

Now, Agnes was about eighteen, when a young man of her own age, named Henry Cranstoun, took up his residence for a few months in her father's house. He was the son of a distant relative of her mother, and was then articled as a clerk or apprentice to a writer to the signet in Edinburgh. He also was the only child of his parents; for, though they had had eight others, he was all that death had left them. He was the youngest son of his mother; and there was a time when there was no mother had greater cause to be proud of her children. Yea, as they hand in hand, or one by one, went forth on the Sabbath morning with their parents to their place of worship, there was not an eye that looked not with delight or admiration on the little Cranstouns. The neatness of their dress, the loveliness of every countenance, the family likeness of each, the apparent affection of all, the propriety of their demeanor interested all who looked upon them. But, as untimely flowers, that, by a returning frost, are stricken down in beauty, so drooped, so perished, this fair and happy family.—Some had said that they were too beautiful to live; and, as they also manifested much quickness and wisdom for their years, there were others who said to Mrs. Cranstoun, as she was shedding their shining hair upon their brows, that she would never comb an old head! This is a cold, cruel, and ignorant prophecy—it has sent foreboding and unhappiness into the bosoms of many a fond mother; but, in this case, it needed not the gift of a seer to foretell the gloomy tidings. Consumption lurked amidst the beauty that glowed on every cheek; and seven of the fair family had fallen victims to the progress of the insidious destroyer, till Henry alone was left. And now, even upon him also, it seemed to have set its mark. The hollow cough, and the flushed cheek, the languidness by day and the restlessness by night, gave evidence that the disease was there.

Change of air and less study were recommended by the physicians as the only means by which Henry might be saved; and he was sent over to Northumberland, to the house of William Percy, his mother's friend.

It was about that period of the year which is spoken of as the "fall of the leaf," when Henry Cranstoun first arrived at Till-side. William Percy had just gathered in his harvest, and Henry met with the kindly welcome of a primitive family. The father, the mother, and their daughter, received him as

one whom they were to snatch from the hands of death. In a few days, the goat's milk, and the bracing air, which came with health on its wings from the adjacent mountains, wrought a visible change in the appearance of the invalid. His cough became more softened, his eyes less languid, his step more firm, and he panted not as he walked. He felt returning strength flowing through his veins—in his bosom, in the moving of his fingers, he felt it. He walked out by the side of Agnes—she led him by the banks of the Till, by the foot of the hills, by the woods where the brown leaves were falling, and by the solitary glen.

Perhaps I might have said that the presence of Agnes contributed not less than the mountain air, and the change of scenery, to his restoration to health. Of this I have not been told. Certain it is that her beauty and her gentleness had spread their influence over his heart, as spring, with its wooing breath, awakens the dreaming earth from its winter sleep. It was not the season when nature calls forth the soul to love; for the cushat was silent in the wood, the mavis voiceless on the thorn, the birds were dumb on every spray, the wild-flowers had closed their leaves and drooped, and the meadow lost their fragrance. But, as they wandered forth together, a lark started up at their feet; it raised its autumn song over their heads; it poured it in their ears. Both raised their eyes in joy towards the singing bird; they listened to it with delight. His fingers were pressed on hers as he heard it, as though he would have said—"How sweet it is!" But the lustre forsook his eyes while he yet listened—he sighed, and was silent. They returned home together, and Agnes strove to cheer him; but his spirit was heavy, and he pressed her hand more fervently in his. The song of the lark seemed to have touched a chord of sadness in his bosom.

Henry was heard walking backward and forward in his room throughout the night and, on the following morning at breakfast, he put a paper into the hands of Agnes, which was written the following rhymes:—

#### THE LARK'S AUTUMNAL SONG.

(INSCRIBED TO AGNES PERCY.)

Again in the heavens thy hymn is heard,  
Bird of the daring wing!  
When last ye sprang from the daisied sward,  
Making the welkin ring,  
Thy lay the dressing buds awoke—  
Thy voice the spell of winter broke—