Preface: The Cruel Father

“The Cruel Father” first appeared as a serialized long story in the *New-York Weekly Museum*. It ran in four weekly installments between November 2, 1805 and November 23, 1805. No author was ascribed to the story, a common occurrence during this period when stories were often culled from other newspapers, periodicals, and literary sources. The anonymous author may also be due to the story enacting a common stereotype and trope which cuts across cultures and traditions—that of the cruel and tyrannical father. Many other serialized stories appear during the early American era named “The Cruel Father” which contain the same general motif, but are comprised of different characters and different plotlines. The cruel father also appears as a stock character in numerous other tales and stories of the same time period. While the serialized form appeared in numerous variations in other periodicals, it was also pirated by Russell Ladd in 1812 and printed in Philadelphia in novel form as a prefix to another pirated serialized story, *Albert and Eliza.* This novelized format from 1812 is the version most readers are familiar with (although the story remains for the most part, unknown), and is nearly identical in characters and plotlines to the edition which appeared first in the *New-York Weekly Museum*.

The *New-York Weekly Museum* was a popular newspaper in New York City. The newspaper began May 17, 1788 as the *Impartial Gazeteer* by John Harrison and Stephen Purdy, booksellers in the city. In their introductory edition, the booksellers announced the availability of a number of widely popular children’s books for sale at their bookstore. The publishers assured readers in this first edition that their aim was to “promote the amusement of its readers” and avoid content that would “offend the modest or disturb the feelings of the Virtuous.” The following September in 1789, printers convinced Harrison and Purdy that the content of the weekly periodical failed to match the title of the newspaper. The *Impartial Gazeteer* became the *New-York Weekly Museum.*

After changing its title to more accurately reflect content, the newspaper catered to a female audience. The *New-York Weekly Museum* proved to be popular and profitable, as well as enduring in a time when newspapers, magazines, and periodicals speedily came and went. The newspaper’s reputation among women grew due to the “true” and “moral” sentimental stories it published. At the end of each year, the most popular of the serialized stories were gathered into bound and printed volumes, advertised, and sold in Harrison and Purdy’s bookstore. Additionally, the newspaper contained prose, poetry, moral lessons, advice, and advertising all aimed at the polite and refined female society of New York City. Although the newspaper was chiefly a literary magazine, it also contained paragraphs of news, theatrical announcements, and advice for women in the form of verse. It was during this period of the newspaper’s existence that “The Cruel Father” appeared in its pages.

Advertisements aimed at attracting attention of the intended audience were also included alongside literary content. These included notices about runaway slaves, gossip columns, and death and marriage notices. The death notices generally announced deaths of a particularly gruesome, mysterious, or lurid sort. Murdered children, suicides, unfaithful spouses, seduced young girls, and deaths of foreigners generally rounded out such announcements.

The paper operated under the direction of Harrison and Purdy until 1791, at which time Purdy withdrew his financial interests and control. In 1804, Harrison died, leaving the newspaper in the control of his widow and eldest son. In 1814, the paper was taken over by James Oram, who took exception to the name. He experimented by adding a subtitle, essentially changing the name to *New-York Weekly Museum, or, Polite Repository for Amusement and Instruction, Being an Assemblage of whatever can tend to interest the Mind or exalt the character of the American Fair*.” In 1817, he shortened the title to the simple, but direct, *Ladies’ Weekly Museum*. Shortly thereafter, Oram announced that rivaling newspaper editor, Alexander Ming bought the publication and merged it with his own newspaper, the *Weekly Visitor*. The *New-York Weekly Museum*, an independent newspaper for twenty-nine years, was subsumed by Ming and became a part of the new newspaper, *Weekly Visitor and Ladies’ Museum*.

That “The Cruel Father” would appear in the *New-York Weekly* is somewhat surprising. The tale is a moral tale, but one aimed at husbands and fathers instead of women. It relates the story of a young woman who marries a greedy man named Malvolio, whose only love in life is money. His avarice and violent nature cause a series of calamitous events for those closest to him.

In serial form, this story served to entertain readers. Readers of either gender would enjoy the familiarity of the common morality tale—warning of greed, avarice, cruelty. The installments ended in the midst of moments of suspense, urging readers to buy the next installment in order to find out what happened next. The common elements and themes in the story made it a good choice for serializing, as the plotlines were recognized and familiar, helping readers easily conjecture what was coming next. The sentimentality of the story, the romance and doomed love affair would also appeal to the female readership the *New-York Weekly* aimed to serve.

Sources Consulted

Stearns, Bertha Monica. “[Early New York Magazine For Ladies](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/24470494)” *New York History*, 14.1 (1933): 32-41.

[1. 2 November 1805]

The Cruel Father

THE love of money is a passion which not on-

ly degrades our nature, and renders it insensible

to those ties which unite the human race, but

has the power of contracting all the softer affect-

tions, and of converting the heart of its posses-

sor into an impenetrable mass. Such a heart

was placed in the bosom of Malvolio; the plea-

dings of humanity never drew a tear from his

eyes; every feeling seemed bound up in an ad-

amantine girdle, which the hand of Plutus alone

had the power to unbrace.

Malvolio had been educated under the care

of an uncle, who, by a train of petty meannesses,

had acquired a large portion of wealth; and the

artificial character of Biggs, or the real one of

Elwes, could not have devised the means of sa-

ving sixpence upon a more despicable plan.--

Taught from his infancy the intrinsic value of a

farthing, and instructed in the art of conver-

ting pence into pounds, money, in fact, became

his idol; and to obtain it, he frequently over-

stepped honesty's bounds. The uncle of Mal-

volio was one of those deceptious characters who

pass for men of rectitude in the opinion of the

world; he talked loudly of the increasing depra-

vity of human nature, subscribed to public char-

ities, and went regularly to church. Under

this appearance of virtue and sanctity, a fraudu-

lent and selfish disposition was concealed; and

a merchant, with whom he lived in the habits

of the greatest intimacy, committed into his care

the person and fortune of a beloved child.

This sacred deposit was no sooner placed in his

protection, than he determined she should be-

come his nephew's wife, and Malvolio, delight-

ed at the idea of becoming master of a large for-

tune, was highly gratified at his relation's choice.

The inclinations of the young lady were[[1]](#footnote-1) not e-

ven consulted; and though her heart was pre-

engaged, her disposition was not formed to re-

bel; and though the gentle Isabella ventured to

remonstrate against her destiny, she found it of

no avail, and at length was forced to submit.

Never were dispositions more completely op-

posite than that of Malvolio and this amiable

girl: she was all sweetness, softness, and liber-

ality; whilst his every emotion was absorbed in

the desire of accumulating wealth. In addition

to this, he was a domestic tyrant; his passions

were violent, and he was the victim of caprice:

at one moment he would caress her with a fond-

ness absolutely fulsome, and at the next he

would almost annihilate her with rage. About

two years after her marriage, Isabella became a

mother. A variety of pleasing emotions crow-

ded upon her mind; but the child at once pro-

ved a source of comfort and uneasiness; for Mal-

volio insisted upon superintending the care of it

himself. If she ordered the servant to walk out

with it, that was improper; if it was retained

in the nursery, she was ruining its health; and,

under the pretence of fondness for the infant,

its unfortunate mother had not a moment’s[[2]](#footnote-2) peace.

The little Adolphus, however, grew in spite

of the inconsistencies of the capricious author of

his birth, and displayed, even in childhood, a

variety of instances of a good understanding,

and a susceptible heart. To strengthen those

amiable propensities, which he had derived

from nature, afforded Isabella, the highest de-

light; and, in the absence of his father, all her

attention was devoted to the controlling[[3]](#footnote-3) his pas-

sions, and the cultivation of his mind. In the

twelfth year of his age, Adolphus had the mis-

fortune to lose a mother, whom he at once loved

and revered: but though death had deprived

him of her maternal tenderness, her precepts

had made a strong impression upon his heart.

Though Isabella appeared to have no influ-

ence upon Malvolio's conduct, yet, by her sooth-

ing softness, his passions were frequent-

ly allayed; and when deprived of her, he gave

them an unbounded dominion over him, to the

terror of those who were under his power. A-

dolphus not only inherited the amiable dispos-

tion of his mother, but possessed all that yield-

ing softness for which she was admired, and ne-

ver presumed to oppose the commands of Malvo-

lio, though they were frequently repugnant to

every feeling of his heart.

The time, however, at length arrived, when

duty and affection were at warfare; for Malvo-

lio thought himself entitled to provide a

wife for his son; and as fortune had been his only

consideration, he expected Adolphus to adopt

the same plan. The disposition of this young

man was formed for domestic happiness, and he

had beheld and object with whom he thought it

was to be found; she was the daughter of an

officer, who had no fortune but his commission,

who lived within a short distance of his father's

house. The mind of Eliza Desborough had

been highly cultivated; her form was the most

perfect that can possibly be conceived; her

countenance was at once an index to her feel-

ings, and expressed her sensations without the

language of speech. Such was the amiable girl

who had made an impression upon the heart of

Adolphus, which it was beyond the power of

parental authority to efface; and the wife which

his father had selected, was in every respect op-

posite to her; for she was destitute of every per-

sonal and every mental grace.

"Adolphus," said his father to him one mor-

ning at breakfast, "I intend introducing you

this evening to the rich heiress, Miss Green.

She has twenty thousand pounds independent

of her father, who I know has above double that

sum snug in the stocks; and if you do but play

your cards with caution, the prize will be yours,

I'd bet a thousand pounds!" Adolphus was so

petrified with this piece of intelligence, that he

was absolutely unable to make any reply: when

his father exclaimed, in a voice of authority,

"Pray, Sir, have you lost the use of your

tongue?" "No, Sir," replied Adolphus; ''but

I have never thought of marriage. And--I--I

--I cannot say I am much struck with the per-

son of Miss Green.'' "Struck,'' said Malvolio,

in a tone of violence: "But, Sir, have you ne-

ver heard of a father striking a son out of his

will? Yet[[4]](#footnote-4) I tell you once for all, boy, I am deter-

mined you shall marry her; for I shall not be

such a fool as to let you choose for yourself."

"Sir," rejoined Adolphus, inspired by the

recollection of Eliza Desborough's attractions,

"I have in all things paid an implicit obedience

to your wishes; but you cannot desire me to

sacrifice the happiness of my life; and I must

candidly declare that I have a repugnance to

the idea of even thinking of Miss Green in the

character of a wife."

"And have you any repugnance to her for-

tune, Sir?" thundered out Malvolio scarcely a-

ble to articulate from the violence of his rage.

You numbskull[[5]](#footnote-5)! you blockhead! How[[6]](#footnote-6) dare you

dispute my orders! Why, I tell you, the girl

will have sixty thousand pounds; and I tell you,

moreover, that I will make a beggar of you, un-

less you marry the person of whom I make

choice."

It was in vain for Adolphus to attempt dispu-

ting with his father in this violent perturbation

of fury and rage; he therefore endeavoured to

allay the paroxysm of his passion, by declaring

himself ready to accompany him to Miss Green's.

Conformable as he had hitherto been to the

wishes of his father, in this instance he resolute-

ly determined not to yield; and though he a-

greed to pay the intended visit, the image of E-

liza reigned triumphant in his heart. If the

person of Miss Green had excited disgustful e-

motions, how much were they increased by the

vulgar coarseness of her remarks! He was con-

vinced that their marriage had been a precon-

certed measure by their parents; for the mo-

ment tea was ended they were left by them-

selves. Instead of the young lady displaying

any embarrassment at this circumstance, she had

the indelicacy to turn it into jest; enquired

whether it was the first time he had ever been

left tète a téte with a female; and asked if the

novelty of the circumstance excited any new

sensation in his breast.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Adol-

phus could so far conquer his feelings, as to par-

ry off her questions, as if she had merely been

in jest, but never did he think the hours pas-

sed so tediously as until Mr. Green, and his fa-

ther returned. The smirking countenance of

the lady delighted Malvolio, who flattered him-

self that his son had been intimidated by his

threats, and had thought sixty thousand pounds

an ample compensation for every bodily and

mental defect. Full of this idea, he took leave

of the father and daughter, having some mercantile

affairs to transact with a gentleman in his own

line; and Adolphus pleading a violent head-

ache, Malvolio did not persuade him to stay.

Released from that restriction he had been

compelled to put upon his feelings, the footsteps

of Adolphus involuntarily led towards Captain

Desborough's house, when the sight of the muf-

fled knocker gave a horror to his feelings, and

for a few moments suspended the pulsation of

his heart. He rang softly at the bell, yet dread-

ed to see the door opened, lest he should hear

some fatal intelligence respecting the object so

dear to his heart; and when the servant appear-

ed, he could scarcely enquire, whether it was

Captain or Miss Desborough who was ill.

"Oh! 'tis my poor master, Sir," replied the

woman, taking up the corner of her apron to

wipe away the tears which her news had exci-

ted; "but, my dear young lady, I assure you,

is in a dreadful condition; for the doctor has

just told her the capt. cannot live!" "Not live!"

exclaimed Adolphus, turning pale at the infor-

mation--"Oh, God! What[[7]](#footnote-7) a stroke for my poor

Eliza to endure!" Not sensible of what he said,

he then asked the servant if she thought her mast-

er could be seen.

Though Adolphus from a child had visited at

Captain Desborough's, and was treated by him

with the same familiar affection as if he had been

his son, he had never even ventured to mention

his passion to him, though in a thousand differ-

ent instances he had displayed the feelings of

his heart. Shocked, as he was, at the idea of

his friend's situation, he was still more so at

the prospect of Eliza's unprotected state; and

he was anxious to obtain the sanction of Captain

Desborough, to shield her from the dangers to

which youth and beauty is exposed.

The servant, who knew the intimate footing

which Adolphus was received in the family, in-

stantly conducted him into her master's room;

and though the exhausted invalid had appeared

to be dying, he instantly rose from his pillow,

exclaimed, "Oh, my son!" Adolphus seized

the hand which had been extended towards him,

and involuntarily dropped upon his knees.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

[2. 9 November 1805]

(*Continued.*)

"Commit Eliza to my care," said he: "I

will be her protector. But let me not deceive

you in a moment like this! My[[8]](#footnote-8) father, dearest

sir, will never consent to our union. In the

wish of promoting my interest, he would sacri-

fice my peace; and he has positively declared,

that he will make me a beggar, unless I consent

to marry Miss Green. My heart, long attach-

ed to your amiable Eliza, asserts the privilege of

making its choice; industry and exertion will

render me independent; and to-morow mor-

ning, with your permission, I will make her my

wife. The affection which I have long felt to-

wards her, has been of so refined a nature, that

I dreaded asking your consent, from the fear of

being refused; and not anything[[9]](#footnote-9) would have

induced me to make this declaration, but the a-

larming state to which I see you reduced!

If there is any other being to whose protection

you can intrust her, whose fortunes appear more

brilliant than my own----"No, No," exclaim-

med the dying man interrupting him, "She

would prefer poverty with you, I am persuaded,

my son."

During this conversation, the agitated Eliza

sat in a state of stupefied[[10]](#footnote-10) sorrow on the other

side of the bed, until roused by Adolphus enqui-

ring, in a faltering accent, whether she would

consent to bless him with her hand, "In a mo-

ment like this," said the weeping object of his

affection, "how can I indulge one thought a-

bout myself?" It is only in such a moment,

my beloved Eliza," replied Adolphus, "that I

could have ventured to ask you to bless me with

your consent. If Heaven should deprive you

of the protection of your father, it is only under

the title of your husband, that I can prove my-

self your friend!"

"Give him your hand, my Eliza," said the

exhausted Captain Desborough, "for I have

long known that he has had the possession of

your heart. And may the blessing of a dying

man shield you from misfortunes! and oh, Adol-

phus! Be[[11]](#footnote-11) tender, be affectionate to my child!"

The entrance of the apothecary with a large

blister, which he was going to apply to his pa-

tient's head, put an end to a conversation, which

was becoming too interesting for the enfeebled

frame of Captain Desborough to sustain.

The variety of emotions which agitated Adol-

phus, it would be difficult for the power of lan-

guage to describe. He knew he was going to

forfeit all claims upon his father, by making the

amiable Eliza his wife. Whether to inform

him of his intention, or whether to marry with-

out endeavouring to soften his rage, was a cir-

cumstance which required mature reflection;

yet no time could possibly be allowed for delay.

A relation of his mother's was the only person

to whom he could apply for council and advice;

he accordingly took leave of the object of his

tenderness for the purpose of consulting this

friend. The illness of Captain Desborough had

been so extremely sudden, that though this gen-

tleman was intimately acquainted with him, he

was a stranger to the event; and when he re-

flected upon the irreconcileable temper of Mal-

volio, he was at a loss to know how to advise his

agitated son. The mutual attachment between

Eliza and Adolphus, Mr. Middleton had for a

length of time observed; and had cautioned

him against going so frequently to Captain Des-

borough's knowing that his father would never

consent to the match; but when he heard that

Adolphus had made an absolute declaration of

his passion, and that a dying parent had com-

mitted a darling child to his care, he thought a

private marriage would be the most adviseable

measure, and undertook the kind office of mak-

ing Malvolio acquainted with the event. He

accordingly accompanied Adolphus to the house

of a neighbouring clergyman; the license was

procured, and the next morning he attended

him to church, where the ceremony was per-

formed without any witnesses, except Mr. Middle-

ton and the clerk.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Eliza

could be persuaded to leave her father, who see-

med to revive at the thought of leaving her un-

der Adolphus's care; and whose spirit waited

to take its flight to the mansions of eternity un-

til the arrival of Mr. Middleton, who had wit-

nessed the event. The variety of conflicting e-

motions which had torn the breast of Eliza, pro-

duced an alarming effect upon her delicate

frame; and the moment she entered the house

of her father, she dropped apparently lifeless in-

to her husband's arms. By the help of volatiles,

she was restored to recollection; but as it was

necessary to conceal the circumstance from the

dying man, Mr. Middleton hastened to the a-

partment, to inform him that he had seen the

ceremony performed. Scarcely had this intel-

ligence been imparted, when clasping his hands

with fervor and delight he exclaimed, '' I thank

thee, oh my God, for lengthening my existence

until this gratifying intelligence had afforded

comfort to my mind! Bless them, oh thou mer-

ciful Protector of the friendless. Oh, bless, de-

fend, and sustain my child!" Here his lips

quivered, his voice faltered, and raising his eyes

to Heaven, he instantly expired.

The scene which followed, language can

scarcely depicture, for at that instant Eliza o-

pened the door, when the lifeless form of her fa-

ther presented itself to her; and before Mr. Middle-

ton could prevent the effort, she had encircled it

in her arms! Horror for some moments check-

ed the power of utterance; the assuaging balm

of tears was denied, and grasping the body

with a force that refused yielding to exertion,

she seemed determined not to move from its

side! The groans of Adolphus, who thought

her intellects were effected, at length seemed to

restore recollection to her mind; and stretching

out one hand towards him, she uttered a shrill,

piercing scream! This effort of nature fortu-

nately relieved her; and she soon afterwards

burst into a violent flood of grief, consented to

be removed from the object of her affection, and,

though overwhelmed with affliction, was per-

fectly resigned.

Adolphus was under the cruel necessity of tear-

ing himself from his beloved Eliza, and of atten-

ding as usual to mercantile affairs: but to the

bosom of a female friend their secret was intrus-

ted, who, upon the death of Captain Desborough

remained at the house. Malvolio was too much

occupied in the concerns of business, to pay a-

ny attention to the dejection so visible in his

son; but when dinner was over, he again ex-

plained the advantages which would result from

his forming a union with Miss Green. Fortu-

nately for Adolphus, Mr. Middleton at that mo-

ment entered. "I am glad to see you," exclai-

med Malvolio with a smile. "I have a scheme

in agitation, which does not seem quite to accord

with the wishes of that blockhead: in short I

am going to provide him with a wife."

"I should suppose he would prefer providing

himself with a commodity of that nature," said

Mr. Middleton; "however he may wish to

consult you in any affair of trade." What

the devil do you mean?" exclaimed Malvolio:

"would you teach disobedience to that head-

strong boy?" "Far from it," replied the mild

Mr. Middleton; "but I think there is no possi-

bility of directing the wayward feelings of the

heart." "That is very true," said the hitherto

silent Adolphus:--"And in every thing but

marriage, I am ready to obey my father's com-

mands."

"You shall obey them in that too, Sir, or

from this moment I renounce you for ever,"

said Malvolio, in a voice suffocated with rage.

"But get out of my sight, and never let me be-

hold you, unless you feel ready to let my or-

ders be obeyed!" Adolphus instantly rose

from the table, and flew to the object who occu-

pied his every thought, but carefully concealed

the preceeding conversation, fearful of adding to

the sorrow which already preyed upon her

heart.

As soon as he had quitted the room, Malvolio

informed Mr. Middleton that a marriage be-

tween the young people had been proposed by

Mr. Green; "and because the girl is not hand-

some," said he, "would you believe it possible,

that her fortune possesses no charms in his eyes!

She has twenty thousand pounds independant of

her father; and Green has upwards of forty now

in the stocks; yet this rebel of mine would re-

ject such an aliance, when the girl has a right

to look up to a lord!"

"Perhaps his affections are engaged," replied

Mr. Middleton; and in that case it would be

villainous to offer himself for her husband."

"Zounds, sir!" exclaimed he, "do you think

he dare do such a thing? What! Dispose[[12]](#footnote-12) of his

affections without my consent!" "Come, come

my good friend, moderate your resentment;

and converse upon this subject like a rational

man. You have lived long enough in the world

to know that young people, in an affair like

that of marriage, will choose[[13]](#footnote-13) for themselves.”--

"Will they?" vociferated the still more violent

Malvolio; "then I tell you that my son shall

not, by G--: and unless he chooses[[14]](#footnote-14) to marry

the girl I select for him, the devil of one penny

shall he ever have from me."

"But suppose it is out of his power to obey

you: suppose for one moment he is already a

married man." "Then" exclaimed he, stri-

king the table with the utmost violence, "May

the curses of a father fall upon his head! --

may distress pursue--may poverty overtake him--

may his children become beggars--may his wife

perish in the streets--may sorrow and repent-

ance prey upon his vitals, until they destroy the

thread of his miserable life!"

"Oh shame to humanity, disgrace to the name

of father!" said the petrified Mr. Middleton, rising

from his seat; "fall upon the knees, implore

the pardon of that Being who in one instant can

put a period to your life! Have you not from

childhood been the favorite of heaven? Have

you not been blest in a wife, and happy in a

son? Has not fortune smiled upon all your un-

dertakings, yet you impiously offend Him from

whom these blessing are derived? Are you so

dead to feeling, so lost to the voice of nature, as

to call down curses upon the head of your child?

A child too, who excepting this one instance,

has made your wishes the absolute rule of his life."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

[3. 16 November 1805]

(*Continued*.)

"Is he married?" enquired the pale and

trembling Malvolio. "What will you say, if I

tell you that he is?" "Say!" exclaimed he,

scarcely able to articulate the sentence, "That

I hope every curse will be multiplied upon his

head! And as to you, base and insidious vil-

lain, who have instilled principle of disobedi-

ence into the breast of my son, may you live to

feel disappointment like that which at present

overwhelms me; and may accumulated misfor-

tunes overcloud your days!" So saying, he

quitted the apartment, and gave orders that

his son should be denied admission into the

house.

Adolphus, who was ignorant of what had

passed between Mr. Middleton and his father,

returned to his paternal dwelling at the accus-

tomed hour, for the purpose of placing the keys

of the compting house in Malvolio's room, which

was his usual practice. Upon rapping at the

door, it was opened by a servant, who had liv-

ed in the family of his mother, from the time

of her being a child, and whom she had enga-

ged in the capacity of a footman when she was

so unfortunate as to become a wife. Adolphus

was in the act of entering, when Stephen placed

himself before him with extended arms. "My

dear young master, (said he, in faultering ac-

cents) for God's sake take the council of an old

man. Your father is enraged against you--

therefore do not attempt seeing him until his an-

ger subsides. Give me the keys of the compt-

ing house, and tell me where I can call upon

you to-morrow morning." The poor fellow ut-

tered this speech with so much agitation, that

Adolphus was aware some terrible fracas had

occurred; and taking the keys out of his pock-

et, he was preparing to leave his father's man-

sion, when Stephen thrust a purse into his

hand, and burst into a flood of tears. "I dare

not offend you, sir, (said he) by begging your

acceptance of that trifle; but for God’s sake,

keep it only for me just a little time. I do not

know in whose hands to place it; and mayhap,

trifle as it is, it may be of some use to you. Oh,

my poor dear, dear mistress! What[[15]](#footnote-15) a blessing it

is that she is not alive!"

"Excellent fellow! (exclaimed Adolphus--

catching the infection that streamed from his

aged eyes,) I value this proof of your friendship

and attachment more than it is in the power of

language to describe; but I am not distressed

for a few guineas; if I was, most gratefully

would I accept this boon." As Adolphus had

promised to return again to Eliza, he determin-

ed not to acquaint her with what he had heard:

but the next morning he received a visit from

Mr. Middleton, who thought it necessary to ac-

quaint him with all that had passed. Poverty

he could have borne; distress he could individ-

ually have encountered; but when he reflected

on the distress which the object of his tender-

ness must sustain, fortitude yielded to the pow-

er of affection, and the feelings of the man were

converted into those of the child. Roused into

energy by the arguments of Mr. Middleton, he

determined to write a conciliatory epistle to the

author of his birth; and if this did not succeed,

to endeavour to obtain employment in some of the

families with whom his father did business, as a

clerk. The letter, which was couched in terms

to have softened an heart of adamant, was read

without receiving any reply; and the inhuman

Malvolio circulated amongst his acquaintance,

the most cruel and unjust aspersions against his

son; and actually declared that he had embez-

zled the property which had been committed to

his trust.

The consequence of these reports was what

Malvolio expected; for no one would afford the

object of his resentment employ. His society

was shunned, and he was regarded as a monster

who deserved to be driven from the haunts of

mankind. In vain did the worthy Mr. Middle-

ton endeavor to vindicate his character; no one

believed it possible for a parent unjustly to con-

demn his child; and those fathers who were

anxious to impress the practice of filial obedi-

ence, forbid their children from associating

with such a pupil of vice. Those manners

which had been admired for gentleness and

flexibility, were now said to have been the result

of policy and deceit; and his very virtues were

converted into vices:--so strong is the effect

which prejudice produces in the mind.

After having unsuccessfully endeavored to

obtain employment in England, from the desire

of not being separated from the wife he adored.

Adolphus at length obtained one in the West

Indies, through the interest of that friend who

was well acquainted with his worth. With a

heart torn by a variety of afflicting emotions, he

took leave of Eliza and her lovely little boy,

promising to send for them as soon as he was es-

tablished, if the situation proved equal to what

he had a right to expect. The anxieties he had

encountered and the distress he had been invol-

ved in not only depressed his spirits but debi-

litated his frame; and scarcely had he taken

possession of his new employment, when he was

attacked by the fever incident to that clime.--

The art of medicine was in vain exerted to save

him; his constitution was too much weakened

to struggle against the disease; and the physi-

cians informed him that the only chance he had

of recovery, was to return immediately to his

native clime.

The unjust stigma which had been cast upon

the character of Adolphus, seemed to extend e-

ven to his amiable wife; and amongst the num-

ber of her father's friends, only one seemed sen

sible of her merits, or paid the least attention

either to her or her child. The sale of her fa-

ther's furniture had procured her a little ready

money, but the greater part of this had been

expended in procuring the necessary articles

for her husband’s new employ; and Eliza had

no means of supporting her existence, but by

procuring work form the shops. The greater

part of the day was spent in nursing of her

helpless infant; therefore evening was the only

time she was able to work; and seldom did this

amiable and industrious young woman retire to

her bed before two o'clock. The anxieties of

her mind, and the fatigues she encountered,

soon produced a visible effect upon her health,

and she was no longer able to make those exer-

tions which, were absolutely necessary for her

support. The only friend who sympathized in

her misfortunes, was from the confinement of

her own income, unable to render her essential

relief; and her situation must have been deplo-

rable, but for the worthy Mr. Middleton, who,

out of a little more than a hundred a year, al-

lowed her half a guinea a week. The anxiety

she felt as receiving no letters from Adolphus,

may be imagined, but cannot easily be describe-

ed; and her foreboding fears, too readily sug-

gested, that he had fallen a victim to the unheal-

thiness of the clime. Brooding one evening o-

ver these melancholy reflections, and weeping

over the babe whom she wished had never been

born, she was roused from the train of misera-

ble ideas by a violent knocking at the door.----

Her name was loudly vociferated by the person

of whom she hired the apartment. Eliza's agi-

tation was so violent, that she could not rise from

her seat and the sound of several footsteps on

the stairs increased her emotion, and a univer-

sal tremor overspread her frame. The door was

opened, and Adolphus entered, pale, trembling,

and supported between two men. "Merciful

God! (she exclaimed) do I behold my husband?

Oh, my Adolphus, I could have borne any thing

but this!"

"My Eliza! (said he, extending his arms to-

wards her,) my loved, my adored, my unfortu-

nate wife! Oh, how you are changed? I want-

ed not this affliction to complete the miseries

and distresses of my life!" The humane com-

panions of the wretched Adolphus mixed their

tears with those of the ill-fated pair; and, after

assisting the debilitated Eliza to undress her ap-

parently dying husband kindly went to Mr.

Middleton to inform him he was arrived. On

the wings of friendship, that worthy man flew to

the house of sorrow; but what an effecting scene

presented itself to his eyes! The expiring A-

dolphus was supported by pillows, and by

the side of him knelt his disconsolate wife "My

friend my only friend! (said he, in scarcely ar-

ticulate accents,) the Almighty in mercy has

granted my prayer. I wished but to breathe

out my soul in the arms of my Eliza; and to re-

commend her, and my boy to your care!"--

"Talk not of dying my dear honest fellow, (re-

plied the agitated Middleton;) I hope you will

live many, many years. You are fatigued with

your journey. I will run for a doctor;" and at

that moment he was hastening out of the room.

Stop! Stop! I conjure you, (exclaimed the

unfortunate sufferer, in a more renovated tone

of voice;) all assistance is vain. I feel myself

going to that bourne from whence no traveller

returns! My father! My[[16]](#footnote-16) inexorable father!

will, perhaps, pardon my transgression, when

he knows I can no longer offend. Will you, my

friend, undertake to solicit his protection for my

Eliza, and her unfortunate child?"

"I will undertake every thing, (rejoined the

still more agitated Middleton,) if you will but

suffer me instantly to procure you advice. You

have youth on your side; much may be done

for you." "Oh, fly, Mr. Middleton!" ex-

claimed the hitherto silent wife. The worthy

man did not require the request to be repeated,

and returned with a physician in less than a

quarter of an hour, who, the moment he felt the

pulse of his patient, knew he had only a short

time to live. The agonized Eliza watched his

countenance with an anxiety which it would be

difficult to describe, and too soon discovered the

hopeless state of her husband, in the melancho-

ly turn of his features, and the sympathizing

tenderness of his eyes.

"We shall soon meet again, my Adolphus,

(said she, tenderly embracing him,) where pa-

rental authority cannot extend! I feel, my be-

loved, that our separation will be transient; yet

that unfortunate infant still endears me to life!"

(*To be continued in our next.*)

[4. 23 November 1805]

(*Concluded.*)

"Try to live for his sake, I implore you, my

Eliza," exclaimed the affectionate Adolphus, re-

turning her embrace. Here his voice faltered[[17]](#footnote-17)--

his breath became shorter, and, uttering

a penetrating groan, he expired! "Has he left

me? (exclaimed the frantic Eliza, grasping the

lifeless body in her arms) Oh, Adolphus! my

beloved; death shall not part us! No, never;--

never shall you leave me again!" The physi-

cian endeavored to disengage her arms from the

body; but she grasped it with a still firmer hold;

and uttering a violent scream, fell into convul-

sions, when with the utmost exertion of strength

she was removed. One fit rapidly succeeded

another, until at length nature seemed exhaust-

ed by fatigue, and the humane physician did

not leave her until she had fallen into a quiet

sleep.

The humane Mr. Middleton's heart had ne-

ver encountered such a trial. He had always lo-

ved Adolphus, with as much affection as if he

had been his child. He had likewise known

Eliza from a state of infancy, and was well ac-

quainted with the exquisite sensibility of her

mind. Though the person with whom she

lodged was a very good kind of a woman, yet she

was a stranger to that soothing tenderness which

gratifies the heart; he determined, therefore,

to send the only person who had consoled E-

liza in affliction, and who seemed to be truly

sensible of her worth. Mrs. Herbert, which

was this lady's name, instantly obeyed the sum-

mons; but what an effecting scene presented it-

self to her sight! In one room, she beheld the

dead body of Adolphus; and in another, his

apparently expiring wife; Eliza, it is true, was

sleeping; yet she breathed with the utmost

difficulty, and every feature in her beautiful

countenance had undergone a change: entirely

round, her mouth was disfigured with a black

circle, and frequent groans testified the uneasy

state of her mind. The little infant began to

be uneasy for that sustenance which it would

have been dangerous for him to have drawn:

but the mistress of the house, at the same peri-

od, fortunately happened to be a nurse. Eliza

continued in these uneasy slumbers for the space

of seven hours, when springing upright in her

bed, she terrified her attendants, by exclaim-

ing, "Oh, my Adolphus, I come--I come!"--

Again the fits returned upon her, and with far

greater violence than before, until nature was

exhausted by the violence of exertion--and the

hapless Eliza expired. Every effort that human

skill could suggest was made use of; but the

spotless spirit had taken its flight; the lifeless

body of Eliza was laid by that of her husband;

and kneeling by the side of them, Middleton

sacredly promised to become a father to their

child.

From the day of Adolphus' marriage, Mr.

Middleton had never seen Malvolio; though he

had written several letters expressing the hor-

ror he felt at his unjust aspersions on the charac-

ter of his child: and he now meditated a revenge

which he thought must punish his depravity,

and penetrate into the deep recesses of his mind.

Scarcely had the idea entered his imagination,

when he directed his footsteps towards Malvo-

lio's house, and rapping at the door, made no

inquiries, but walked unceremoniously into the

room.

"Is it you, Mr. Middleton? (exclaimed Mal-

volio) this is a pleasure which I did not expect

to receive, I am heartily glad to see you, how-

ever: but you will think it a great proof of my

want of sense, when I tell you I have been

dreadfully disturbed with dreams. In short, I

cannot help thinking it a vision; but I wish to

know whether you have lately heard any news

of my son?" "Your son arrived last night in

England, (replied Middleton, indignantly.)--

The climate, unfortunately, has proved destruct-

tive to his health; your cruelty had preyed too

deeply upon his constitution, and rendered him

unable to cope with disease." "God forbid!--

(exclaimed the at length repented Malvolio.)

Then I fear that my dream will to soon be made

out. I will go and see him this instant, if you

will introduce me; but I have not the courage

to go alone." "I am ready, (rejoined Middle-

ton,) for it is the very thing I came for; but you

must expect to see him considerably changed;

and his poor wife is equally altered, and both at

this moment are confined to their bed." Mal-

volio sighed, but made no reply to this intelli-

gence; and a total silence ensued until they ar-

rived at the house; when, opening the door of

the apartment where the lifeless bodies lay ex-

tended, he exclaimed, "Behold the victims of

your cruelty, and tremble at the sight! Monster

of iniquity! (continued he, exalting his accents,)

disgrace to the very name you bear! What fa-

ther but yourself, would not have been proud

of studying the happiness of such an amiable,

such a deserving son? You have not only been

the destroyer of his existence, but you have

been the murderer of his fame: yet, if Provi-

dence grants me life, I will vindicate his mem-

ory, and disperse that vile odium you cast upon his

name!

"Oh,God! Thy[[18]](#footnote-18) judgments are fallen heavy

upon me! (said the petrified Malvolio, clinging

for support to the bed.) And is he really dead?

Call me not murderer! Oh! This[[19]](#footnote-19) is a blow which

human nature cannot bear! Oh, Adolphus! In-

jured Adolphus! How[[20]](#footnote-20) shall I expiate the enor-

mity of my crime?" "Thus, (said the worthy

Middleton, taking the infant from the cradle,)

become a parent to this unprotected child. Not

that I will ever resign him to your protection;

no--his happiness shall be the first object of my

life. I have sworn to protect him over the bo-

dies of his parents, and most religiously will I

fulfil my vow. Make him your heir; that is

all I require from you; it is the only compensa-

tion you can make him for the loss of your son."

"Alas! Exclaimed[[21]](#footnote-21) Malvolio, my happiness

is fled forever, and I no longer wish for the con-

tinuance of life: yet surely I am not the wretch

that you describe me! Surely I have not been

the murderer of my child! Oh, Middleton! Why[[22]](#footnote-22)

did you not let me see him before those lips were

finally closed? Perhaps he would have told me

he pardoned my cruelty; and, from possessing

his forgiveness, I might have died in peace!--

(Then throwing himself upon the bed by the

side of the lifeless body of Adolphus, he burst

into a violent agony of tears.) Am I not pun-

ished? (exclaimed he starting up with a phren-

zied countenance,) I suffer at this moment

the torments of the damned! His wife,

too, dead! Who was her slaughterer? You do

not dare to say that deed was performed by my

hand! Poor luckless girl! Yet she seems to

smile upon me. Ah, they told me she had a

kind and gentle heart: yet, wretch that I was,

to suffer her to pine in obscurity, when I was

absolutely wallowing in wealth! But the day

of retribution has already overtaken me. Oh,

Middleton, I have my punishment even in this

life! However, do not teach that boy to curse

me: and, in pity to my present sufferings, do

not expose my crimes!"

The humane Mr. Middleton had already re-

pented of the part in the dreadful drama which

he had performed, and felt the most alarming

apprehensions, lest the senses of the repentant

Malvolio were turned. He therefore gave him

a positive promise, not to expose his cruel con-

duct, or to endeavor to prejudice the mind of

the child: but the world too late became sensi-

ble that the injury he had done to Adolphus, and

his inhuman father was universally despised.--

The horrors of a reproaching conscience contin-

ually pursued him: in his dreams he perpetual-

ly thought he beheld the spirit of his son, accu-

sing him with being the destroyer of his happi-

ness, and the murderer of his beloved wife.--

For three years he lived a life of misery; the

only happiness he enjoyed was in the presence

of the child, whom he left the whole of his

fortune, except an annuity to the worthy Mr. Mid-

dleton of three hundred a year.

1. In original, was is used instead of were [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In original, word fails to show possessive [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. In original, spelling rendered as controuling [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. In original, word is rendered numbscull [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In original, word appear without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. In original, word appears as two separate words [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In original, word is rendered as stupified [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In original, word is rendered chuse [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. In original, word is rendered chuses [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. In original, word is rendered faultered [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In original, word appears without capitalization [↑](#footnote-ref-22)