



## MY LITTLE GIRL'S GARDEN.



faint sunlight on the far-away moorland, when I heard the soft click of the wicket gate. Two minutes afterwards tiny steps came up the winding walk, and a little form appeared. Such a little form! with a pale, wistful face, framed in waving brown hair, that strayed away from under the cotton sun-bonnet in a tangle of curls, with wistful brown eyes that seemed to say to me at once, "Here I am—you have been waiting for me, and now I have come to you." She did not speak; she came slowly to my side, and laid a small hand softly in mine. And I, feeling the wonderful pathos in the child's calm eyes, said then, as I have said all my life through since, "My little girl!"

No one came to claim her; no one seemed to care about her; no one attempted to take away my treasure. They told me in the village that a strange lady had been staying there a few days accompanied by a little girl. Nothing was known of her except that she seemed very ill, and had left the neighbourhood very suddenly—without the child.

I questioned my little girl. "I have come to you," she said. "I love you, and I love the beautiful garden. It is like heaven, and mother is going to heaven soon—very soon."

"And where is mother now?" I asked. But the child looked wistfully up into the blue sky and folded her tiny hands.

"Mother is on the way to heaven, going up the beautiful path all among the stars," she answered softly; and then she drew a little closer to me and added, "Some day we will go together, dear; but not yet, because the angels will come to show us the way, and then mother will be ready at the golden gate watching for us."

My sweet little girl! Surely the mother's heart must have been torn with grief before she left you to find your way to the old garden and to me!

And time passed by. The villagers ceased to gossip about my little girl, as they had done at first, or to stare at her as they passed the wicket and saw her tending the honeysuckles or gathering the purple clematis. She was "my little girl," and they accepted her as such.

The garden was her paradise, especially her own little domain, over which she reigned like a sweet queen, happy in the possession of her flowers. What a fair spot it was! There were sunflowers—the loved them so. "They are like the stars, dear," she would say; "like the

blossomed in quiet corners, and pansies—purple pansies, soft as velvet, and with hearts of purest gold—bordered the long beds on each side of the

window. And the roses—such roses never grew anywhere else, we used to think; and I think so still, though many years have passed since then, and the dear old garden is far, far away. There was the pale creamy Gloire de Dijon, with its countless blooms, on the south wall, the dear old-fashioned damask that my grandmother loved so much, and the humble but sweet cabbage-rose that grew everywhere, in all sorts of nooks and out of the way places. Ah! that bonny garden lives yet in my memory, and shall live as a dream of sweetness and beauty for ever.

And it was here that my little girl lived and walked and played among the flowers, tending her own little bit of ground with infinite pains and never-tiring care, and watching each blossom and each leaf with the tender love of a child's pure heart. My little girl! She came to me in the spring-time, with the first primroses and the early violets, and when the rooks were building in the copse near the little burn that comes tumbling down the mountain side, as if it wanted to rush onward for liberty, or to gain the quiet waters of the sedate river that flows through the village.

I was sitting in the porch, watching the

OURS was one of those dear old-fashioned gardens that one sometimes sees still in out of the way parts of England. There was a well-kept hedge of evergreen yew, with pyramids on each side of the gate, which, I remember, used to frighten us very much at night when we were children, and many were the anxious looks cast round as we passed under the dark shadows of the yews and up the broad gravel walk to the front door.

Ah! what a sunny, sweet old garden it was! Great hollyhocks towered proudly in the background, lifting brilliant heads of crimson and rose-pink for the dewdrops and the first rays of sunshine to rest upon. White lilies