

LE VIN DE L'ASSASSIN

My wife is dead, and I am free!

Now I can drink my whole week's wage.
I used to come home stony—she
Tore my nerves with her cries of rage.

I am as happy as a king:

The air is pure; the lark's astir—
We had just such another spring
The year I fell in love with her.

The dreadful thirst that parches me

Craves wine, wine, wine to loose its clutch:
Wine, wine enough to brim with glee
Her grave—and that is saying much.

I threw her body down the well!

The little wall around that ran
I pushed upon her as she fell.
—I will forget her if I can!

By all the oaths of tenderness

Whose tendrils nothing may unbind,
And to bring back the enchanteress
Love to the days when she was kind.

I begged of her a darkling tryst

One night—a night of wind and rain.
She came, poor silly devil! Pist!
We are all more or less insane.

She was still beautiful, although

So tired. Still sweet! still pale! still shy!
I loved her overmuch—and so
“Out of this life you go!” said I.

No one can understand me. None
Of these dull drunkards could divine
In nightmares this that I have done
—To make a winding-sheet of wine!

This black invulnerable vice
—Engines of iron! towers of stone!—
For winter's blight or summer's spice
True love, true love hath never known—

True love with black inchantments filled,
Its hellish rout of shrieks and groans,
Its phials of poison death-distilled,
Its rattling chains and skeletons!

Here am I, free, alone—alone!
I shall be drunk, dead drunk, to-night.
Then I shall slip to the cold stone
Without remorse, without affright;

And I shall sleep—yes, like a dog!
The lumbering wagon with its weight
Of wheel, its load of stone or log,
May well come crawling—it is fate!

Crush my curs'd head—cut me in half!
The guilty soul, the swinish clod!
I laugh at it—laugh as I laugh
At the body and the blood of God!