

AU CAVEAU DES INNOCENTS.

28th Oct., 1904.

NIGHT, like a devil, with lidless eyes,
Stands avenging over the Halls.
Sleep there is none, for day awaits
Tokens of toil; there is none that dies,
Death being rest; there is none that calls,
Voice being human; only the Fates
Rattle the dice at a sombre game,
Game without goal of peace or fame.
Sinister, sombre, horrors and hates
Lurk in the shadows, under the walls.
Light deceives, and the darkness lies.

Love there is none; he is child of peace:
Joy there is none; she is bride of force:
Thought there is none; it is birth:—there fell
Ages ago all hope of these.
Lust is awake, and its friend remorse.
Crime we snatch, between spell and spell.
Man is aglare, and is off unheard.
Woman hath speech, of a single word.
Hell may be heaven, for earth is hell!
So do I laugh, and the hideous coarse
Peals like applause re-echo and cease.

Here in the close and noisome cave,
Drunk on the breath of the thieves and whores
Close as they cram in the maw of the pit,
Sick with the stench of the kisses that rave
Round me, surfeiting sense, in scores ;
Mad with their meaning, I smoke and sit
Rhyming at random through my teeth,
Grey with the mire of the slough beneath,
Deep in the hearts that revel in it,
Drowned in the breath of the hell that pours
In the heart of Paris its infamous wave.

Damning the soul of God, I rise,
Stumble among the dissolute bands,
Grope to the steep inadequate stairs
Scrawled with villainous names. My eyes
Loathe the flare of the flickering brands.
Out I climb through the greasy airs
Into the cold and desolate road.
Horror is sure of a safe abode
Here in this heart, too pale for prayers,
While over the Halls avenging stands
Night, like a devil, with lidless eyes.