

September.

BY J. O. WHITTIER.

ONCE more the liberal year laughs out,
O'er richer stores than gems or gold;
Once more with harvest-song and shout
Is nature's bloodless triumph told.
Our common mother rests and sings,
Like Ruth, among her garnered sheaves;
Her lap is full of goodly things,
Her brow is bright with autumn leaves.
O favours every year made now!
O gifts with rain and sunshine sent!
The bounty overruns our due,
The fulness shames our discontent.
We shut our eyes, the flowers bloom on:
We murmur, but the corn ears fill:
We choose the shadow; but the sun
That casts it, shines behind us still.

FOUR GIRLS.

HOPE DARING.

It was the week before commencement at the Methodist college in the village of Layton. In Professor Gray's room the freshmen were taking their last examination in Latin. Outside the open window the breeze gently waved the green leaves, while a robin sang as if it was indeed "the one day of the year." Occasionally a paper was laid on the desk and a student smiled brightly at the kind old professor's query, "How went the battle?" or slowly and gravely left the room. The door opened and a tall, slender girl, with an earnest, frank face and wide-open gray eyes entered.

"Good afternoon, Miss Redmond. Examinations are over for you, are they not?"

"Yes, but I am sorry when I think this is my last term at Layton. Please may I speak to Nellie just a moment?"

"Certainly; she is by the south window."

With a pleasant smile and greeting to one and another, she crossed the room to the side of a girl clad in mourning.

"Have you nearly finished, dear?"

"I will be ready to go in ten minutes."

"Then I will wait for you in the library," and Barbara Redmond quietly left the room. Descending the stairs she entered the library where she had spent many happy hours, for she was a senior, and had learned to love Layton and its surroundings. The room was deserted, and sitting down at a little reading table, she allowed her mind to wander back over the four years she had spent at school. She did not hear Nellie open the door, but her voice brought her back from dreamland.

"Are you asleep? Come, let us go, for my head aches, and I am choking for a breath of air."

Nellie Smith was a blonde, fair and childish, but a keen observer would have said her chin and mouth told of a resolute will and great strength of mind.

Chatting merrily, the two girls proceeded up the street until they reached a pleasant house situated on the river bank. Passing up stairs, Barbara and Nellie entered the parlour they occupied in common with two other students. It was a cheery room, one window filled with plants, and the large round table covered with books and drawing materials.

Floy Munson sprang up from the piano as they opened the door. She graduated from the conservatory of music the next week. Floy was small, with a face in no ways remarkable save for the luminous black eyes. "Eyes full of music," as Nellie expressed it.

"I was wishing some of you would come, for I have no heart for music to-day. There is Madge coming up the street."

Plump, graceful little Madge Redmond, Barbara's cousin, was an art student, and came running up stairs crying, "Yes, it is done. The Rubicon is

passed. My picture is hung, and girls, I do almost believe I'll win the prize."

"What a state of mind that must be," laughed Floy, "of course you will win. I shall disown you if you do not."

"I am so tired," said Nellie, "do let's sit down and have a good talk. Oh, girls, how we shall miss these talks!"

"Don't talk about that now," commanded Barbara, as she brought a pillow and made Nellie lie down on the couch. "Floy, take this rocking-chair, and Madge, dear little butterfly, can you sit down quietly?"

For reply Madge brought a hassock and sat down at her cousin's feet, resting her head against Barbara's knee. A moment's silence fell upon the party, broken by Madge.

"Girls, what do you most desire the future to bring you? What do you expect your lives will be?"

"There's a vast difference in your two questions," answered Nellie. "What I desire is so different from what my life is to be, that I for one could not answer you in one breath."

"Take two, then," was Madge's saucy reply, "but it will be as good as having our fortunes told. So we will each tell our desires and expectations. Commence, some one."

"We are waiting for the originator of this scheme to begin," said Floy.

Madge made her as sweeping a bow as her lowly position would admit. "I lead in the presence of two seniors? I'm too modest. Barbara, you have helped me out of innumerable scrapes, just help me now; there's a darling."

Barbara laid her slender hand on the reddish-brown curls. "Of course I will, cousin. My immediate future you all know. Thanks to my dear doctor brother, a position as assistant in the Vernon school awaits me. What I most desire can be told in one brief sentence—to be a doctor. But all the dead and gone generations of Redmonds would protest if 'one of the ancestral name should step down from a lady's position,' as my father expresses it. Why should it be worse for me to practise medicine than to teach? My brother sympathizes with me, and will plead my case at home, so I will not despair. Now, Nellie."

"To leave Layton now, girls, at the close of my freshman year, is a greater trial than I can tell you. But Christmas Day, when papa lay dying, he called me to him and talked of mamma's poor health. He said Norah or I must remain with her. Norah is to be married in September, so my duty is plain"—there was a touch of tears in the low sweet voice. "She thinks we will go to Europe next year, and I shall devote my life to her. I never speak of the one thing I long to do, and may surprise you; but, dear friends, I wish I could be a missionary. I am not speaking without thinking, for I have dreamed of this for years. I would gladly give up my luxurious home and pleasant surroundings to carry the story of the Saviour's love to those who sit in darkness."

Floy sprang up and knelt by Nellie's side. "You darling! you shame me, for I have no such lofty purpose. You know my parents are not wealthy, and it has been a struggle for them to keep me here. So I shall commence at once to give lessons, and am to be organist in our home church. The one dream of my life is to study music under Italy's blue sky. Doubtless it will always be a dream. Music—that expresses it all, and I also hope to lighten the burdens of my dear parents."

Barbara, who was always leader, smiled approvingly upon Floy, then turned to her cousin.

Madge burst forth, "Girls, I shall have to marry."

"I thought Charlie's devotion would touch your heart," began Floy, teasingly.

"Don't talk nonsense," was Madge's abrupt reply. "Of course four beautiful talented maidens, like the present assembly, could not go through life unmated, and as none of you included a husband in your plans, I shall find one. I received a letter to-day from my uncle in Boston. He is rich, an old bachelor, and full of whims and queer fancies. He writes that my teacher gives such a good account of me he has concluded to help me. Thinks I should devote my life to art, and bids me come to Boston this fall and pursue my studies under a noted artist, and his home is open to receive me. I am grateful, but why did he not send me a few thousands and let me study where I please? I love art, and shall try to do something of which you may be proud, but I love money, or the things money can buy. I shall marry a rich husband. Not an old miser, but a Prince Charming, who can give me velvets and diamonds. Then, sweethearts, you shall have everything you want."

Barbara stooped and kissed her. "I am glad to hear of your uncle's kind offer. And I know you are too true to sell yourself for riches."

"There is the supper bell," said Floy. "Come, Madge, my generous darling, may I escort the Princess Charming to tea?"

That was ten years ago. Let us glance at them to-night, and see how well their present agrees with the pictures they drew that June night at Layton.

Barbara first. For two years she was an earnest, enthusiastic teacher; then she accepted the hand of a talented young Episcopal minister. Three bright boys play around her chair, and our would-be doctor is a happy wife and mother.

Nellie cared for her invalid mother for three years, sacrificing every wish to the will of her loved but exacting parent. Then death came, and Nellie was alone and very wealthy. She returned to Layton, finished her college course, and then, when her life's dream was about to become a reality, physicians pronounced her too delicate to brave a foreign climate. It was a disappointment, "but there is work here," she wrote Barbara, and straightway set herself to work. She lives at Layton. It is a bustling city now, and Nellie's home is a resting-place for the weary student, a home for the orphan child, while she is sister, mother, friend, to many of God's poor. A beautiful life—and she is quiet, gentle Nellie as of old.

"Music and to help my parents," was to be Floy's work. It was well done until, three years after leaving Layton, she was stricken down by a fever. She was buried on what was to have been her wedding day. Oh, we thought our hearts were breaking that glorious September day when we gathered around her coffin in the church of her childhood. Now we know it was best and she is safe, forever safe, while that dear voice chants the praises of heaven's King.

Madge is still Madge Redmond, and while the years have brought her repose of manners and wondrous beauty, in many respects she is unchanged. Wealth and social success are hers now, not by a fortunate marriage, but by her pictures. She has a lovely home at Boston, which she shares with a younger brother and sister whom she is educating.

So we leave them. Not leading just the lives they planned, but cheerily doing the work God gives them.

A CHRISTIAN woman said, when speaking of a path of service which was fraught with toil and trial: "I do not wish to leave this place until I have an honourable discharge."