

Catherine fulfilled her promise, and I fled. And now, dear husband, (for so I will ever call you.) now you will understand the mingled joy and anguish with which I listened to the avowal of your pure and ardent love; but believe me, I did not at first intend to deceive you. Even when I began that lying letter I meditated a full disclosure of my situation. I believed that my enforced marriage could not be binding in the sight of Heaven, and I hoped that you might also think so. But my courage failed when I contemplated the possibility of losing you for ever by this confession, and I adopted the deceit which made you mine. I know that you may justly doubt the truth of even this statement, from one already convicted of falsehood, but words uttered with death breath may surely be relied on." They were relied on, and long before the dear penitent had concluded her recital, she was restored to my confidence, and pillowed on my bosom. She continued to explain the events of the last few days.

One evening, on her return from making some little purchases, she was followed and traced home by Harwell, who forced himself into her presence, but who, to her great surprise, instead of upbraiding her for her desertion, addressed her in terms of adulation, and urged her to accompany him on a tour of pleasure which he was about to make. Having discovered that what she most dreaded was my being made acquainted with his claim, he, on her refusal to accompany him or even to receive his visits, threatened to make all known, and legally enforce her return to him. It was on the evening of this threatening visit that I found her in the deep swoon, into which she had fallen soon after he had left her. Hence her precautions for preventing any subsequent intrusions on her solitude, and hence too her alarm at every sound that might indicate the approach of a stranger. The evening before the present, however, meeting him accidentally, she, of her own accord, accosted him and earnestly besought him to bury in oblivion their ill-omened marriage, and leave her to the lowlier lot which she had chosen. His manner left her in doubt as to the effect of her entreaties, but the event showed that his revengeful feelings were excited by her unconquerable aversion, and made us feel that he would spare no effort to compass our preparation, and her destruction, though I felt

that poor Charlotte was my wife, in the eye of justice and of Heaven, I yet feared that human law would not consider her as such. My marriage with her could, I knew, be easily substantiated, and if, as was likely, Harwell could also prove his, every thing was to be dreaded from his malignity. This, together with alarm at her hourly increasing illness, prevented my thinking of Charlotte's sole fault, that of deceiving me. Mental suffering had so fatally aggravated her disorder, that she was soon confined entirely to bed. Finding it impossible to leave her alone in such circumstances, I resigned my situation, and devoted myself entirely to tendence on her while she waked, and to writing when she slept. I had sufficient credit to obtain for her all that she required, and, in such a case, I did not scruple to incur debt; for, should I lose her, I should have time enough, and too much, to betray it, and, should my cares be blessed by her recovery, all after privations would seem light to us both. Fear of the threatened prosecution, however, disquieted every moment of our lives, and Charlotte's deepest slumbers were haunted by vision of trial and disgrace. But, when several days elapsed without bringing any new calamity, we began to hope that Harwell would fear to invite public notice to a transaction in which he had played so disgraceful a part. On calm reflection, I saw good reason for believing that the marriage had only been a mock ceremony, intended to delude and betray the innocent Charlotte. The unprincipled character of her mother, the profligacy of Harwell, and, above all, his conduct on his first visit to Charlotte, after her marriage with me, so unlike that of an injured husband, served to confirm me in this conjecture; and, eager to obtain proof of it, I resolved to seek an interview with the woman who had favoured Charlotte's escape. For this purpose, I went to Mrs. Ormond's villa, the situation of which Charlotte had often described to me. But my disappointment was keen on finding that she had left Ireland. I learnt, however, that she had dismissed Catherine, who now lived in Dublin, some time before she went. This Catherine I with some difficulty found, and her testimony banished all lingering dread of Harwell's threatened vengeance. He and his vile accomplice had quarrelled on pecuniary subjects soon after