

AT ONE AGAIN.

I. NOONDAY.

Two angry men — in heat they sever,
 And one goes home by a harvest field:—
 "Hope's naught," quoth he, "and vain endeavor;
 I said and say it, I will not yield!

"As for this wrong, no art can mend it,
 The bond is shiver'd that held us twain;
 Old friends we be, but law must end it,
 Whether for loss or whether for gain.

"Yon stream is small — full slow its wending;
 But winning is sweet, but right is fine;
 And shoal of trout, or willowy bending —
 Though Law be costly — I'll prove them mine.

"His strawberry cow slipped loose her tether,
 And trod the best of my barley down;
 His little lasses at play together
 Pluck'd the poppies my boys had grown.

"What then — Why naught! *She* lack'd of reason;
 And *they* — my little ones match them well:—
 But *this* — Nay all things have their season,
 And 'tis my reason to curb and quell."

II. SUNSET.

So saith he, when noontide fervors flout him,
 So thinks, when the West is amber and red,
 When he smells the hop-vines sweet about him,
 And the clouds are rosy overhead.

While slender and tall the hop-poles going
 Straight to the West in their leafy lines,
 Portion it out into chambers, glowing,
 And bask in red day as the sun declines.

Between the leaves in his latticed arbor
 He sees the sky, as they flutter and turn,
 While moor'd like boats in a golden harbor
 The fleets of feathery cloudlets burn.

Withdrawn in shadow, he thinketh over
 Harsh thoughts, the fruit-laden trees among,
 Till pheasants call their young to cover,
 — And cushats coo them a nursery song.

And flocks of ducks forsake their sedges,
 Wending home to the wide barn-door,
 And loaded wains between the hedges
 Slowly creep to his threshing floor —

Slowly creep. And his tired senses
 Float him over the magic stream,
 To a world where Fancy recompenses
 Vengeful thoughts, with a troubled dream!

III. THE DREAM.

WHAT'S this? a wood? — What's that? one calleth,
 Calleth and cryeth in mortal dread —
 He hears men strive — then somewhat falleth! —
 "Help me, neighbor — I'm hard bestead."

The dream is strong — the voice he knoweth —
 But when he would run, his feet are fast,
 And death lies beyond, and no man goeth
 To help, and he says the time is past.

His feet are held, and he shakes all over, —
 Nay — they are free — he has found the place —
 Green boughs are gather'd — what is't they cover? —
 "I pray you, look on the dead man's face;

"You that stand by," he saith, and cowers —
 "Man, or Angel, to guard the dead
 With shadowy spear, and a brow that lowers,
 And wing-points reared in the gloom o'erhead. —

"I dare not look. He wronged me never.
 Men say we differ'd; they speak amiss:
 This man and I were neighbors ever —
 I would have ventured my life for his.

"But fast my feet were — fast with tangles —
 Aye! words — but they were not sharp, I trow,
 Though parish feuds and vestry wrangles —
 O pitiful sight — I see thee now! —

"If we fell out, 'twas but foul weather,
 After long shining! O bitter cup, —
 What — dead? — why, man, we play'd together —
 Art dead — ere a friend can make it up?"

IV. THE WAKING.

OVER his head the chafer hummeth,
 Under his feet shut daisies bend:
 Waken, man! the enemy cometh,
 Thy neighbor, counted so long a friend.

He cannot waken — and firm, and steady,
 The enemy comes with lowering brow;
 He looks for war, his heart is ready,
 His thoughts are bitter — he will not bow.

He fronts the seat, — the dream is flinging
 A spell that his footsteps may not break, —
 But one in the garden of hops is singing —
 The dreamer hears it, and starts awake.

V. A SONG.

WALKING apart, she thinks none listen;
 And now she carols, and now she stops;
 And the evening star begins to glisten
 Atween the lines of blossoming hops.

Sweetest Mercy, your mother taught you
 All uses and cares that to maids belong;
 Apt scholar to read and to sew she thought you —
 She did not teach you that tender song —

"The lady sang in her charmed bower,
Sheltered and safe under roses blown —
'Storm cannot touch me, hail, nor shower,
Where all alone I sit, all alone.

"*My bower! The fair Fay twined it round me;
Care nor trouble can pierce it through;
But once a sigh from the warm world found me
Between two leaves that were bent with dew.*

"*And day to night, and night to morrow,
Though soft as slumber the long hours wore,
I look for my dower of love, of sorrow —
Is there no more — no more — no more?"*

"Give her the sun-sweet light, and duly
To walk in shadow, nor chide her part;
Give her the rose, and truly, truly —
To wear its thorn with a patient heart —

"Misty as dreams the moonbeam lyeth
Chequered and faint on her charmed floor;
The lady singeth, the lady sigheth —
'Is there no more — no more — no more?"

VI. LOVERS.

A CRASH of boughs! — one through them breaking!
Mercy is startled, and fain would fly,
But e'en as she turns, her steps o'ertaking,
He pleads with her — "Mercy, it is but I!

"Mercy!" he touches her hand unbidden —
"The air is balmy, I pray you stay —

Mercy?" Her downcast eyes are hidden,
And never a word she has to say.

Till closer drawn, her prison'd fingers
He takes to his lips with a yearning strong;
And she murmurs low, that late she lingers,
Her mother will want her, and think her long.

"Good mother is she, then honor duly
The lightest wish in her heart that stirs,
But there is a bond yet dearer truly,
And there is a love that passeth hers.

"Mercy, Mercy!" Her heart attendeth, —
Love's birthday blush on her brow lies sweet;
She turns her face when his own he bendeth,
And the lips of the youth and the maiden meet.

VII. FATHERS.

Move through the bowering hops, O lovers, —
Wander down to the golden West, —
But two stand mute in the shade that covers
Your love and youth from their souls oppress.

A little shame on their spirits stealing, —
A little pride that is loth to sue, —
A little struggle with soften'd feeling, —
And a world of fatherly care for you.

One says: "To this same running water,
May be, Neighbor, your claim is best."
And one — "Your son has kissed my daughter,
Let the matters between us — rest."