

He believes me innocent. He has been to me more than a brother. He will accompany me to another clime, whither I am going, to try the effect of more genial air on my shattered frame. Would to God we could have met before we parted—perhaps for ever. Your father says you have been ill, that you fear the effect of the meeting on both. You have been ill—my ever adored, still tenderly beloved Cecilia, I write not to reproach you. Bitter is the penalty paid for one moment of passion. Had I ever swerved in my affection for you, even in thought, I should deserve all I have suffered. I recall your sadness, your coldness, and averted looks. I know the cause, and mourn over it. Why did you not confide in me? We might yet have been happy—but the will of God be done. The vessel waits that is to bear us to a transatlantic clime—farewell. Should I return, bearing with me some portion of my former vigour, should your confidence in my love be restored, then, perchance, through the mercy of heaven, two chastened and humble hearts may once more be united on earth. If I am never permitted to revisit my native soil, if I die in a foreign land, know, that faithful to you, to my latest hour, my last thought, prayer and sigh, will be yours.” \* \* \*

And he was gone—gone—sick, wounded, perhaps dying he was gone to another land, and the blood that was drained from him on my soul. My father forbade him to see me—he was too feeble to bear the shock of beholding me in the condition I then was. My real situation was concealed from him. The only means of making the prohibition effectual, was to word it as proceeding from myself. Thus, he believed me cold and selfish to the last. My father talked to me of better days, of the hope of my husband's speedy restoration, and of our future reunion. I could only listen and weep. I dared not murmur. I felt too deeply the justice of the judgment the Almighty had passed against me. I had one ordeal yet to pass—an interview with Alice. She also was under my father's roof, confined by increasing debility to her own apartment. As soon as my strength allowed, I made it a religious duty to visit the poor invalid. I was shocked to see the ravages of her malady. Her eye of glassy brightness turned on me with such a look of woe and remorse, it cut me to the heart. I took the pale thin hand she extended towards me, and burst into tears. Yes! I saw it but too clearly. Here was another victim. The steps of the destroyer were fearfully accelerated. She had had a profuse hemorrhage from the lungs, and her voice was so weak and husky, it was with difficulty I could understand her. She drew me down near to her pillow, and, placing my hand on her heart, said, in a careful whisper—“Remorse, Cecilia, it is here. It is this which gives the sting to death.” She then drew from beneath her pillow a paper that she had written for me, which she begged me to read when I was alone. I did read it. It was the transcript of a warm, romantic heart, ardent and misguided, yet even in its aberrations discovering an innate love for virtue and truth. Her whole soul was bared before me—all her love, imprudence, and remorse. She described my husband as an angel of light and purity, soaring high above the clouds of passion that gathered darkly around herself. She spoke of that scene followed by such irremediable woe. “Even now,” continued Alice, “wasting as I am on the bed of death, with the shadows of earthly feeling dimly floating round me, knowing that I shall soon turn to cold, impassive clay, the memory of that hour presses with scorching weight on my brain. I must have been mad. Surely I had not the control of my reason. I had taken the previous night an unusual quantity of opium, which, instead of composing me to sleep, had excited my nerves, and strung them as with fire. Your husband came in only a short time before your sudden entrance, evidently on some errand; and though he kindly paused to speak to me, his looks expressed haste to depart. Just as he was about to leave the room, I was attacked with one of those spasms you have sometimes witnessed. He came to my relief—he administered every restorative. I know not all I uttered, but when I recovered I remember many wild expressions that escaped my lips. It seemed to me

that I was going to die, and while his arms thus kindly supported me, I felt as if it would be joy to die. With his conviction, was it so black a crime to breathe forth the love that had so long pervaded my frail and lovely existence? Cecilia, herecoiled from me with horror. He proclaimed his inviolable love and devotion for you—his glance was stern and upbraiding. Then seeing me sinking in despair, the kindness of his nature triumphed, and he sought to calm my overwrought and troubled spirit. He expressed the affection of a brother, the pity of a friend, the admonitions of a christian. “Above all,” said he, “make a friend of Cecilia. She will always cherish you with a sister's love,” “Never!” I exclaimed, “she hates me, she must ever hate me.” The vision of an injured wife arrested my unhallowed accents. You know the dreadful tragedy that followed. Never since that hour have I had one moment's calm. Conscience, with her thousand scorpions, lashes me—whether sleeping or waking there is no rest. “There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked.” Yet mine was not deliberate guilt. Had I only wrecked my own happiness!—but the wide desolation, the irretrievable ruin! I shudder, I weep, I lift my feeble hands to that Power whose laws I have transgressed, and pray for pardon. To you, whose home of love I have laid waste, dare I turn my fading eyes, and hope for forgiveness? To him whom I have driven from his native land, shorn of the brightness of his manhood—Oh! sinful dust and ashes,—here the unhappy writer broke off—the blank was stained with tears. Probably in that broken sentence the embers of passion flashed out their last fires, through the “dust and ashes” of withering mortality. Poor Alice! may'st thou be forgiven by a merciful Creator as freely as thou art by me. Gentle be thy passage through the valley of the shadow of death, to that country where no storms desolate the heart, where passion and penitence are unknown. As for me—why and for what do I live? For hope or despair? I pray for tidings from the beloved exiles, yet dread to receive them. If the night gale sweeps with hasty gust against the window, I tremble lest they be exposed to the stormy deep. When I gaze on the moon and stars, I ask myself if they are lighting the wanderers on their homeward way, and sometimes gather hope from their heavenly brightness.

The manuscript of Cecilia here abruptly closes. It has fallen to the lot one who afterwards became the devoted friend of Clinton, to relate the sequel of their melancholy history.

“It was in the spring of the year 18—, I was sitting on the deck, watching the rapid motion of the boat, as it glided over the waves, thinking earnestly of the place of my destination, when I first beheld Cecilia, the wife of Clinton. I was a stranger on board, and gazed around me with that indefinite expression, which marks the stranger to the experienced eye. At length my glance was riveted by the appearance of a lady, leaning on the arm of a gray-haired gentleman, slowly promenading the deck. They passed and repassed me, while I continued to lean over the railing, fearing, by a change of position, to disturb the silent strangers. There was something in the figure of the lady inexpressibly interesting. She wore a mourning-dress, and her eyes were covered with a green shade. Notwithstanding her face was thus partially obscured, the most exquisite beauty of outline and colouring was visible I ever saw in any human countenance. She wore no bonnet or veil, for the sun was verging towards the west, and its rays stole soft and mellow over the golden waters. Fair and meek as the virgin mother's was the brow that rose above the silken screen, defined with beauteous distinctness by dark, divided hair, whose luxuriance was confined by a golden band. At length they seated themselves very near me, and began to converse in a low tone. There was a melancholy sweetness in her accents, and I was sure they were speaking of some sorrowful theme. We were now entering the bay, and the boat rocked and laboured as she plunged through the increased volume of the waters. Now, just visible on the glowing horizon, was the topmast of a vessel. On she came, with sails full spread, her canvass swelling in the

breeze, her majestic outline softened by the sunset hues. The gentleman pointed out the object to his companion who lifted the shade from her brow, revealing, as she did so, eyes of such melting softness. I wondered I had, thought her lovely before. She pressed the arm of the gentleman, and gazed eagerly on the vessel, which now bore down ‘majestically near.’ She rose, she bent forward with earnest gestures, her face kindled, and sparkled like the waters themselves. The ship approached so near we could discern figures on the deck. The boat had diverged from her path to give place to the nobler craft. She was sailing with great rapidity, and the noise of the engine and the dashing of the waves drowned the sound of the voices near me. I began to feel a strange interest in the vessel on which the eyes of the strangers were so earnestly riveted. Amid the figures that walked her deck, I distinguished one, which was aloof from the others, of a more lofty bearing—a cloak was gathered round him, and from this circumstance, together with his extremely pallid complexion, I judged him to be an invalid. From the rapid motion of both vessels, it was but a glance I obtained, after we were near enough to trace these lineaments. At this moment the lady sprang upon the bench beneath the railing—she stretched forth her arms, with a startling cry. I saw her for an instant, bending far over the edge of the boat. I rose and rushed towards her to warn her of her danger, but a plunging sound in the water, that closed darkly over her sinking form, froze my veins with horror. “Oh! my God!” exclaimed the father “save her. My daughter! O! my daughter! then fell back almost paralyzed on the seat. To throw off my coat and plunge in after the ill-fated lady, in whom I had become so painfully interested, was an instantaneous deed. Alas! all my efforts were unavailing. The current was so powerful, I found it in vain to struggle with its force. I relaxed not, however, till my failing strength warned me that I was seeking a grave for myself, without being able to rescue the victim for whom I had willingly periled my life. I will not attempt to describe the grief of the half-distracted father. I never left him till he reached his own home. What a scene of agony awaited him there! The husband and brother, so long absent, were returned, yearning to behold once more that beloved being, whose involuntary sin had been so fearfully expiated. It was Clinton whom I had seen on the vessel's deck. As he afterwards told me, the dazzle of the rays on the water, in that direction, had prevented him from distinguishing the features for ever engraven on his heart. The hoarse sound of the waves swallowed her drowning shriek—onward they bore him, and he saw not the fond arms that would have embraced him, even over that watery chasm. I have witnessed many a scene of sorrow, but never saw I one like this. From the peculiar circumstances that brought us together, I became almost identified with this unhappy family. Clinton was the most interesting man I ever saw. He was a confirmed invalid, never having recovered from the effects of his wound. I never saw a smile upon his face, nor could I ever smile in his presence. He seldom spoke and never but once did he mention the name of Cecilia. It was one night when he was unusually ill, and I was sitting alone with him in his chamber. He gave me the manuscript for perusal which is here transcribed, an act of confidence considered due to me, who would have been her saviour. Through the watches of that night he poured into my ears the hoarded agonies of his grief. Never before did I know how deep human sorrow could be, or how holy was the love which clings to the memory of the dead.

Alice dwelt in ‘the dark and narrow house.’ She was spared the knowledge of the fatal catastrophe, for she died before her victim. Yes—her victim! Had she guarded against the first inroads of a forbidden passion, there might have been beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. The angel form that lies low, wrapped in the winding-sheet, the waves, might now be moving in the light of love, and joy. But who will dare to arraign the doings of the Almighty?”