

LE JOUR DES MORTS.

AT Paris upon Dead Man's Day

I danced into the cemetery.
The air was cool; the sun was gay;
The scent of the revolving clay
Made me most wondrous merry.

Earth, after an agonising bout,
Had swallowed up a widow clean.
The issue hung for long in doubt:—
—Oh! anybody can make out
The mystery I mean.

The dead were dancing with the worms;
The live were laughing with their lemans;
The dead-alive were making terms
With God, and notaries, and germs,
With house-agents and demons.

All Paris keeping sacrament
Of musing or of melancholy,
Impatient of the next event,
To spend, to barter, to be spent;—
I chuckled at the folly.

“I would that I were dead and damned,”
Thinks every wiser human.
“Corpses have room, and men are jammed ;
Those offer food, and these are crammed :—
And cheaper, too, is woman !”

I, being neither God nor ghost,
A mere caprice of matter,
Hop idly in the hideous host,
Content to chaff the uttermost,
To cackle and to chatter.

They bring their wreaths to deck the dead,
As skipping-ropes that devils use them.
One through the immortelles perks his head.
[These sights to ghosties are as bread ;
The luckless living lose them.]

Grotesque and grim the pageant struts ;
We sit a-straddle on the crosses.
Our soulless missiles take for butts
The passers' hats, or in their guts
Disturb their dinner's process.

Thus one man's work is one man's play ;
The melancholy help the merry.
All tread the ordered stupid way
At Paris, upon Dead Man's Day,
In Père Lachaise his cemetery.