

AUTUMN AFTERNOON IN ARTOIS

On an Autumn afternoon—
Dear September still was smiling—
I, an idle hour beguiling,
Watched a weary land aswoon
In a brief surcease from pain;
Hardly might I mark the stain
Flung by battle's hand defiling;
Distant hung the dull reviling
Of the blackened lips of Cain,
Ere, beneath the small, pale moon,
Hell, refreshed, gave tongue again.

On that Autumn afternoon—
Sweet September all aswoon—
Seemed this land a gentle place,
As the Lotus Land in grace;
Hollowed softly to the eye
In a shallow pleasauncie;
A vast but gracious bowl of green
Rimmed full round with deeper sheen
Of copse and forest to the sky
That leaned to kiss it sleepily.
A fragrant bowl, a pot-pourri,
It seemed that afternoon to me,
A very gem of artistry.
A bowl of dainty porcelain ware
It lay around me, lying there
Beneath its echoing further rim;
Its colours were a little dim
As must be beauty seen through tears
Or beauty chastened by the years;
And all its scents and all its sounds
Were muted, as when one with wounds
Lies in a room dressed soberly
In lavender and dimity.
But scents there were and sounds to hear: