

Poetry to-day is suffering from what singing and music generally are suffering from—namely, from the fact that monetary success can be obtained by evading technical difficulties.

It is a much greater task to express oneself within the limits set by rhyme and metre than simply to jettison them, cut up one's work into lines of odd or even length, and print it so that it looks like what is called "free verse."

The would-be poet, too, suffers and does himself incalculable injury by refusing to make the necessary effort. Unfortunately, to-day so many seem to be content with this object, meretricious success without effort. True poetry, except in very rare cases, does not come forth without prayer and fasting.

As was indicated before, the object of this criticism is not to belittle Corporal Gilbert's effort nor to discourage him, but to give him some sound advice.

Here, then is the attempt to produce something better on a similar theme, though treated differently.

It, too, is open to criticism, but claims to have achieved a clear expression though subjecting itself to the laws of harmony, rhythm, and proportion and to have made some attempt to approach Edgar Allan Poe's definition of poetry, "rhythmical creation of beauty."

THE DEAD

The dead are past ; the quick are here,
Forget, forget,
And wear your dainty black, my dear,
Without regret.
Bring me no roses ; spend no hours,
Beside my grave
On those who live bestow your flowers
And all you have.
I shall sleep well, so make no moan,
No lullaby.
Fed by my mouldering flesh and bone,
Soft grass grows high.
But if on any Autumn eve,
A sunset glow,
Recalls some memory of our leave
Spent long ago—
Brings to your lips that wistful smile
I loved to see
Forget for just a little while
To forget me.

Corporal G. R. Gilbert, R.N.Z.A.F., who wrote "The Comrades," makes this comment on our correspondent's letter:—

I notice that your correspondent contents himself with general observations, and it appears that his main

charge is that the verse is not written in one of the pseudo-traditional forms. I would point out that adopting one of these forms alone will not transform non-poetry into poetry. Conscious self-discipline allied with the natural endowments that make an artist can alone do this. If he is a poet, then he will write poetry—if he is not, he can write rhyming lines that scan until he rots but it still won't add up to much.

For me, anyway, the significance of a poem lies in its content, and it is the content that determines form, imagery, method, and approach. These things, as it were, present the meaning with the sharpest possible impact and greatest significance, and enable the poet to distill into a few terrific words his whole comprehension of the world, or that part with which he deals. To describe the result we often use the strange word *beauty*.

Ever since man has found himself in conflict with the accepted realities of this world, he has interpreted his beliefs in terms of experience. The greatest of the interpreters we call artists, among them poets—and it matters little to me whether the words are printed irregularly across the page, or in neatly arranged metrical lines that rhyme, so long as they are sincere, they say something worthwhile, and they say it in the best possible way so that its impact makes me see for a little while, with the poet's vision.

In conclusion, I will say that the broken lines which appear to your correspondent to be an attempt at disguise are used—as in all verse, including metrical—to assist the reader, who should be reading aloud. Otherwise it could all be written as prose, and in fact often is.

One other thing. I suggest that your correspondent obtain a book entitled—as nearly as I can remember—"A Survey of Modernist Poetry," written by Laura Riding and Robert Graves; it will answer his criticism of word arrangement more fully and more capably than I could ever do.