

bright beautiful stars that border the road to heaven." And so she would have sunflowers all along the narrow path that ran round her garden. Then there were forget-me-nots, dear little double daisies, and pansies—plenty of pansies, so that she could give me a posy every morning; and she knew that I loved the dewy fragrant pansies that bloomed so serenely in the sunlight. She spent hours in her garden breathing the pure air from the moorland above, and with the fresh wind to fan the bright brown hair into rippling curls and tendrils.

Theodora, she told me, was her name—God's gift! I was indeed a gift from God to me. I had been leading a weary, aimless life in the dim old house all alone, with nothing particular to do—no one to care for but myself, and no one to think of or to love. Now I had not only something to love and to care for, but to bring up and watch like a half-blown rose or a delicate pink-tinted apple-blossom. God had indeed sent me a wonderful gift—such a gift that, bringing new thoughts into my daily round, was fitting me more and more for the beautiful heaven that was so real a future to the innocent heart of the child.

And so the years passed. Three—three long, sweet years—spring, summer, golden autumn, stormy winter, all came and went, with fresh duties, new responsibilities, and new joys. My little girl was nearly eight—still very pale, with the same dreamy eyes and wonderful hair. She was dearer to me now than anything else in the wide world. I watched her with unflinching care, and yet—and yet—I never saw what others saw, what others spoke softly of, and shook their heads, and turned away gently when I talked happily of next summer, until she told me.

I was sitting once more in the porch in the even of a perfect summer day, when the long shadows were falling across the dark moorland, and the western sky was flecked with rich clouds of amber and crimson. My little girl, as I always called her, was among the flowers as usual, touching them softly with her tender little fingers, gathering a blossom here and a fern-leaf there, or bending over some straggler with an ever patient care. At last she came to me up the long walk as she had come three years before. And, like a flash, the memory of

that spring sundown came back to me—the faint steps on the dry gravel path, the tiny figure with its pale face and tangled hair, the clasped hands and pink cotton sun-bonnet falling back from the little tired head. But that was long ago. Now she was my own, own little girl; and yet—how weary was the sweet face this evening, and how slow the little footsteps.

"Dear"—the soft tones were softer than ever, and I felt the touch of her caressing hands round my neck—"Dear, I am so tired; take me in your arms. I am not very heavy, am I?"

No, she spoke truly; she was not heavy at all. A bitter pang shot through my heart, could this—could this be the beginning—of the end?

But she was speaking again, with her earnest eyes fixed on the glories of the golden west.

"Dear, how beautiful it is, and how sweet the garden looks. My roses, my white roses, are almost in bloom. You love them so, dear, and so do I. I think there will be flowers in heaven, dear, don't you?"

"I hope so," I answered, slowly. "I hope so, my little girl. But why do you think of that now?"

Her eyes looked troubled.

"I love to think about heaven," she replied. "And it seems as if I could see the pathway when the sun goes down and the stars come out. 'See!' she cried, 'there is the first star, it is the angels' flower, and grows by the beautiful road, like my sunflowers do in my own garden.'"

There was silence again, and the shadows fell more darkly and other stars appeared in the clear sky.

And then she told me. "Dear," she whispered, "dear, do you love me? And I love you, dear, oh! so much; but I hear the angels calling—every night they call me, very softly—and—and—I must go. Oh! dear, I must go up the starry pathway to the golden gate." And tears fell from the wistful eye—tears of parting that mingled strangely with the peaceful calm on the pale lips of my little girl.

And then we went in, away from the dear

old garden, where I had received my gift, and where I had been bidden to give back my treasure to the great resting-place above.

The end came at last. They told me that care had spun out the little life far longer than it would otherwise have lasted. They talked of decline—her mother's weakness—her feeble frame—what did I hear? For I knelt by the little bedside, by the window which overlooked the beautiful garden in all its summer wealth of blossom, and watched my little girl. She was going, going, very calmly, very sweetly, to that heaven, of which she had talked so often. It was very near to her now—a calm home, a peaceful resting-place, after the last struggle with life. And she would leave me all alone once more. My little girl was going!

"My darling!" I cried, "my little girl, speak to me! Don't leave me!"

But she answered very softly, "Dear, I must go. I hear them calling, still calling, and I see the pathway, the beautiful pathway, with the star-flowers on each side. Come to me, dear, when I wait at the golden gate; come to me very soon. My poor, poor dear, don't be lonely, for I will always watch for you at the gate of the great garden—the garden where we shall live for ever—evermore, dear—for ever—and ever—Amen." And my little girl's eyes closed at last, the pale hands lay still, and the quiet lips smiled in the last sweet smile of death. She had gone up the starry pathway to the garden of rest.

The white roses were in bloom when we laid her down in the green earth's breast. I scattered them round her little bed, and wreathed them among the bright hair, for she loved them well, the bonny flowers from her own, own garden.

She is waiting now by the gate of the far-away heaven, waiting for me. And surely, some day, in the gloaming-time, when my call shall come, and my life is over—some day, when, as I think of my little girl and her sweet garden in the dear old-fashioned village by the moorland—I shall lay me down in peace and take my rest, God will give me back my little girl amid the lilies and the roses of the golden garden.

AUGUSTA HANCOCK.

IN A WINTER WOODLAND.

By MARY ROWLES JARVIS

THE tawny beech-leaves wither on the spray,
So lovely yesterday,
The drifts by autumn shed,
The tarnished bracken whence all gold has fled,
Tell of a summer lying prone and dead
While from each songless bough
Come memories of its music silent now

Yet life is here, continuous in its power
Through winter's bleakest hour,
The future slumbering lies
In the Dark Present, and to watchful eyes
Gives many a token through its chill disguise,
While tones of hope and cheer
Speak to the heart of things that shall appear.

Here fairy lichens write with patient care
Their records everywhere,
Here clustering mosses dwell,
Each in its tiny lot apportioned well,
Serene in storm, unharmed when snowdrifts swell.
Safe in their lowly birth—
They are the meek, inheriting the earth!

Here Nature, hopeful, waits the winter through
The touch that makes anew,
The tempest that bereaves
Gives space for sunbeams, and the wind that grieves
In mournful requiem over last year's leaves,
Rocks cheerily on high
The buds that shall make summer by and by

O bounding heart, intolerant of rest,
Things waited for are best!
Far down where none may see,
The certain springtime lives in moss and tree,
God keepeth truth with thousands, and with thee
Bear well His winter's strength—
All flower and fruitage shall be thine at length

Let the resolves that shall thine actions form
Strike deeper for the storm;
For long endurance brave,
Fear not the threat of winds that vainly rave,
Nor the ice morsels sent to cleanse and save.
Sing while the snowflakes fall—
One hour of June shall make amends for all!

