuously through
the heavens, threatening rain, and lis-
tening mechanically to the conversation
that was being carried on between my
elegant sister, Diana, and her most in-
timate friend, Belle Ray.

We were all spending a few weeks at
a by no means very fashionable water-
ing-place, but, nevertheless, an exceed-
ingly beautiful and picturesque village
situated on the sea-shore.

Presently I heard my sister say, in
reply to some remark just uttered by
her friend,—

Yes, Belle, it certainly is, as you say
most insufferably dull in L— at pre-
sent, and very likely to continue thus
for some considerable length of time.
Oh, that some startling event might oc-
cur to vary the tedious monotony of life,
and render the time spent by us less
miserable! And, by the way, Belle, that
reminds me of a choice bit of gossip that
I overheard to-day. What do you im-
agine it was?

That I cannot tell, Diana, I'm sure.
Pray relieve my anxiety, which is bor-
dering on the intense, at once. I am
almost dying for some change, be it
for the better or worse. What is it?

And Miss Ray tossed back her jetty
ringlets, and seated herself more com-
fortably in her easy chair, preparatory
to listening to what my sister had to
say.

Smoothing down the folds of her
"moire antique" dress, Diana went on
carelessly.—

I consider it the most fortunate news
conceivable, just now. Only think,
Belle, my old admirer, Walter Clayton,
arrived to-day at the Montour House.
Now, there! Is not that what you term
excellent news? No more solitary chats
and walks for us, but, in the future, an
extremely handsome, wealthy cavalier
to attend us in our ramblings, and vary

the tiresome monotony of life at L—
and of all persons I shall be glad to see,
Walter Clayton is the one. You have
never met him, I believe, Belle? I
formed his acquaintance last year, at
Newport, where he was very attentive
to me, I can assure you. And, 'sub
rosa', Belle, I mean to captivate him;
for, besides being the handsomest man
I ever met, he is vastly rich.

—And my sister glanced with a self-
satisfied look at herself in the mirror,
which hung directly opposite, contem-
plating the beautiful vision reflected
therein.

Diana was a tall, stately blonde, with
ultra marine blue eyes, and a great
abundance of reddish-golden hair, which
by some unaccountable process, she al-
ways managed to fasten into an indes-
cribably graceful and careless mass at
the back of her head, enough to drive
any other woman distracted with envy
it was so transcendently becoming.

Besides, she had that easy, imposing
way with her, utterly impossible to ac-
quire, unless it be of nature born; and
as I glanced at her, I felt assured, that
if she were really in earnest about cap-
tivating Mr. Clayton—whom I had
never met, by the way—she would suc-
ceed; it seemed impossible for her to
fail.

Coming out of the semi-conscious re-
verie that I had fallen into, I spoke now
for the first time.

And what style of a man, Diana, is
this handsome cavalier of yours—dark
or fair? Tall or short?

My sister turned superciliously upon
me.

I thought you were off in the land of
dreams long ago, little one, as usual.
And so you want a description of your
brother in law that is to be, Hester?

Well, puss, I will try and satisfy your
curiosity, if possible. He is tall and
fair, with brilliant blue eyes, and golden
auburn hair and beard—the only fair-
complexioned man I think I ever fancied
of cutting me out, have you.

And at the ludicrousness of the
thought, her silvery laugh rang out,
clear and sarcastic, through the room.

Perhaps I have, I retorted, quickly
for her gay, bantering tone nettled me.

Rising, I let down my heavy veil of
dark brown, glistening hair, which fell
far below my waist, to arrange it in a
style, if possible, more becoming.

How I hated myself as I glanced in
the glass.

I was so homely and unattractive,
with such a plain, dark face, the sallow-
ness of my complexion brought out into
bolder relief, to-day, no doubt, by the
dress of light blue which I was arrayed
in.

Hastily twisting up my hair in a
tight knot behind, which, I verily be-
lieve, made my face look darker and
plainer than usual, and throwing a water-
proof cloak over my shoulders, that com-
pletely concealed my slender form, which
I mentally denounced for not being more
imposing and statuesque, I took down
my gingham sun-bonnet, which Aunt
Betsey had compelled me to bring in
case of a like emergency, and tossed it
with a bitter expletive on my head, with-
out deigning to notice in the least the
curious, wondering glance cast upon me
by Diana and Miss Ray. I sallied out
of the house for the purpose of indulg-
ing in a long, solitary walk, totally un-
mindful of the impending storm.

On and on I went, a great pain throbb-
ing at my heart, a feeling of rebellion
rising within me, as I thought that I
who had always worshipped beauty in
any shape, should be so plain and un-
attractive.

Darker and darker grew the clouds,
colder and chillier blew the wind, and
at last, raindrops came pattering down
upon me; but, repressing an involuntary
shiver, I wrapped my cloak closer
around my shoulders, and kept persist-
ently on my way.

Presently, however, the drops came
eddying down faster and faster, larger
and larger, until I found myself obliged
either to seek some temporary shelter or
get completely drenched with the fall-
ing rain; and, knowing that the
latter case would not by any means im-
prove my looks, I had not the least in-
tention of so doing; so, turning a cor-
ner abruptly, in order to gain shelter
underneath a noble oak that I observed
towering, grand and majestic, above
me, in my unusual hurry my foot hit
against some obstruction, and I found
myself precipitated to the ground.

As quickly as possible I regained my
footing, muttering angrily to myself the
while, when, happening to raise my
eyes, I beheld before me, with um-
brella in hand, a handsome, stylish man
with golden-auburn hair and beard,
whom I instantly recognized—through
my sister's description—as Walter Clay-
ton, laughingly regarding me.

I gave my bonnet an angry jerk to
cover my face, which I well knew was
flushed deep red with anger and confu-
sion, wishing, as I did so, that he was
in Jamaica, or some other equal distant
place, when the string that confined it
broke, and down fell my bonnet to the
ground, loosening, as it went, my hair,

which came tumbling in a great, tangled
mass, like a miniature cataract, down my
back; while down upon my uncovered
head the rain poured, as if the windows
of heaven were really open and ready
for another flood, making, withal, as
awkward and original a picture, perhaps
as Diana's apollo ever had the pleasure
of witnessing.

It was all in vain I tried to fasten up
my hair; it would still persist in cling-
ing wet and heavy, about my shoulders,
and, in utter despair, I finally desisted
from the useless attempt, and, catching
up the contemned head-piece, I again
threw it over my head, and was proceed-
ing to move on my way after bestow-
ing an angry glance upon Walter Clay-
ton, when, stepping up to me, he said,
still eyeing me askance with that arch,
laughing look,—

Allow me, madam, to hold this um-
brella over your head. It must be in-
tensely unpleasant standing out here in
this shower, with these huge drops fall-
ing so savagely upon you. You remind
me vividly of a mermaid, just risen
out of the sea, with your tangled, drip-
ping locks.

All of this was uttered in a graceful,
although slightly sarcastic, tone, he,
meanwhile, holding the umbrella above
me.

I would fain have dispensed with his
company, preferring even to be left alone
in the rain, if only free from him; but
there was something so coolly imperious
about this handsome, aristocratic man,
that I found myself utterly incapable of
replying; in fact, I was literally unable
through anger to do so; and he, taking
my consent for granted, walked on by
my side, rattling on in an easy, graceful
manner about anything and everything
that happened to arise during our pro-
gress.

I replied only in cold, angry monosyl-
lables, scarcely cognizant of what I was
saying. My only thought was to be at
home. How I hated him as I saw his
merry, laughing blue eyes every now and
then, riveted upon my dark, blushing
face, and then wander down to my palest
of blue dresses! I knew but too well
that he was forming a nowise favorable
opinion of my taste, I could bear it no
longer. I must speak, or else burn with
suppressed rage, and I accordingly did
the former.

Leave me, I said, angrily, motioning
him away with as imperious a gesture as
I could then command. I should prefer
being left alone in the rain, rather than
suffer your presence any longer! Leave
me! I again repeated, as I saw no evi-
dence that he intended taking his de-
parture.

Nay, he replied in an insolent tone.
I dare not obey your command, greatly
as you desire it. We must hurry on,
or be completely drenched by the im-
pending flood. See how the drops are
falling! And listen, he added, as a low,
rumbling sound of thunder went rolling
in a glorious, majestic peal on high, that
surely threatens something more than a
mere shower.

I answered not a word; so on we went
the rain descending upon us in torrents,
the thunder resounding with force ter-
rific on high, the heavens now and then
lit with, and made perfectly resplendent
by, the long, arrowy chains of lightning
that went rushing with fearful velocity
through the sky, while I suffered torture
that I never wholly forgot.

I was naturally very proud and sensi-
tive, and it was intensely galling to my
independent spirit to be relying, even for
so short a time, on a stranger—one who
was regarding me in an unfavorable
light; and yet I knew him to be a per-
fect gentleman, notwithstanding his
laughing glances and almost insolently
imperious tones and felt instinctively
that he was a man to be trusted.

How differently I should have felt to-
wards him had I only been some stately,
gifted lady, like my sister Diana!

For then, of course, he would not have
favoured me with so many of those in-
quiring looks, and would not certainly
have had the remotest chance of making
light of me.

The Empire—the hotel that I was
stopping at—loomed at last just ahead
of us, I said, icily,—

If you please, sir, I will stop here;
this is my destination.

Certainly, he replied, deferential, and
we ascended the walk together, I wholly
oblivious of the two pairs of eyes rest-
ing upon me as we neared the hotel.

Just as we came in front of the build-
ing I saw him cast a sharp, penetrating
glance at me, which I found myself at
fault in interpreting, and then he asked
in a half-hesitating manner, whether I
would enter by the front way or go in
by way of the servants' passage.

I glanced at him in blank amazement.
What was he conjecturing?
Go in by way of the servants' entrance,
I said. Assuredly not! Why should I?

Pray excuse me; I took you for —
He hesitated, stammered, and, for
the moment, I deemed him absolutely
awkward.

Then the truth burst upon me vivid-
ly and startlingly—he had mistaken me
for a servant.

Turning upon him with an angry
glance I did not care to veil flashing
from my eyes, I said, with cool delibera-
tion,—

You took me for a servant. Thank
you sir, for the intended compliment.
I do, no doubt, resemble one in this
guise; but, nevertheless, as I am a lady
I will pass over your insolence, and bid
you good afternoon, trusting that the
time will arrive when I shall be abund-
antly able to repay your kindness in
allowing me the friendly shelter of your
umbrella, thereby letting me escape a
complete drenching, which would have
taken all the stiffness out of the 'slats'
of my sun-bonnet, and rendered invis-
ible the pale blue of my dress, which
colour is so enlivening to my sallow
complexion. Good-day, sir.

And favoring him with one of my
haughtiest bows—which, alas! could
never prove anything but excessively
awkward—I passed him and entered the
house, leaving him staring after me with
a decidedly astonished air.

Entering my room, I tossed my cloak
and bonnet aside, and then veered
round to answer my sister's question.

Yes, I said, angrily, you did see me
walking with Walter Clayton. I was
caught in the storm, and your distingua
looking cavalier very gallantly offered to
escort me home.

Here I stopped wholly suppressing
the rest, for I did not care that stately
Diana, or fascinating Miss Ray, should
know Walter Clayton's true opinion of
myself.

I truly hope that he did not recogniza
in you my sister, Diana retorted. If so,
I should be mortified to death. Why,
Hester, I never saw you before in such
a guise. Really you are a veritable
fright!

I bestowed upon her a menacing glance
but, suppressing the angry words that I
had nearly given utterance to, I began
to make a change in my toilet, which I
discovered to be as truly frightful as
Diana had termed it; after which I seated
myself in my accustomed place by
the window, and watched the advancing
progress of the storm.

The heavens were frowning dark and
lowering, above me, while the rain still
descended in torrents, and, striking
against the window panes, created a sad
dreary, monotonous refrain, very pleas-
ant to listen to in my excited, irritable
frame of mind.

I sat there hour after hour listening
to the grand and solemn peals of thun-
der that ever and anon burst forth with
awful distinctness upon the air, and
watching the lightning as it gleamed
and flashed its bewildering train of light
like a flaming serpent, athwart the inky
sky, wholly unconscious, for the time be-
ing, of that dull, dreary pain that had
been tugging so bitterly at my heart only
a short time ago.

At last, to my sorrow and discom-
forture, the lightning vanished, the thun-
der died away in the distance to return
no more while the drops of rain became
less and less frequent, and finally ceased
altogether.

With a sigh I turned away from the
window, conscious for the first time of
the eyes gazing wonderingly upon me.

Upon my word, Hester, Diana said,
lightly, I should really like to know what
ails you. Here have Bella and I been
regarding you for this long time intently
but not the least notice whatever have
you condescended to bestow upon us.

Instead, you have been deep in the
mysteries of a day-dream, gazing away
into vacancy with those solemn, owl-
like eyes of yours; your whole dark face
illumined with wondrous thoughts,
until as I watched you, I felt unspeak-
ably glad that Walter Clayton was not
here to see you in that phase, for he,
who admires so passionately the strange
the picturesque, in whatever guise it
may present itself would not have passed
unnoticed your striking countenance;
and then all my hopes and aspirations of
becoming the envied Mrs. Clayton would
have instantly dissolved in thin air.

[CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.]

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