

PHILPOT

This morning Philpot
has a runny eye. His glasses
are already too thick
for comfort. Last week's visit
to the optician did nothing
about the run. Perhaps he should
have mentioned it. But he couldn't
be sure: do you go to an optician
with a thing like this -- or
to a woman? It was embarrassing not knowing
at his age. So he tries not to think
of his rheumatism, of his next birthday.
He'll be all right: don't think the water,
running down his cheek, is tears.

PHILPOT UNFIT FOR ACTIVE SERVICE

Another man would have kicked
the T.V. set in or killed the wife,
though he suspected that to be a rumour.
Another man would reminisce about
his War and use patronage and gratitude
to run a second wife, a younger home.
Broken, Philpot looked back in longing
to the Middle Ages of his youth where
dreaming was a sin a bright boy might commit --
the touch of something smooth, skin
unblemished by sores and evidence of
rough times. He had grown ugly waiting
for the compensation he was due; and if
the world continued to cheat him of it,
well, the wife would have to pay again.