

# The Independent

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## Poems From The Front

FROM the thousands of poems that have come from the trenches, some of the best, expressing in soldier language every phase of soldier life and thought, have been collected by Lieutenant C. E. Andrews, U. S. A., under the title *From the Front*. There is no pretense of style and the soldiers have written just what they see, hear, think and feel.

"Dawn in the Trenches" is by Eric Thirkell Cooper:

Dawn o' day! And birds a-singing;  
Sniping starts along the line;  
"Stand to, all," comes quickly ringing.  
"Pray the coming day is fine;  
Mind the pools from last night's drizzle,  
Post 'day-sentries' straight away——"  
Rifles cleaned whilst rashers frizzle—  
So to us comes break o' day.

Two other volumes of similar content and equal literary value and sympathetic appeal are *Songs from the Trenches*, compiled by Herbert Adams Gibbons, and Frank Foxcroft's *War Verse*.

Of the author of *Fairies and Fusiliers*, John Masefield said: "There is a gay young singer named Robert Graves, who has written poetry about the war which will live."

The tiny bookful of short lyrical poems by Robert Graves strikes a high average of literary excellence and individual appeal. Many of the fifty poems were written in the intervals of fighting at the front, where Robert Graves is a captain of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. They paint with genuine simplicity and keen imaginative skill one soldier's reactions to the emotions of war. "Not Dead" is one of them:

Walking' thru trees to cool my heat and pain,  
I know that David's with me here again.  
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.  
Caressingly I stroke

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*Poems from the Front*

Rough bark of the friendly oak.  
 A brook goes bubbling by: the voice is his.  
 Turf burns with pleasant smoke;  
 I laugh at chaffinch and at primroses.  
 All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.  
 Over the whole wood in a little while  
 Breaks his slow smile.

But not all these verses are of war. There are whimsical scraps of philosophy and some charming poems of children. Doesn't this stanza from "Double Red Daisies" remind you of the days when you were young?

Double red daisy, that's my mark:  
 I paint it in all my books!  
 It's carved high up on the beech-tree bark.  
 How neat and lovely it looks!  
 So don't forget that it's my trademark:  
 Don't copy it in your books.  
 Claire has a tea-rose, but she didn't plant it:  
 Ben has an iris, but I don't want it.  
 Daisies, double red daisies for me,  
 The beautifullest flowers in the garden.

The ugliness of war, the pain, the loneliness, the devastation, are forcefully presented in *The Other Side*, war poems by Gilbert Frankau, staff captain in the British army. This description of Ypres was written after he fought there thru the winter campaign of 1915:

This is the City of Fear!  
 Death  
 Has ringed her walls with his sickle, has choked  
 her streets with his breath;  
 In her cellars the rats feed red  
 On the bodies of those whom their own roof-  
 beams betrayed to him as they fled—  
 For none live here.

*From the Front*, collected by Lieutenant Clarence Edward Andrews, U. S. A. D. Appleton & Co. \$1. *Songs from the Trenches*, by Herbert Adams Gibbons. Harper & Bros., \$1.25. *War Verse*, by Frank Foxcroft. Thomas Y. Crowell Co. \$1.25. *Fairies and Fusiliers*, by Robert Graves. Alfred Knopf. \$1. *The Other Side*, by Gilbert Frankau. Alfred Knopf. \$1.