

Of His Majesty's Rum Jar

A BILLET IN FLANDERS

(1915)

WITHIN, the frowstiness and gloom;
Without, the chill and sodden dark;
Within, pitiful, pale and small,
Christ crucified on the mildewed wall.

Without, the grind of wheels; the ring
Of hoofs and heels on greasy stone:
Within, the old bed, high and damp;
A candle and a smoky lamp.

There I was lonely for sane things:
There I was heartsick for glad days:
And there I knew, with dawning near,
That indecision men call fear.

Heated with wine or caked with mud—
(A revel spent or a day's work done)—
Slowly I turned to that dreary bed
And the pale regard of the imaged dead.

I thought of death; and it did not seem
So dull a thing, nor so sad a jest,
As the dismal nights and the weary round
Of keeping alive on the muddy ground.

Flat ruins now, that house and room
Where I was caged with my soul's gloom
And poor Christ languished, pale and small,
In agony on the mildewed wall.