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All in the golden afternoon
Full leisurely we glide;
For both our oars, with little skill,
By little arms are plied,
While little hands make vain pretence
Our wanderings to guide.

Ah, cruel Three! In such an hour,
Beneath such dreamy weather,
To beg a tale of breath too weak
To stir the tiniest feather!
Yet what can one poor voice avail
Against three tongues together?

Imperious Prima flashes forth

Her edict 'to begin it'—

In gentler tone Secunda hopes

'There will be nonsense in it!—

While Tertia interrupts the tale

Not *more* than once a minute.

Anon, to sudden silence won,

In fancy they pursue

The dream-child moving through a land

Of wonders wild and new,

In friendly chat with bird or beast—

And half believe it true.

And ever, as the story drained

The wells of fancy dry,

And faintly strove that weary one

To put the subject by,

“The rest next time—” “It *is* next time!”

The happy voices cry.

Thus grew the tale of Wonderland:

Thus slowly, one by one,

Its quaint events were hammered out—

And now the tale is done,

And home we steer, a merry crew,

Beneath the setting sun.

Alice! a childish story take,

And with a gentle hand

Lay it where Childhood's dreams are twined

In Memory's mystic band,

Like pilgrim's withered wreath of flowers

Plucked in a far-off land.