

Written for the Amaranth.

GEORGE NEVERS.

A TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAPTER I.

"HA! George, my boy, they tell me you're in love!" was the first salutation of the gay and thoughtless Morris Home, as he leaped from his Stanhope to greet his friend George Nevers, whom he now met for the first time since his return from one of the fashionable watering places, where he had been spending a few weeks for the ostensible purpose of benefiting his health, but with a determinate view to mending his fortune. Morris had been the victim of a decline, not in body, for, with the exception of an occasional headache after a night of conviviality, his health had suffered little interruption,—but of that which, like the rays of the sun, has the power of administering to our happiness, and of contributing to our destruction, according as we make a wise or unwise use of it—*his purse*.

The sparkling eye of Nevers, which had been raised to greet his friend, sought the ground as he winced under the charge so unexpectedly made by one, who, though his friend, he did not wish should be master of his secret, for such he had deemed it to be. He speedily recovered himself, however, and with a readiness in which most persons similarly circumstanced, are deficient, replied—

"To judge, Morris, by the thoughts that are uppermost in your mind, love must be the dictator of your own movements. Who but the millionaire for the dashing Morris Home."

"Nay, then, since you'll have it so, it's not the millionaire but her pretty person, her mind accomplished, and—but you look incredulous, mine ancient friend," and he added more seriously—"think you, the reckless Morris Home,—the spendthrift, if you will—has no soul to appreciate female worth?"

This was asked in a tone so different from that of his usual manner, that Nevers looked in his friend's face, and thought he could discover there the germ of a tree destined to yield a rich harvest under the culture of female influence. A gleam of pleasure shot across his noble features as he made the observation; for although their tastes and pursuits had been dissimilar, those of the one, leading to study and retirement, and those of the other, trenching upon folly and extravagance; yet the excellent qualities of his friend, who had been his classmate, had created for him in the breast

of Nevers, a respect which his excesses had failed to weaken. George had witnessed his friend's pursuit after the delusive pleasure of the world, with a sorrowing eye. He had frequently pointed out to him their destructive tendency; and his remonstrances had been listened to with respect, and indeed often regarded for a time, until the crowd of events that are ever interfering with virtuous resolutions, would obliterate their impression.

True, Morris had been gay and thoughtless. Money had been to him only the means of gratifying the promptings of a generous disposition: but how unworthy were the objects of his bounty! Ever ready to suit themselves to his pleasures; swallowing with avidity, the bait, which, like that thrown out to the ravenous shark, ensures *his* destruction, while it works no substantial benefit to him who casts it, they would have shunned him in misfortune without compunction or remorse.

When we thus describe the life of Morris, it is not to be imagined that he had plunged at once into the abyss of vice—that he had covered himself with all the enormities of which wealth acquired without toil, is often the prelude. On the contrary, whatever might have been his inclinations, the powerful example of Nevers, added to his occasional remonstrances, had operated as a talisman, warding off the temptations presented by the more vicious habits of his companions.

"My dear fellow," said Nevers, clasping his companion warmly by the hand, "a sceptical human honesty might well doubt the truth of your language. An extravagant young man with diminished finances, about to unite himself to a wealthy bride, disavowing any influence from the amount of her wealth, and professing to be governed altogether by the charms of her person, might well be a subject of distrust to any, but one who knows him to be incapable of deception. Nay, then, 'tis no flattery," he continued, "there—don't blush—know your modesty, but there's no occasion to interrupt me—"

"Yes, but while you're giving me credit for more modesty than I can charge to my account, you will not give me time to confer your opinion of my virtue. Why, my dear boy, the millions I spoke of as the dowry of my bride, consist of the numberless little principles and springs of action that make up the standard of perfection which I have discovered in her I intend to make my wife."

"You mean, you think you have," said Nevers, smiling at his friend's warmth.