

WHEN LEAVES BEGIN TO FALL.

By HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.

THE blossom time is almost o'er,
The summer rose has shed,
The last frail buds it bravely bore,
Upon its grassy bed;
The swallow's wheeling flight is low,
We hear its shrilly call,
And in the sunlight, soft and slow,
The leaves begin to fall.

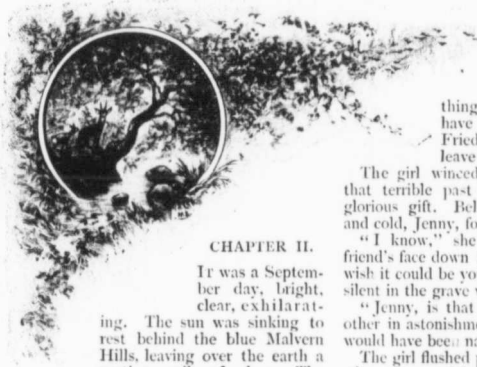
The bracken trails its plumes of gold,
The chestnuts patter down,
The morning mists hang, fold on fold,
O'er moors, burnt russet-brown.
Though noontide airs be soft as balm,
And fruits hang on the wall,
Still in the sunlight, golden calm,
The leaves begin to fall.

Oh, falling leaves, oh, withered flowers,
Oh, summer bird that flies!
Ye leave to us autumnal bowers,
'Neath chill and wind-swept skies—
But leave us still bright thoughts of cheer,
God's love is over all;
And Nature's hour of rest is near,
When leaves begin to fall.

So let the time of roses pass,
And let the swallows fly,
And let the flowers that starred the grass,
Hang down their heads and die.
The winter will but nurse the spring,
God leaves His hope with all—
New buds will blow, new songbirds sing,
Though leaves begin to fall.

HER LAST ORATORIO.

By GRETA GILMOUR.



CHAPTER II.

It was a September day, bright, clear, exhilarating. The sun was sinking to rest behind the blue Malvern Hills, leaving over the earth a parting smile of glory. The Severn shone like liquid gold and the woods burnt red and yellow with autumn fire. An exquisite sweet sadness lingered in the air, amongst the trees and hills and under the shadow of the cathedral spire. The year was drawing near its close. The gladness of summer was fading, and death crept round amongst the woods and fields, stealthily robbing the trees of their foliage, the lanes and fields of their garlands. Soon the balmy air and golden light would give place to keen north winds and sunless skies.

In the cathedral there was a subdued bustle and preparation for the great sacred concert to be held there that night. In the latticed window of the quaint house opposite sat the artist, whose name was on every lip and who was to take the leading solos in the oratorio. It was Jenny, who after all had yielded to Signor Flosi's request so often repeated. Her fair hair was loose about her, Frieda had been brushing it and was now about to dress it.

"My only fear is that the excitement will make you ill," said Frieda gently.

"Have no fear, dear; I shall do my part well to please Dr. Lunn, Signor Flosi and you—if I should die in the effort."

A sudden thrill passed through Frieda. Jenny's unconscious words meant so much in this case. She took them up seriously.

"You have still many, many days to live,

Jenny, and you surely don't grudge them to me from all the vast eternity before you?"

"Frieda, I grudge you nothing—nothing I have. But over this I have no control. I wish—oh, Frieda! how I do wish—I could leave you my voice."

The girl winced. "Don't remind me of that terrible past when I envied you your glorious gift. Believe me the envy is dead and cold, Jenny, for evermore."

"I know," she said, softly drawing her friend's face down to hers. "Nevertheless, I wish it could be yours to use, instead of lying silent in the grave with me."

"Jenny, is that your creed?" asked the other in astonishment. "Had I said that, it would have been natural, but you!"

The girl flushed painfully. "Do you know what my creed is, Frieda. It is this," she said, and rising she seated herself at the piano and began to sing—

"Though afflicted, tempest-tossed,
Comfortless awhile thou art,
Do not think thou canst be lost,
Thou art graven on my heart.
All thy wastes I will repair,
Thou shalt be rebuilt anew;
And in thee it shall appear,
What a God of love can do."

When the beautiful voice ceased the spell was broken.

"Jenny, where did you find that melody? I have never heard it before, and it is so lovely."

The girl turned swiftly round, her eyes shining. "Frieda, do you really think it lovely?"

"Of course I do, else I would not say so. Why, what do you mean? Do you not like it?"

"Frieda, it is my own."

"Your own!" she cried, a pang like a knife running through her. Was there no end to the wealth of this wonderful nature, which was soon to be impotent in death?

"All thy wastes I will repair,
Thou shalt be rebuilt anew."

The thought entered her rebellious heart, bringing with it great comfort.

"You evidently didn't credit me with as much gumption," said Jenny, peering up into her friend's face with a mischievous smile.

"But I have written plenty more, so there!"

"And why did you never tell me, Jenny," asked the other in a wounded tone.

In a moment Jenny's arms were round her. "Frieda, you know how I have always mistrusted my powers. I was afraid to let you hear what I feared, with your knowledge of harmony, you would condemn."

"You foolish child! Let me hear another."

"Oh, there is no time; I really must dress now. But some time or other I will show you my bundle of songs. I just wrote for the joy of it, and dedicated them to you and to my old friend Dr. Lunn, who first discovered my voice. The harmony, etc., will horrify you, I know."

"Not if they are all like that one," returned Frieda. "To whom is it dedicated?"

A wistful smile came into the girl's eyes.

"To Sir Arthur Holmes," she said, turning into the adjoining room, whither Frieda followed her.

When she came out again she was dressed in a simple robe of white, with her fair hair gathered in a knot behind. She looked fragile and sweet.

"You have not a single ornament, Jenny," exclaimed Frieda, a little disconsolately.

"Nor do I wish for any. You know I want to look like a high priestess, which indeed, for the time being, I am. But there is just one addition to my toilet I should like."

"And that, dearest, is what?"

"A sprig of jasmine, Frieda."

In a moment the casement was open and Frieda was searching amongst the dark foliage for a lingering spray of the star-like blossoms. Having found it she placed it in the girl's bosom and bending over her kissed her.

"It is not quite time to go, dear, would it tax you too much to sing, 'O satisfy us'?" Jenny looked up with a radiant smile. This anthem she had never sung since that memorable May evening. She sang it now transcendently. Frieda thanked her with a glance which meant more than words.

Then it was time to go, and soon Frieda found herself amongst the vast audience in the cathedral, waiting impatiently and