

needed but the utterance of a single word to distinguish the quiet subdued tone of the one, from the clear trumpet-like voice of the other. Wilfred Thornton, grave, thoughtful and studious, looked forward only to a career of intellectual usefulness; while Charles, bold, stalwart and courageous, anticipated a life of stirring deeds, and, if possible, of noble emprise. Both possessed the finest qualities of heart and mind. The nicest sense of honor, the most unsullied purity of feeling, and the masculine virtues of magnanimity and personal courage were gifts possessed in common between them; but the superior mental powers of Wilfred were combined with a degree of tenderness of nature almost amounting to weakness, which showed itself in a vacillating infirmity of purpose; while the bolder and more decided force of character which belonged to Charles, was sometimes rendered too obvious by the exertion of a most untamed and untameable will. Yet despite this difference, perhaps even because of it, the brothers loved each other with the utmost warmth and devotedness.

As they grew up to man's estate, they left their native village, and while in a neighbouring city, Wilfred pursued the studies of a laborious profession; Charles endeavoured to chain his free soul to the chariot-wheels of fortune. But the prison-life of a merchant was ill-suited to one who was only happy when he inhaled the mountain air, or trod the unfettered green-sward. He became disgusted with the details of business, and determined to seek a home upon that element which seems ever the most fitting field of enterprize to a daring and restless spirit; nor did it excite any surprise in the minds of those who knew him best, when they learned that Charles Thornton had abandoned the comforts of his home for the excitement and hardships of a sailor's life. But the loss of his brother's presence was most severely felt by Wilfred. Hitherto, in the close-knit intercourse of daily companionship, he had relied so unconsciously upon the firmer character of Charles, that he had never learned his own weakness; but he now found himself suddenly deprived of a prop and support which was absolutely necessary to his success as well as happiness. Dreamy and imaginative, he had given himself up too much to speculative fancies; and it required all the practical good sense of his brother to counterbalance this disposition to abstraction, which, while it elevates a man's character in a moral point of view, perhaps tends, more than any other intellectual indulgence, to limit his usefulness.

Amy Ellerslie had been a mere child when the brothers went out into the world to carve their own way to fortune; but she was in the first bloom of beautiful womanhood, when Wilfred Thornton, disheartened and unhappy, returned to his native village. He had devoted his days to toil and his nights to study, he had laboured with all the energy of his nature, but had been met by difficulties and disappointments on all sides, while he found himself outstripped in the race of life by those who, destitute both of his talents and integrity, crept on through by-paths, where he would have disdained to tread. The spectres conjured up by a morbid imagination, terrified his shrinking spirit; he fancied himself a mark for the arrows of misfortune; and after a few ineffectual struggles with the exigencies of life, he sought his boyhood's home as a refuge, or at least a shelter, where he might repose his weary soul. He was too much beloved not to be warmly welcomed by the friends of his youth, and he met with both sympathy and kindness from the very men who felt most disposed to reprove the weakness that led him soon to quit a field which is to every one a battle plain, where many a hope must be slain ere a single victory can be achieved.

But more especially did the melancholy student find solace in the society of Amy Ellerslie. Her presence was to his heart as sunshine to the flower; and he dwelt beneath her smiles until his soul seemed to grow stronger beneath the influence of her consistent and innocent cheerfulness. A passionate admirer of the beautiful in the moral as well as the natural world, Wilfred found his ideal more than realized in the delicate beauty, the transparent truthfulness of character, and the gentle gaiety of heart, which formed Amy's great attractions. For him Amy only felt the same kind of preference which was shared by some half a dozen others. She liked his society, and found pleasure in the converse of one whose thoughts were ever among the poetical and lovely things of earth; while the remembrance of his disappointments, and the sight of his habitual sadness, imparted a tenderness to her manner which might easily be mistaken by him, whose wishes were too often allowed to expand into hopes.

Daily did Wilfred feed his passion with the contemplation of her exceeding beauty, and his character which had been enfeebled by morbid fancies, seemed to strengthen beneath the influence of a true and pervading affection, even