

VILLON'S APOLOGY
(ON READING STEVENSON'S ESSAY)

*Originally published in the December
1912 issue of The Poetry Review.*

MY duty is to God and man
To do my work as best I can.
I need, if that is to be done,
Leisure and food and drink and fun.
Why should I bow to scarecrow rule
Of prig, professor, prude and fool?
And who dare say I was a shirk?
I did more perdurable work
Than any other of my time:
I limned my century in rime!
Why should brute drudgery extort
Respeft that is denied to thought?
Who knows what agony of toil
Goes to make poets' cauldrons boil?
Kindly permit me for the nonce
The pride of having been a ponce!
A trade that Stevenson, thinks I,
Might have found difficult to ply.
If I should make another Will,
I'd leave him, in a codicil,
What he most needs to make him stronger—
An inch of nose, or something longer.