

XX. WHY DO THE FLOWERS BLOOM, MOTHER?

(By J. E. Carpenter.)

"Why do the flow'ers bloom, mother,
Why do the sweet flowers bloom;
And brightest those we rear'd, mother,
Around my brother's tomb!"

To fill the world with gladness,
My child, were flow'ers given,—
To crown the earth with beauty,
And show the road to Heaven!"

"Then why do the flow'ers fade, mother,
Why do the sweet flowers fade,
When winter's dreary cloud, mother,
Earth's brighter scenes pervade?"

My child, those flow'ers that wither,
Have seeds that still remain,
That the sunshine and the summer
Restore to life again!

"And shall not those that die, mother,
Come back to life once more,
E'en as the rain and sun, mother,
Those beauteous flow'ers restore!"

Yes,—yes, my child, such powers
To human flow'ers are given,
Here earth's frail flow'ers may blossom,
But we may rise—in Heaven!"

XXI. INFANTINE INQUIRIES.

(By William P. Brown.)

"Tell me, O mother! when I grow old,
Will my hair, which my sisters say is like
gold,
Grow grey as the old man's, weak and poor,
Who ask'd for alms at our pillar'd door?
As he, when he told us his tale of woe!
Will my hand then shake, and my eyes be
dim?
Tell me, O mother! will I grow like him?"

"He said—but I know not what he meant—
That his aged heart with sorrow was rent;
He spoke of the grave as a place of rest,
Where the weary sleep in peace and are
blest;
And he told how his kindred there were laid,
And the friends with whom in his youth he
play'd.
And tears from the eyes of the old man fell,
And my sisters wept as they heard his tale!"

"He spoke of a home, where in childhood's glee
He chased from the wild flowers the singing bee;
And follow'd afar, with a heart as light
As its sparkling wings, the butterfly's flight;
And pull'd young flowers, where they grew
'neath the beams
Of the sun's fair light, by his own blue streams:—
Yet he left all these, through the earth to roam!
Why, O mother! did he leave his home?"

"Calm thy young thoughts, my own fair child!
The fancies of youth and age are beguiled;
Though pale grow thy cheeks and thy hair turn
gray,
Time cannot steal the soul's youth away!
There is a land of which thou hast heard me
speak,
Where age never wrinkles the dweller's cheek!
But in joy they live, fair boy! like thee:
It is *there* the old man long'd to be!"

"For he knew that those with whom he had
play'd,
In his heart's young joy, 'neath their cottage
shade—
Whose love he shared, when their songs and
mirth
Brightened the gloom of this sinful earth—
Whose names from our world had passed away.
As flowers in the breath of an autumn day—
He knew that they, with all suffering done,
Encircled the throne of the Holy One!"

"Though ours be a pillar'd and lofty home,
Where want with his pale train never may come,
Oh! scorn not the poor with the scorner's jest,
Who seek in the shade of our hall to rest;
For He who hath made them poor may soon
Darken the sky of our glowing noon,
And leave us with woe in the world's bleak wild!
Oh! soften the griefs of the poor, my child!"