

# THE AMARANTH.

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## THE FIRST AND LAST GRIEF.

"She was not made,  
Through years or moons, the inner weight to  
bear,  
Which colder hearts endure, 'till they are laid  
By age in earth."

There are some persons who seem sent upon earth only to beautify and bless everything that comes within the sphere of their influence,--beings whose hopefulness of spirit and joyousness of temper make an atmosphere of light around them,--whose presence is a sort of moral sunbeam. Such a creature was Amy Ellerslie, and never did cheerfulness and goodness find their dwelling within a lovelier form. With a face as bright as a spring morning, large liquid blue eyes, a profusion of blonde tresses, and the figure of a sylph, it was impossible for the imagination to conceive a more beautiful personification of innocent happiness. Her quick and agile movements, her cheerful voice, nay, the very toss of her pretty head, as she flung back the exuberant curls, evinced the joyousness of her nature. One could not look at her without being unconsciously reminded of all the glad and free things in nature. The flight of the forest bird, the bound of the timid fawn, the leap of the mountain stream, all might have furnished similes for the graceful and merry girl. Yet perhaps the loveliest trait in her character was the maidenly gentleness and tenderness which seemed to pervade her whole nature, softening its brightest effluence of joy, even as the light breeze over the face of a summer sky, tempers the splendors of the noonday sun.

Though only a simple village maiden, Amy had grown up in an atmosphere of affection. The youngest and fairest of a large family, she had been the pet and plaything of all, but the very indulgence which might have rendered a less noble nature selfish, produced quite a contrary effect on Amy. There were so many to

study her happiness, that she seemed to feel it quite unnecessary to care anything about herself; and, indeed, there was little motive for selfishness in the heart of one, whose temper could, like the bee, extract sweetness from the most envenomed flowers of life. Her *insouciance* and gayety probably tended to prolong for her the sweet season of childhood and girl-ismess. Certain it is that at a period when most women have fully learned the sweet instincts of their own nature, Amy still possessed an unawakened heart, and a store of undeveloped affections, whose very existence was unknown to her. Her soul was like a lake lying on some high mountain-top; the blue heaven might colour its pure wave,--the fervid sun might glitter on its surface, and the cold moon silver its placid waters,--the stars might mirror themselves within it, and the wild flowers stoop to kiss their own sweet image on its margin, but its hidden depths had never been stirred by human hand, nor had the shadow of a passion ever darkened its pellucid flow. Though surrounded by admirers, she showed no decided preference for any, but seemed to find something to like in each; as if the voice of kindness and tenderness was but the variation of a well-known melody, which she had listened to so long that it had ceased to excite her special attention. The few that envied her, accused her of latent coquetry, while the many who loved her, knew that she possessed that innate gift of pleasing, which was as natural to her as is the power of song to the bird.

Among the friends of Amy Ellerslie's early youth, were two brothers, the sons of a widow, who resided in the same village. Charles and Wilfred Thornton were as wonderfully alike in personal appearance as they were dissimilar in character, and while, at first sight, it was scarcely possible for even an intimate friend to know which of the two he was addressing, it