

**A BUSINESS IN
POETRY: AN
IMITATIVE DIALOGUE**

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A Business in Poetry: An Imitative Dialogue by Frederick Hill Meserve

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An Imitative Dialogue

By FREDERICK HILL MESERVE

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FROM
THE BEQUEST OF
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL
1918

To The Quill Club of New York
Upon the Occasion of its
Members' Night Festival,
May 9, 1916.

Vertical line of text on the left side of the page.

PREFACE

Extract from the Minutes, May, 2016

OF the first quarter of the 20th Century two facts are remembered by students of history,—the recrudescence of poetry, and the Great War in Europe.

This period of literature, which was marked by new inventions in forms of expression, may be called the Exoteric; and the upheaval of arms, which led to the final democratization of the monarchical States of Europe, furnished to the legion of its poetasters material for their craft.

For nearly a century the causes of the war's dramatic ending were unknown. Recently there have been discovered documents of these flamboyant writers which may have helped to mold the opinion of the time. A fragment of this contemporary writing is here first printed.

If the representation of the characters is anomalous, for in one instance the author has used in his dialogue the name of Sir Alfred Austin, the laureate who preceded the episode in question, it is probably the license of fancy.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

Eller Squealer Fillcocks, *Verse Manufacturer.*
Bill Shakespeare, *Her Stenographer and Typist.*
Ruddy Rippling, *Master Mechanic.*
Al Fresco Austin, *The Poet Laureate.*
Jack Blaze-field, *Able Seaman.*
Colonel W. Joyful Hampton, *Free Verse Mechanic.*
Fra Gutenberg, *Printer's Devil and Editor.*

THE PHONOGRAPH.

*Minor Poets, Parody Makers, Plagiarists,
and Scriveners.*

A BUSINESS IN POETRY

PROLOGUE

IT seems a fashion now-a-days to cry
A pest upon the poets and their wares.
Maybe an envy 'tis that some shall try
To reach a little nearer to the stars.
Shall joy, profit perchance, attend the play,
Yet 'tis so different methods for them all
Who write their thoughts. What matters it the way,
If Truth be placed on Fancy's pedestal?
If satire, let no living heart be wrung.
Fantastic, seek it, if the spirit leads.
But when 'tis finished and the song is sung,
Pray that the spirit live in flowers, not weeds.
So, Friends, have patience, while our masquerade
Pass in review for praise or cannonade.

ACT I

A Verse Factory.

Will Shakespeare *discovered at a typewriter in the outer office.*

Shakespeare. A quill, a quill, my kingdom for
a quill!

Or lacking kingdom I would quickly trade
My sweet wife's mother for a nimble quill,
A goose quill for a goose, and goose am I
To click this damnèd thing. Were Austin here
To quell the riot of these jumping keys;
To ease, with soft converse, my click-mad mind,
With one, or two, or three, I might stand three,
Of his pet lyrics to the hapless flowers,