

Idle Thoughts

A Hollow Ring

ANOTHER boxer died today.
How old was he? Just nineteen?
Of course he'd known the risks involved.
Of course he did: he wasn't dim.
The problem lay in his believing
He would never cause the grieving.
Tragedy was not for him:
He'd make good! He was resolved
To win his belt and so be seen
To rule the ring on princely pay.

Another boxer died today.
How old was he? Twenty-two?
Not some ancient raddled pro,
With vision blurred and battered brain,
Bequeathed a twitch and mumbling stammer,
By relentless leathered hammer,
Whose flurried fury's aim was pain —
Whose owner simply sought to show
That he could win, because he knew
A *tougher* fight would come his way!

Another boxer died today.
How old was he? Twenty-three?
Mustn't worry! Save your breath!
Watch me win it! Just believe!
The choice is mine: another fight'll
See me going for the title!
Widow's heart is on her sleeve:
They won't record the cause of death
And children's tears, was being free
To choose to live his life his way.

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Another boxer died today.
How old was he? Twenty-five?
Instant blood clot came to tell
A lad — who never heard, alas —
That though he did it for a living,
Pummelled heads are unforgiving.
And that was why it came to pass,
When they rang his third-round knell,
A lad alert and so alive
Was not about to stay that way.

Another boxer died today.
How old was he? Twenty-eight?
The uppercut that glazed his eyes
And sagged his knees and blew his brain
Made it far too late explaining
All the waste of all that training.
Bright eyes will not see again:
Clear the ring before he dies!
The living's good, the living's great!
The funeral's less so, so they say.
