

THE MEANEST MAN

Of the meadows so fragrant with clover,
With bees in each down-drooping head,
Of the noisy stream rushing onward,
Away to its pebble-lined bed.

Of the homely affection abounding,
The work that was duty's sweet call,
Of the church that stood on the hillside,
Of the graves—the end of it all.

"I'm waiting," her voice broke a little,
"For one perfect summer to come,
Not the stifling summers of cities,
But one of the summers of home.

And before the frost touches the flowers"—
Here she held the boy to her breast—

"I'll be sleeping too soundly to care,
And this dear one—ah, God knows best!"

Now I'm not soft-hearted as some folks,
But an odd catch came in my breath,
She seemed such a lone little creature,
With nothing to wait for but death.

But Abner, he rose up and buttoned
His great coat, and smiled so benign,
"Missus," he said, "I've brought you some wood,
There's no kinder heart—hem ! than mine."