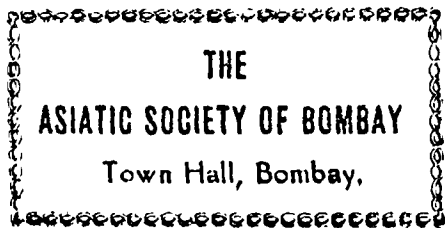




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ON

ENGLISH

VERSIFICATION.

LONDON :  
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

A  
TREATISE  
ON  
ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CROWE,

PUBLIC ORATOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

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al 6 1500

Conscripsi præscriptiones terminatas, ut eas attendens, et ante facta, et futura, qualia sint opera, per Te nota posses habere.

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TO  
THOMAS CALDECOTT,  
OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE, ESQ.

WHO MATERIALLY ASSISTED IN THE COMPLETION OF  
THE PRESENT VOLUME,

THIS TREATISE

ON

ENGLISH VERSIFICATION

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HIS SCHOOLFELLOW IN WINCHESTER COLLEGE, AND  
FRIEND OF SEVENTY YEARS STANDING,

THE AUTHOR,

W. C.

*Oxford, April 5, 1827.*



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A  
TREATISE  
ON  
ENGLISH VERSIFICATION.

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INTRODUCTION.

ALTHOUGH the art of English poetry has been long and diligently cultivated, in every species of composition, and every kind of measure that our language will admit, it would be difficult to point out any complete treatise of English prosody, or account of the nature of our verse, as yet existing among us. There are not indeed wanting writers, who have treated of the subject; but they have either touched upon it incidentally, or considered it partially, without giving that full and satisfactory information which would

supersede the necessity of any future attempt. Upon this account it is proposed, in the following pages, to investigate and explain the principles of our versification, and to give a more systematic English prosody than has hitherto been made public.

Another reason might also be alleged for engaging in the task which is here undertaken. Our English writers of the present age are indeed seldom deficient greatly in the art of versification; but there are certain popular works in circulation, which though, in other respects, of great merit, are composed in verse of so loose a structure, and with such unwarrantable licenses, that, if they should obtain many imitators (they already have some) we might relapse again into ignorance of true poetical measures; and the art "to build the lofty rhyme" might fall into disuse and be forgotten. I allude to some of the poems of Sir Walter Scott, and of Dr. Southey, the poet laureat; and to such measures as these:

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,  
Go visit it by the pale moonlight,

When the broken arches are black in sight,  
And each shafted oriel glimmers white ;  
When the cold light's uncertain shower  
Streams on the ruin'd central tower ;  
When buttress and buttress, alternately,  
Seem framed of ebon and ivory ;  
When silver edges the imagery,  
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die ;  
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,  
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave.

These lines, which are found in the Second Canto of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, are evidently composed after the manner of our ancient ballad-makers; and they are perhaps allowable in this work, because they are not unsuitable to the character of the minstrel, nor to his subject, which is a ballad. But the same loose measures and licenses abound in his greater piece, his Marmion, where they are entirely destitute of the same excuse. They have no congruity with his subject; indeed, they are in direct opposition to it. The dignity of an heroic poem requires an heroic measure of verse; and an author could hardly debase his subject more by celebrating his hero's exploits in eight syl-

lable (that is, four feet) lines, than if hē had represented the hero himself as only four feet high.

Demetrius Phalereus, in his Treatise on Elocution, has a section expressly on this head. Having observed that a length of phrase is admissible and proper for grand subjects, of which he gives an example from Plato, he adds, “therefore the Hexameter is called the heroic verse because of its length, as being suitable to heroes: for no man would think of writing the Iliad of Homer in the short lines of Archilochus, such as

ΤΙς σὰς παρτεῖγε φρενας,

Who now has enchanted her eyes?

nor in those of Anacreon,

Φερ' ὕδωρ, φερ' οἶνον, ὦ παι,

Bring me water, bring me wine, boy;

which is a measure of verse for a tippling old man, and not for a warlike hero.”—*Sect. 5.*

The judgment which Dryden passed on Butler is applicable here. “The choice of his



numbers (says he, in the Dedication prefixed to his Translation of Juvenal) is suitable enough to his design (his Hudibras) as he has managed it; but in any other hand the shortness of his verse, and the quick returns of rhyme, had debased the dignity of style\*."

In the other English poet above mentioned, we find these verses.

\* Warton, in his History of Poetry, informs his reader that "there was a species of short measure used in the minstrel romances, for the convenience of being sung to the harp at feasts, and in carols, and some other light poems, which are more commodiously uttered by buffoons in plays, than by any other person; and in which the sudden return of the rhyme fatigues the ear. Such (says an early English critic, Puttenham) were the rhymes of Skelton, being indeed but a rude railing rhymers, and all his doings ridiculous; he used but short distances and short measures (*i. e.* the rhymes near together, and the lines short); pleasing only the popular ear." Vol. ii. p. 341. Here is an example.

And if ye stand in doubt  
 Who brought this rhyme about,  
 My name is Colin Clout:  
 I propose to shake out

You hear no more the trumpet's tone,  
You hear no more the mourner's moan ;  
    Though the trumpet's breath,  
    And the dirge of death  
    Mingle and swell  
    The funeral yell.

*Southey's Curse of Kehamah, p. 3.*

---

All my conning bagge,  
Like a clarkly hagge.  
For though my rhyme be ragged,  
Tatter'd and jagged,  
Rudely rain-beaten,  
Rusty and moth-eaten,  
If ye talk well therewith,  
It hath in it some pith.

His satire on Cardinal Wolsey, entitled, *Why come ye not to Court?* contains these lines.

Our barons be so bold  
Into a mouse-hole they would  
Run away, and creep  
Like a meiny of sheep,  
Dare not look out of door  
For dread of the mastiff cur,  
For dread of the butcher's dog,  
Would worry them like an hog :

I charm thy life  
 From the weapons of strife,  
 From stone and from wood,  
 And the beasts of blood\*.

*Ibid.* p. 18.

But it is not my present business to pursue this censure farther: nor are these lines now recited with any other view than to point out their irregular and vicious structure; which the

---

For and this cur do gnar  
 They must stand all afar,  
 To hold up their hand at the bar.

Enough of Skelton.

\* Lines of measure like these were composed in the oldest and rudest state of our language, as

Hightest thou Urse?  
 Have thou God's curse!

These rhymes were made before the Conquest, against Ursus, earl, or sheriff of Worcestershire, for his encroachment on the church. See William of Malmesbury, de Gest. Pont. Angl. l. 3, p. 271; and Godwin de Præsul. Life of Aldred, archbishop of York, and Tyrwhitt's Chaucer, vol. i. p. 34. There is a Latin translation of them in the Leonine verse, *Tunc vocare Ursus? Te sit maledictio versus.*

authors have admitted, not by accident or inattention, but have contrived of set purpose; and which, of course, is a species of versification that they recommend by their authority and example.

But having stated that the subject of English prosody has been already treated of by former writers, it will not be improper, before entering upon the present work, to mention who they are (the principal of them, at least), and to give some short account of what they have done.

The first English writer \* that occurs to notice is William Webbe, who published a Discourse of English Poetry, in 1586. In that discourse, after treating of poetry in general he singles out Spenser from the English poets for his especial commendation, and takes the Shepherd's Calendar, published about seven years before (but which, it seems, had not been owned by him), for the subject of his remarks on En-

---

\* Our King James published in Scotland, in 1584, "Ane schort Treatise, containing some reulis and cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie."

glish Versification. He says, “ of the kinds of English verses which differ in number of syllables, there are almost infinite. To avoid therefore tediousness, I will repeat only the different sorts of verses out of the Shepherd’s Calendar, which may well serve to bear authority in this matter.

“ There are in this work twelve or thirteen sundry sorts of verses, which differ either in length, or rhyme, or distinction of the staves.” Having quoted several passages to prove this assertion, he adds, “ I shall avoid the tedious rehearsal of all the kinds which are used; which I think would have been impossible, seeing they may be altered to as many forms as the poets please: neither is there any tune or stroke which may be sung or played on instruments, which hath not some poetical ditties framed according to the numbers thereof.”

But notwithstanding this abundant variety, our author was one of those who fancied that English poetry would be greatly improved by adopting Greek and Latin measures, and composing in hexameter, pentameter, sapphic, and

other ancient forms. It was a project that had already been set on foot by some of high literary reputation; and he endeavoured to advance it by his advice and example. He was aware, indeed, of the objection "that our words are nothing resemblant in nature to theirs, and therefore not possible to be framed with any good grace after their use;" but this he proposed to surmount, by "excepting against the observance of position, and certain other of their rules." Still there remained various difficulties; and it is amusing to hear him relate his distress, when composing in the new fashion, "he found most of our monosyllables to be long," when, to serve his purpose, they should have been short: he wanted "some direction for such words as fall not within the compass of Greek or Latin rules, and thereof he had great miss." He was forced "to omit the best words, and such as would naturally become the speech best," to avoid breaking his Latin rules. Under all these discouragements, however, he translated two of Virgil's Eclogues into English hexame-

ters, and transformed a part of the Shepherd's Calendar into sapphics; and these pieces make a conspicuous portion of his book.

The next was George Gascoigne, an eminent poet of that age; his book was published in 1587, and is to be found among his poems; the volume is become scarce. It is entitled *Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of Verse or Rhyme in English*.

The more remarkable passages in Gascoigne's work are these. He speaks of no other feet, as entering into verse, than those of two syllables; of which, says he, "the first is depressed, or short; the second, elevate, or long." He gives rules for rhyming, and for finding a rhyme. Concerning the admission of polysyllables into verse, he gives this direction—"I warn you that you thrust as few words of many syllables into your verse as may be; and hereunto I might allege many reasons: first, the most ancient English words are of one syllable; so that the more monosyllables you use, the truer English you shall seem, and the less you shall smell of the ink-

horn. Also, words of many syllables do cloy a verse, and make it unpleasant\*." Respecting the cesure, or pause in a verse, he observes that, "in lines of eight syllables it is best in the middle, as

Amid my bale | I bathe in bliss.

In lines of ten syllables, after the fourth, as

I smile sometimes, | Although my grief be great.

• In those of twelve syllables, in the middle; and in those of fourteen, after the eighth, as,

Divorce me now, good death, | From love and lingering  
life;

That one hath been my concubine, | That other was my  
wife †.

• There are two critics of later times who have given their judgment upon the use of polysyllables in English verse; of whom some mention will hereafter be made. Of these, one is directly opposed to Gascoigne, the other agrees with him; and, upon the whole, appears to be right.

† These examples are taken from his own poems.



“ Lines of twelve and fourteen syllables alternate,” says he (i. e. such as the last here quoted), “ is the commonest sort of verse which we use now-a-days.”

But the most celebrated work, hitherto composed on the subject, was a regular treatise, on the Art of English Poesy, published in 1589, but written some time before, by Puttenham. This author was of a different opinion from Webbe in respect to the introduction of Greek and Latin measures into English poetry; and he says, with good judgment, thus—“ Peradventure with us Englishmen it may be somewhat too late to admit a new invention of feet and times that our forefathers never used, nor never observed till this day, either in their measures or their pronunciation: and perchance will seem in us a presumptuous part to attempt; considering also it would be hard to find many men to like of one man’s choice in the limitation of times and quantities of words; with which, not one, but every ear is to be pleased and made a particular judge; it being most truly said, that a multitude or commonalty is hard to please, and easy to

offend." In conclusion, he condemns this sort of versification, as a frivolous and ridiculous novelty. But, although in this particular he manifested his good sense, in some other points he fell in with the whimsical fancies of his time; such as making poems in the shape of altars, pyramids, and the like.

He who shall peruse Puttenham may collect from him some information concerning the state of poetry in his day; and may understand what kind of verse was censured or praised, and what degree of estimation former English poets were then held in, but he must not expect much instruction upon the art itself.

Warton says of this book, *Hist. of Poet.* vol. iii. 10, that it remained long as a rule of criticism.

Another work, however, was published in 1602, with this title, "Observations in the Art of English Poesie, by Thomas Campion. Wherein it is demonstratively proved, and by example confirmed, that the English tongue will receive eight several kinds of numbers proper to itself; which are all in this book set forth, and were

never before this time, by any man, attempted,"

Campion was a physician, and was celebrated by his contemporaries, not only as a poet, but also as a composer of music; and his acquaintance with the latter art appears by some remarkable passages in his book. The eight several kinds of numbers which he mentions are to be understood, not of feet, nor yet altogether of verses taken singly, but, some of them, of combinations of verses and stanzas. He has, indeed, a chapter on "English numbers in general," by which he means the feet admissible into English poetry; and he reduces them to two, as being essential, and giving character and name to two different species of verse: viz. 1. The iambic; and 2. The trochy, of which he gives this strange account, that it "is but an iambic turned over and over."

Having limited his verse to these two kinds, the iambic and the trochaic, he exhibits his eight several numbers as follows:

1. The iambic verse, of which he makes two varieties; example,

Appear the sterner if the day be clear.

This, being composed of iambic feet only, he calls the pure iambic; the other, into which he admits a spondee, or trochy, as,

Hark, how these winds do murmur at thy flight,

he terms the licentiate iambic.

2. His second number he denominates iambic, dimeter, or English march, of which he gives this example :

Raving war begot.

3. Is the trochaic, viz.

Straight he sighs, he raves, his hair he teareth.

4. The elegiac, this he calls a compound number, and to form it takes two lines,

Constant to none, but ever false to me  
Traitor still to love through thy faint desires.

5, 6, 7. These numbers are still more compounded; they are (as he says) "fit for ditties and odes, and may be called lyrical;" in short, they are stanzas containing four or five lines each, which it is here unnecessary to transcribe.

8. The anacreontic is this :

Love can alter  
Time's disgraces.

Campion might have shown, even from his own poetry, that our language can receive other numbers than he has enumerated: but his book contains little that is new or extraordinary, except that the poetical part is all in blank verse, and that he wishes to discard entirely from our poetry what he is pleased to call "the fatness of rhyme:" which brought forth an answer from a writer of a superior order to Campion, both in verse and prose.

This was Samuel Daniel, who wrote a Defence of Rhyme, against a pamphlet entitled, Observations, &c. "wherein is demonstratively proved, that rhyme is the fittest harmony of words that comports with our language." This is, indeed, asserted; but in proofs and demonstration, he falls as short as his antagonist. Of him he says—"this detractor (whose commendable rhymes, albeit now himself an enemy to rhyme, have given heretofore to the world the best notice of his worth) is a man of fair parts, and good reputation, and therefore the reproach forcibly cast from such a hand may

throw down more at once than the labours of many shall in long time build up again. We could well have allowed of his numbers, if he had not disgraced our rhyme, which both custom and nature doth most powerfully defend; custom that is above all law, nature that is above all art. Our rhyme is likewise number and harmony of words, consisting of an agreeing sound in the last syllables of several verses, giving both to the ear an echo of a delightful report, and to the memory a deeper impression of what is delivered therein; for as Greek and Latin verse consists of the number and quantity of syllables, so doth the English verse of measure and accent; and though it doth not strictly observe long and short syllables, yet it most religiously respects the accent; and as the short and the long make number, so the acute and grave accent yield harmony, and harmony is likewise number: so that the English verse then hath number, measure, and harmony, in the best proportion of music. But be the verse never so good, never so full, it seems not to

satisfy nor breed that delight, as when it is met and combined with a like sounding accent; which seems as the jointure, without which it hangs loose, and cannot subsist, but runs wildly on, like a tedious fancy, without a close." Having thus defended the use of rhyme, he proceeds in a similar strain against the rest of *Campion's* book; asserting, "that of all his eight several kinds of new promised numbers, we have only what was our own before;" such as have ever been familiarly used among us; and the like of his other positions. He expresses a wish, however, "that there were not that multiplicity of rhymes as is used by many in sonnets;" he acknowledges, "that to his own ear, those continual cadences of couplets used in long and continued poems are very tiresome and displeasing;" and he confesses that his "adversary had wrought so much upon him, as to think a tragedy would best comport with a blank verse, and dispense with rhyme, saving in the chorus, or where a sentence shall require a couplet." He says too, that he thinks it wrong to mix uncertainly feminine rhymes

with masculine\* ; which, ever since he was warned of that deformity by a kind friend, he had always so avoided, as that there are not above two couplets in that kind in all his poem of the Civil Wars; that he “ held feminine rhymes to be fittest for ditties, and either to be certain, or set by themselves.”

The opinions of Daniel are more particularly noticed here, because his versification is equal to the best of his times.

Another poet, who valued himself upon his skill in numbers, viz. Cowley, may be joined

\* The terms masculine and feminine, as applied to verse, are taken from the French, and signify—the first, rhymes of one syllable—the other, of two, which we now call double rhymes ; and of which this character of King John, from the First Book of his Civil Wars, is an example :

A tyrant loath'd, a homicide convented,  
Poison'd he dies, disgraced, and unlamented.

By rhymes uncertainly mixed, he means introduced irregularly ; not recurring in the stanzas at set distances, which he calls certain.



with these authors ; not indeed for any formal work upon the subject, but for certain notes, made by him upon his own verses. The purport of those notes is to inform his readers that the verses are intended and framed to represent the things described, by their imitative harmony. In his preface he expresses himself thus, respecting the odes which he calls Pindaric : “ The numbers are various and irregular, and sometimes (especially some of the long ones) seem harsh and uncouth, if the just measures and cadences be not observed in the pronunciation. So that almost all their sweetness and numerosity (which is to be found, if I mistake not, in the roughest, if rightly repeated) lies in a manner wholly at the mercy of the reader. I have briefly described the nature of these verses, in the ode, entitled, *The Resurrection* \* ; and though the liberty of them may

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\* The passage in the Ode on the Resurrection, to which he refers, is this :

Stop, stop, my Muse, allay thy vigorous heat,  
Kindled at a hint so great ;

incline a man to believe them easy to be composed, yet the undertaker will find it otherwise,

————— ut sibi quisvis

Speret idem, multum sudet frustra que laboret  
Ausus idem."

In 1679, Samuel Woodford, D.D., published a Paraphrase on the Canticles, and Hymns; and in the preface made certain observations on the structure of English verse; which are mentioned, not so much for any thing remarkable in his criticism, as for his high commendation, at the period, of Milton's Paradise Lost; though he would rather "it had been composed in rhyme."

---

Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,  
Which does to rage begin,  
And this steep hill would gallop up with violent course:  
'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse,  
Fierce and unbroken yet,  
Impatient of the spur or bit:  
Now prances stately, and anon flies o'er the place;  
Disdains the servile law of any settled pace;  
Conscious and proud of his own natural force:  
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,  
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.

About the same time another work came out, comprising some principles of versification, together with an assistance towards making English verse. The title was the English Parnassus, or a Help to English Poesie; containing a collection of all the rhyming monosyllables, the choicest epithets and phrases, with some general forms upon all occasions, subjects, and themes, alphabetically digested; together with a short institution to English Poesie, by way of preface. The author was Joshua Poole, M.A., of Clare Hall, Cambridge; but it was a posthumous publication. The preface is subscribed J. D.; it contains no matter worthy of particular notice; and for the book itself, it is sufficiently detailed by the title.

This work appears to have been the foundation of another, built on the same plan, but considerably enlarged. The author was Edward Bysshe; who, in 1702, published an Art of English Poetry. The part relating to prosody is contained in three chapters, under these heads: "1. Of the structure of English verses.—2. Of rhyme.—3. Of the several sorts of poems

and compositions in verse." His manner of treating these topics is plain, but neither methodical nor comprehensive; it presents, however, some useful information, and though perhaps no versifier of the present day may seek from this author "Rules for making English Verse" (for so he entitles this portion of his volume), it continued for above half a century to be a popular book. It also provided a farther help to verse-makers, by a plentiful magazine, or Dictionary of Rhymes. But the bulk of his performance was made up of a "Collection of the most natural, agreeable, and noble Thoughts, &c. that are to be found in the best English poets." Now, if the execution of this part be compared with the promise of its title, he will be found to deserve little commendation. The number of poets, from whom he professes to have formed his selection, are forty-three. Of these, more than a third part are either men of no name, as Stonestreet, Stafford, Harvey; or of no distinguished reputation in poetry, as Walsh, Tate, Stepney, Dennis, and others. Then the selection is made so unequally, that

three of his number, viz. Cowley, Butler's *Hudibras*, and Dryden, have furnished him with at least three-fifths of the whole. In fact, he had very little knowledge of our poets, even of those who lived and wrote but fourscore years before himself; as will appear from this statement—Ellis, in his *Specimens of the Early English Poets*, has given extracts from upwards of forty authors in the reigns of Charles the First and Second, not one of whom is mentioned in Bysse's catalogue. Here is another proof of the same: he affirms that “we have no entire works composed in verses of twelve syllables;” he must therefore have been unacquainted with Drayton.

Not long after Glover's *Leonidas* appeared, Dr. Pemberton, a great friend of the author, published *Observations on Poetry*, especially epic, occasioned by the late poem on *Leonidas*, 1738. The versification of that poem is very regular: and the design of the observations, in part, is to justify and extol that regularity; which, in an instance or two, is done without foundation. The sixth section of the *Observa-*

tions is upon the principles of verse;...and here his singular notions, and the severe rules he would establish, might startle and discourage a young poet. He disallows all licence, all irregularity. He asserts that no irregular composition of feet is by any means necessary towards that variety which is required in the longest work. With the same rigour he pronounces upon the last syllables of verses: and commends Glover for closing his lines with a firm and stable syllable, which, he says, is necessary to support the dignity of the verse; and which Milton now and then neglected. The lines he means are, in Glover, such as these:

Reharse, O Muse, the deeds and glorious death  
Of that fam'd Spartan, who withstood the power.

*Leon. b. 1.*

And of the contrary sort, in Milton, such as this:

Here swallow'd up in endless misery.

*Paradise Lost, b. 1.*

A close of the line, which, had he thought it negligent, or wanting dignity, he would not

have admitted so frequently, much less three lines together, as in this instance :

And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Morocco, or Trebisond.

*Paradise Lost*, b. 1.

The foregoing censure on Milton may warrant the mention here (though not exactly in chronological order) of Tyrwhitt's Essay on the Versification of Chaucer, which contains much learned research into the nature and origin of our poetical measures; but which, in regard to the structure of our verse, advances some positions that are very questionable, to say the least of them; as in this passage: "on the tenth (or rhyming) syllable, a strong accent is in all cases indispensably required; and in order to make the line tolerably harmonious, it seems necessary that at least two more of the even syllables should be accented, the fourth being (almost always) one of them. Milton, however, has not subjected his verse even to these rules; and particularly, either by negligence or design, he has frequently put an unaccented syllable in the

fourth place. See *Paradise Lost*, book iii. 36, 586; book v. 413, 750, 874." *Essay*, p. 62.

To make this statement respecting Milton is to show very little attention to his manner of versification; and to put it as a doubt whether he did not, through negligence, set an unaccented syllable in the fourth place of his line, is to doubt whether he was not grossly negligent in that point throughout all his poem; since he has done so no less than three times within the first seven lines:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing heavenly muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, &c.

Again, to affirm that "a strong accent is in all cases indispensably required on the rhyming syllable," is to condemn the practice of our most correct and approved authors. Pope, without scruple, admitted an unaccented syl-



lable to rhyme: for instance, in his Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady,—

Useless, unseen, as lamps in sepulchres.

Eloisa to Abelard,—

And swell the pomp of dreadful sacrifice.

Essay on Satire,—

That guilt is doom'd to sink in infamy.

So that should we submit to Tyrwhitt's authority, we must renounce some of the most established and allowed licenses (if they are so to be called) in English versification.

Foster, in his celebrated Essay on Accent and Quantity, wrote two chapters on English prosody; and the mention of them is introduced here, not for any material information which they will afford to the reader, but rather to caution him against trusting to what is there said upon the subject.

The Treatise on Painting and Poetry, by

Webbe, deserves notice, as well for some judicious remarks on our poetical measures, as for directing the public attention to Shakspeare's skill and excellence in them.

Another work upon the subject under consideration is, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Harmony in Language, and of the Mechanism of Verse*; published in 1804. As the author is yet living, it may not be proper to enlarge upon its character now; this however must be acknowledged, that he has laboured with more diligence and success than any of those who have been hitherto named; and for whatever else it may be needful to say of his book, there will not want occasion in the course of the present undertaking.

There still remain a few, whom it will be sufficient to specify by their names and the titles of their books. These are,—

Tucker (under the name of Edward Search) on *Vocal Sounds*, 1773,—Steele's *Prosodia Rationalis*, 1779,—Odell's *Essay on the Elements, Accents, and Prosody of the English Lan-*

guage, 1805. . From each of whom something may be gleaned to elucidate our national prosody.

But the same subject has employed the pens of certain writers in the northern part of our island, who are by no means to be omitted; for they are all men of high rank, and (with one exception) would form a catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors. They are,—King James the Sixth of Scotland; the lords of session, Kames and Monboddo; Doctor Beattie; and Lord Glenbervie: not that they challenge our notice by their rank, but by the merit of their writings. The first, by his *Reulis and Cautelis* to be observit and eschewit in *Scottis Poesie* (see p. 8); the second, by his *Elements of Criticism*; the third, by his volumes on the *Origin and Progress of Language*; Doctor Beattie by his *Essays*; and very lately, Lord Glenbervie, by the *Notes* on his spirited translation of the *Poem of Ricciardetto*.

In this catalogue are enumerated all, or nearly all, the principal authors who have published any criticism upon the subject of our

versification ; or to speak more precisely, upon the mechanism of English verse. To a few of these there may be occasion to recur, sometimes for the sanction of their authority, and sometimes to specify the points upon which a difference of opinion is entertained.

From the dates here given, it will be seen how much later than poetry criticism appeared among us : and the perusal of these authors will convince us that the art, though now considerably advanced, is yet far from being settled upon rules which all admit. But indeed it has always been found a difficult matter to lay down satisfactory rules for poetical, and still more for oratorical numbers. And here it may be allowable to adduce the authority of Cicero. The passage is in his treatise entitled *Orator*, and applicable to the present subject. He is speaking of the early Roman Orators, who had no skill in rounding their periods, or giving any pleasing cadence to their sentences, and he says, "*Quoniam igitur habemus aptæ orationis,*" &c. (*Or.* ch. 53.) The substance of which is this :—That it was surprising the an-

cient orators were inattentive to this art, (viz. of numerous composition,) especially as they often uttered a well-turned period by chance, and then could not but observe, from the effect which it had upon their hearers, that it was pleasing: so that at least they should have marked what it was that pleased, that they might repeat or copy it. For the ear (or rather the mind by means of the ear) is a good judge of all articulate sounds. Thus it distinguishes between long and short, and always expects that which is measured and perfect. It perceives some (periods) to be maimed and curtailed, by which it is often offended, as if it were defrauded of something that was its due. It perceives others to be immoderately long, which it dislikes still more; for, in this case, as in most others, the defect is less offensive than the excess. Therefore, as the gratification of the ear, and the observation of attentive men, discovered and settled what should be verse; so in prose, the same natural feeling discovered (though much later) that there are certain measures and cadences more agreeable than

others. The ear distinguishes this; and it is unfair not to acknowledge what you perceive, because you cannot tell why it is so. For neither was verse made out by reasoning, but was what pleased the sense; afterwards reason examined, and taught us the cause of it: and thus, observation upon that which was naturally pleasing produced art.

The art which Cicero here describes is indeed but a subordinate part of poetry and oratory; it is nevertheless such as cannot be neglected without injury to the highest branches of these arts; for as the poet has said,—

*Gratior est pulchro veniens in corpore virtus:*

so if our poetry and oratory shall be (as it were) embodied in fair and comely words and sentences, they will appear the more graceful: but, on the contrary, if our language and measures are rough and ill-formed, they will debase the best qualities of the composition.

## CHAPTER I.

IN contemplating the wide extended field of English versification, the poet may perceive a multitude of objects for his attention, but not a single spot for experiment. What remains at the present day to be done, in this respect, is to make observations on the experiments of former poets; these they have exhibited in sufficient number.

For instance, it was an experiment long ago made, to form our verses upon a principle of alliteration, without rhyme, or stated measures, like these lines in the Vision of Piers Plowman :

In a Summer Season when hot was the Sun,  
I Shope me into Shrubs as I a Sheep were ;  
In Habit as a Hermit unHoly of works.

This experiment was afterwards renewed with

a variation, which was to put the lines in rhyme as thus,

In December, when the Days Draw to be short,  
And November, when the Nights wax Noisome and long,  
As I Past by a Place Privily at a Port,  
I Saw one Sit by himself making a Song.

*Percy's Relicks of Ancient Poetry, V. 2. B. 2, 3.*

The structure of verse upon this principle of alliteration is not originally English: neither is the manner of using alliteration the same with that which is so called in modern poetry: not such as Churchill condemns and exemplifies, *by apt alliteration's artful aid*, as will be shown hereafter.

It was another celebrated experiment, to frame our modern verse according to the ancient Greek and Latin measures; so that we had English hexameters and pentameters, together with alcaic and sapphic odes. In this experiment were concerned some of high name in literature; Sir Philip Sidney, Spenser, and his friend Gabriel Harvey, were among them; but it did not succeed, and was soon dropt: nor is there any reason to think that it will ever obtain a footing



among us, though it has been revived in our age by more than one writer.

Again, other experiments were made in an early period, as to the length of lines which English poetry would bear, and poems were written in verses of fourteen syllables each. This species of verse still exists in our poetry under a different form. Other entire poems were composed in twelve-syllable verses; a practice which never extended far; yet the line of twelve syllables (the alexandrine) is still used singly with good effect, and often with great beauty. Spenser wrote one of his Eclogues (the second) in lines of nine syllables, after this measure :

Ah, for pity! will rank winter's rage  
These bitter blasts never 'gin t' asswage?

which Webbe (*Discourse of Poetry*, p. 58) calls "a rough and clownish manner of verse." It does not appear to have been ever adopted, except by some few writers when they were to put words to music.

More promising and more successful were some of those experiments which have been made

to combine our English verses in different ways: from whence arises that boundless variety of stanzas, regular and irregular, which constitute the heterogeneous body of our lyric poetry, odes, madrigals, sonnets, &c.

But the most successful experiment was that which set our principal species of verse, viz. the heroic of ten syllables, free from rhyme. This has been followed by similar attempts on other kinds of verse, but not with a similar result; except in the heroic verse, rhyme is most agreeable to the national taste.

Many likewise are the experiments which our poets have made in the matter of rhymes; in the composition of rhymes themselves, as well as in their arrangement. They tried the effect of identical rhymes, which are allowed in French and Italian poetry, and were formerly admitted into ours. They changed the true pronunciation of a syllable, and warped it from its proper sound, to make a rhyme. They made polysyllables rhyme to each other, as, charity, misery, disfigured, established, &c. In the arrangement of their rhymes, they sometimes set them close

together, and sometimes at the distance of many lines asunder. Sometimes they accumulated three lines, or more, together, having the same rhyme, and sometimes they distributed the same rhyme through the greatest part of a long stanza.

In the whole compass, therefore, of English versification, there does not appear to be any room left for discovery. Former poets have explored every source of novelty, and have diversified our language by every contrivance which inventive genius could suggest. The result of their experiments is for the poet of the present day. All their store lies before him, where he may choose and reject according to his judgment; and his only care, in this part of his work, will be to polish and improve what he may think fit to adopt.

As the province of criticism is humbler than that of poetry, so likewise the critic descends to minuter objects of inquiry than are usually deemed necessary for the poet to regard. For the poet it may be thought sufficient to know, that certain modes of versification are agreeable

to the taste, and others disgusting; that such and such rhymes and measures are approved of, and such again not allowed; but it is the business of the critic to examine more nearly, and unfold the causes why these things are some of them pleasing and others not. For this purpose he must analyze his subject, and observe the smallest parts which enter into the composition of a verse. This is a labour which though the writer of verses may be unwilling to engage in himself, yet he may not be averse to attend to the investigation, when it is made by another for his service; because he may by those means acquire some information, which will be useful to him in the pursuit of his art, and which will neither be difficult to comprehend, nor burdensome to remember.

#### SECTION I,

##### *Of the Elementary Parts of Verse.*

The simplest elements of verse are letters—of letters are formed syllables—of syllables feet—of feet a verse.

As verses are made for pronunciation, their effect on the ear is not to be neglected : and to produce a good effect, the smallest parts which enter into their composition must be considered, viz. the letters ; as whether they be rough or smooth to the sense, and of easy or difficult combination for the utterance. And here we come to a part of the subject, to which our English alphabet bears so close a relation, that some of its defects and strange anomalies require to be noticed.

The account given of the first letter is, that it has three distinct sounds, which are heard in Hal (a nickname), Hale (healthy), and Hall (a large room \*).

Now, a certain and determinate vowel-sound is formed by the organs of speech, when in a determinate position ; and a change of that position changes the vowel as well as the sound ;

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\* In this point the Latin written alphabet was more defective than our own, if we give credit to Priscian ; for he says, in his first book, that every Latin vowel character had many different sounds.

there being no difference between one vowel and another, but what is made by such a change. To pronounce the letter *a* in the different words given above, three different positions of the organs of speech are necessary; and therefore, though it is written by the same character and called by the same name, it is in reality three different vowels.

But vowel sounds admit of a difference, without changing the vowel, in respect of what is termed quantity; that is, the time taken up in their pronunciation; and as this time may be more or less, they are all, except one, divisible into long and short, after the manner which will presently be shown.

And in this another great defect of our alphabet will appear. The difference of quantity in our vowels is not marked, in writing, uniformly, nor by any rule or set of rules; it is entirely irregular.

The difference between our short and long vowels may be heard in the pronunciation of these words.

	<i>Short.</i>	<i>Long.</i>
1st. a	{ sam	psalm
2d. a	{ holly	hall
	e	pen pane
	i	sin seen
	o	jo- cose
1st. u	{ full	fool
2d. u	{ cub	no long sound.

And here it may be seen, that the long vowel is represented by a different character from the short one, for the most part: so the long vowel of *e* is *a*, pane: of *i*, *ee*, seen; of *u*, *oo*, fool; and that the short vowel of *a*, in hall, is *o*, as in holly, oracle, &c.

Other anomalies of the alphabet are not less remarkable: such are these among the consonants. 1. A single written character stands for more than one elementary sound, as *j*, in judge,

\* It is not easy to give an evident instance of the short *o*, without having the same letter long in the same word, as, notorious. "The short sound of this vowel (says Mitford, *Harmony in Language*, p. 28, 2d ed.) never occurs in a syllable strongly offered to the ear."

&c. 2. A single elementary sound is represented by a double character, as in the words sing, shall, this; where *ng*, *sh*, and *th*, stand each for simple sounds. There are consonants, again, and among them *s* and *th*, which do not always stand for the same sound; for example, hiss, his; thin, thine.

These observations are introduced to remind the writer of verse, that the rules of English prosody and rhyme are not applicable to the language as it appears in writing, but as it is heard in pronunciation. Our language, so considered, is not inferior to the best. Its elementary sounds, both in variety and number, are adequate to all our occasions.

The consonants, according to some grammarians, are nineteen; according to others, twenty-one. To the vowels already mentioned are to be added five diphthongs, as uttered in these words, vine, tune, aye \*, joy, cow. And

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\* Grammarians have remarked, that the diphthong *ai* is not used except only in the word aye. The reason is, that our tongue has been much corrupted by polite and



beside these, that great variety of vowel sounds produced by the elements *w* or *y*, when prefixed to a vowel or a diphthong, as *ell*, *yell*; *ire*, *wire*; *all*, *wall*, *yawl*; which are computed to be nineteen at least\*.

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courtly speakers, who have debased the original and true pronunciation of many terms, which were too broad, or too clownish, in their opinion. The words, *maintain*, *road*, and *door*, (from the Greek *θυρα*), are examples of this sort. A similar corruption has happened in other languages, as the French *l'eau* (water) is pronounced by the provincials as two syllables, *l'e-au*; for which they are ridiculed by the polite, who pronounce it like our vowel *o*.

\* The comparison between the English tongue and others, in the note subjoined, will, perhaps, entertain the reader. It is taken from Steele's *Prosodia Rationalis*, p. 168; but the information would have been more satisfactory, if some authority for the assertions had been given. "In English the proportion of monosyllables to polysyllables is more than as five to two: in French, something less than as three to two; but in Italian, which, having more vowels, has less occasion for monosyllables, their proportion to polysyllables is not quite three to four, or one and a half to two." The superior melody of one language over another will be nearly in

All these elements have their distinguishing qualities, of smooth, rough, soft, strong, close, open, clear, obscure, and others; by which they give a corresponding character to the sound of a verse. There is also, in many cases, a great agreement between them and the thing signified; as is shown by Dr. Wallis, in his Grammar, at much length: though indeed he has extended his principle too far, and some of his examples are merely fanciful\*.

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proportion as one exceeds the other in the number of (vowels or) vocal sounds. The number of vocal and consonantal sounds in Italian are nearly equal, or fifty-four consonants to fifty-three vowels; in Latin, five consonants to four vowels; in French, supposing the orthography not as written, but as sounded in pronunciation, the consonantal to the vocal sounds are as four to three; and in English, in the like manner, the proportions are three to two. Therefore, in this view, the French has an advantage over the English in the proportion of nine to eight; but this is overbalanced by the English advantage in its monosyllables, which it has more than the French, in the proportion of five to three, or ten to six."

\* See extracts from Wallis in Dr. Johnson's Grammar. See also Sheridan, Art of Reading, p. 76, 77.

No single element, in a man's native tongue, is of difficult pronunciation to him whose organs of speech are naturally perfect: in a foreign language there may be such, as the Welsh gutturals, and the French *u*, to an Englishman. But there are various combinations, either difficult to utter, or unpleasant to hear \*; and others again of an opposite character; with all of which it is useful for every writer to be acquainted: and therefore, some of the ancients, Dionysius of Halicarnassus in particular, have entered into this subject very minutely, as will be shown when we treat of syllables in the next section.

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\* The maker of verse, who has command of his language, will not feel himself much cramped by these combinations; some few there may be which are unmanageable: such is that made by the second person singular of the past tense, in verbs ending with a double consonant: as touch, touchedst. This was the incompressible throng of consonants which Pope once found in his way, and which he could no better avoid than by trespassing with unwarrantable license upon grammar,—

————— O thou my voice inspire,  
Who touch'd Isaiah's, &c.—*Pope's Messiah.*

Let it not be thought degrading to any composer of English verse to attend to the power and effect of these elementary sounds, since Bacon has recommended an inquiry into the nature of language, for purposes of the same kind; nor accounted it beneath him to record in his works, that we cannot pronounce the letter *t* after *m*, without inserting *p*, as a circumstance worthy of notice. Ex. empty, Hampton\*.

## SECTION II.

*Of Syllables.*

By a syllable, is usually meant as much of a word as is uttered by the help of one vowel, or one articulation; and in this sense it is employed throughout the present work.

Syllables, in respect to roughness, smooth-

\* A similar case of insertion is remarked by Tucker on *Vocal Sounds*, p. 17, viz. the short *u* between some of the vowels (and particularly the diphthong *i*) and *r*, as fire, dire, pronounced fiur, diur.

ness, and the like, have the same qualities as the letters that compose them, of which an account was given in the last section; there are likewise other qualities of syllables to be regarded; which are, tone, accent, and quantity.

By tone (to speak of it in this place) is meant the sound of a syllable, considered as high or low; not as long or short, for that belongs to quantity. It is not the same with accent, but wholly distinct from it: nor is a high tone always joined with the accented syllable: in Scottish pronunciation it is just the contrary. In English speech also, the last syllable of a question, though unaccented, will have the higher tone: for example, "He is going to London.—To London?—Aye, to-morrow.—To-morrow?" In each of these questions the English custom of speaking will admit the last syllable to be raised above the preceding accented one, as much as the difference of the fourth from the key-note in the scale of music. But it is unnecessary to pursue this topic farther: for tone is no constituent part of a verse.

By accent, is to be understood the force of the voice used in uttering a syllable; not a higher or lower sound (the acute and grave of the Greeks and Romans). "It is more usual with us (says Mitford) to speak of syllables merely as accented, or unaccented; that is, as being marked by a peculiar stress of the voice, or not being so marked." *Harmony of Language*, p. 30, 1st edition. This is a just and accurate account\*.

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\* The reader may like to know what other authors say of the accent.

"The English accent is a difference between loud and soft."—*Monboddo's Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. ii. p. 299.

"By accent, is meant a certain stress of the voice upon a particular letter of a syllable, which distinguishes it from the rest, and at the same time distinguishes the syllable itself to which it belongs, from the others which compose the word."—*Sheridan's Art of Reading*, p. 104.

But Dr. Johnson considers accent and quantity to be all one; for he says (treating of English prosody), "Pronunciation is just, when every letter has its proper sound, and when every syllable has its proper accent, or, which

The accent may be placed on short or long syllables indifferently; for instance, on the short, as, *begin*, *teller*: on the long, as, *between*, *tailor*.

Sometimes it is used on the short syllable, and the long syllable is left unaccented, as *désert*, *discúss*.

With accent, as it has been here described, emphasis has a near connexion. Emphasis has been defined thus: "a certain grandeur, whereby some letter, syllable, word, or sentence, is rendered more remarkable than the rest, by a more vigorous pronunciation, and a longer stay upon it." (Holder's *Elements of Speech*).

From this account it appears, that what emphasis imparts to any syllable is either accent or quantity, but has no concern with prosody, or the structure of a verse, otherwise than as possessing those qualities.

By the term quantity, when applied to syllables, is signified the time requisite to pronounce

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in English versification is the same, its proper quantity.—*Grammar of the English Tongue.*

them; as was said before of the vowels: which time being more or less, from that circumstance syllables are denominated long or short. This division into two classes has been deemed sufficient for all the purposes of prosody; though it is certain, that in neither class are the syllables all equal among themselves, as will appear when we have stated what is allowed to constitute a short or a long syllable.

1st. A short vowel when alone, or when no consonant follows it, is taken for a short syllable, as the articles, a, the.

2d. A short vowel, when followed by a single consonant, is a short syllable, as, man, pen: or by the same consonant doubled, as, manner, penny.

3. A short vowel, in some cases, when followed by two consonants, makes a short syllable, as, decline, reprove, at last. For this we have the example of the ancients both in Greek and Latin, who permitted a short vowel to stand for a short syllable, though followed by two consonants, if the first was a mute, and the second a liquid. The cause is founded in nature; and



therefore holds with us : it is, that such a combination of consonants is more readily pronounced than others are.

A syllable is long, 1st. When it contains a long vowel, or a diphthong, as, see, go, loud, joy.

2d. When it consists of a short vowel followed by two different consonants, if they be not a mute and a liquid ; as, into, number. Such a syllable is called long by position.

The ancients, by whose authority we are guided in this arrangement of syllables, allowed a short vowel, before a mute and liquid, to make the syllable either short or long : in that point therefore they fixed the boundary between them. The reason why such a syllable might be accounted short, was because the mute and liquid could be pronounced more readily than two other consonants in their place. It follows then that the same vowel before two other consonants would make a syllable requiring more time in the utterance ; which, of course, must be ranked together with the long. When it is recollected, that every letter is formed by a particular position of the organs of speech, and each different

letter by a different position, it is certain that some time is employed in passing from one to another\*.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus has shown this at more length, in his Treatise on Composition, (i. e. on the choice and order of words in a sentence). He has taken some lines from Pindar, for examples of a harsh composition, produced by the meeting of certain consonants; as *n* before *p*, *th*, *l*, and others, where he observes that these letters, being sounded by different organs of speech, and in different parts of the mouth, there must be such a change in passing from the first to the second, as necessarily occupies some portion of time, greater than other combinations require †.

The same author, Dionysius ‡, as well as Quintilian, has thought proper to note, that

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\* On the quantity of syllables Mitford has written at length, and very satisfactorily, in his Inquiry into Principles of Harmony in Language, sect. 3, second edition.

† See Dion. Hal. sect. 22.

‡ Ibid. sect. 15.

neither the long nor the short syllables have all the same proportions between themselves; but that some long are longer, and some short are shorter, than others. This may seem to be an unnecessary piece of information; for having been taught what makes a long syllable, for instance, a diphthong, as in the word *by*, we know that the syllable *bind* is longer, because of the time taken to utter the two consonants that follow the diphthong. So in this passage of Virgil,

———*exire locosque*

*Explorare novos.*—*Æn.* 1.

The first syllable in *explorare* is longer than the first in *exire*, by as many consonants as would of themselves suffice to make a syllable long. Of so obvious a conclusion as this the ancients could not have been ignorant; yet, when their prosody made but one general distinction, it might be fit to remind them that there were subordinate differences of syllables, by which they might give considerable effect to the flow of a period, or the structure of a verse.

Syllables, then, have a fourfold difference : some are long, either accented, as, *holy*, or unaccented, as, *consent* ; others are short, either accented, as, *refer*, or unaccented, as, *habit*.

There are some who will think these observations on quantity might have been spared, because they maintain that quantity has no concern whatever with English versification, but that it depends entirely upon accent. I trust that such an opinion will be sufficiently disproved in the following pages ; where it will be shown that quantity cannot be altogether neglected without manifest and great injury to the verse. But if the question be put, whether verse cannot be composed without any regard to the quantity of syllables, so that the accents be set in their due places ; it is to be acknowledged that it may. Still the verse would have juster measure, would sound better to the ear, and be much nearer to perfect, if the accented syllables were long, and others short ; so that the quantity and accent should coincide. Take an example :

The busy world and what you see,  
It is a silly vanity.

Of this couplet the first line has its accents regular in place and number, together with three long syllables. The second line is accented regularly as to place, but it contains only two accented syllables, and not one long. It cannot be denied that these verses are in true and exact measure; and, if accent alone be requisite, they are in nothing defective. But now, let them be altered, so as to observe quantity as well as accent, in this manner.

The gaudy world, whate'er you see,  
Is all an empty show to me.

It does not require a nice ear to perceive the difference of these lines from the former, nor any great skill to form a right judgment between them, in respect of their structure, which is the only point, at this time, under consideration.

Regard to quantity is not indeed essential to English verse; neither is symmetry or proportion essential to a dwelling-house: but to a

good dwelling-house they are essential, and so is regard to quantity to good English verse.

This, however, was a matter to which Pope, at least, in his early life, appears to have been insensible, or inattentive, if the following anecdote be true. The second line of his first pastoral stood originally thus:—

Nor blush to sport on Windsor's *peaceful* plains.

He would have altered it to *happy*; but Walsh objected to that correction, saying the quantity would not then be the same; for the first syllable of *happy* was short: Pope therefore put *blissful*\*.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Feet employed in English Verse.*

Syllables being classed into accented and unaccented, as well as into long and short, a certain number of them, put together, make

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\* Boswell on Shakspeare's Metre, p. 560, note.

that combination which is denominated a foot. I have taken the names of our poetical feet from the ancients; which has not escaped the severe animadversion of some critics. And indeed, to call the number of syllables, which compose English verse, by the names of feet, and to apply to them the denominations of Iambic, Spondee, Dactyle, and the like, would deserve much censure, if they were used to signify the same things precisely which they stand for in Greek and Latin poetry; because that would tend to confuse and mislead a reader. But as the sense in which these terms are used here will first be defined, they may as well be taken for the purpose as any other unauthorised terms whatever. In the prosody of the ancients we have feet of four and five syllables each: such feet have never been adopted by us; nor was there any occasion for it, because every foot of four syllables or more is divisible into shorter. We have in use those only of two and three syllables, nor yet all the varieties of them.

## SECTION IV.

*Of Feet of two Syllables.*

These are four in number, distinguished by the names of Iambic, Trochee, Spondee, and Pyrrhic. In the learned languages, these and the other names of feet denote the quantity, in English the accent of their syllables. By the

Iambic,	} is meant a foot having	{	one accented syllable, viz. the last, as, begin, aloft.
Trochee,			one accented syllable, viz. the first, as, pious, lofty.
Spondee,			two accented syllables, as . . . . máintáin; hárk, hárk.
Pyrrhic,			no accented syllable, as . . . . . [va]nity, (ca)gerly*

## SECTION V.

*Of Feet of three Syllables.*

There are eight varieties of these feet; but they need not all be enumerated; since only

\* An example of the Pyrrhic foot cannot be given in a word of two syllables; because every such word has one syllable accented. It does not often happen that a disyllable is pronounced as a Spondee; i. e. with two accents, as it may properly be in this instance, máintain.



two of them (or at most three) are considered as belonging to our prosody, or forming any part of an English verse. Those used by our poets are,

1. The Dactyle. } which has an { first syllable only, as, handily, réverence,  
 2. The Anapest. } accent on the { last syllable only, as, magazine, to demand.

The anapest is a foot not often made by a single word, except those derived from the French, as, *debonáir*, *dishabille*.

To these feet may be added, another of three syllables, called the *Amphibrachys*, which is accented on the middle syllable only, as, *de-lighted*. We might have omitted all mention of this foot, but for the mistake of certain critics, who, finding such a foot at the end of a verse, asserted that the same kind of foot properly constituted the whole verse, and was the legitimate measure by which it was to be scanned.

The following line from Swift's Poems is an example of the measure in question :

Because he has never a hand that is idle.

Here, it is true, the three last syllables make the foot termed *Amphibrachys*, and the whole

line may be divided into such feet. It is nevertheless certain, that the line belongs to verses of another class, and is measurable by anapests, only taking such a license as is always allowed to anapestic verses, viz. that the first foot may be curtailed of its first syllable. The next line in the poem, to describe it accurately, is an anapestic verse of four feet, with a redundant syllable :

For the right holds the sword, and the left holds the  
bridle.

So likewise is the former, notwithstanding the difference in the first foot. If the Amphibrachys had been a foot by which any English verse ought to be measured, there would have been entire poems in that measure, or, at least, poems wherein verses of that measure predominated; but there are none such, nor does a line, measurable by that foot, ever occur, except accidentally among a much greater number of anapestic ones.

Dismissing, therefore, this foot, the Amphibrachys, as intrusive and useless, we have in our prosody these six; the Iambic, the Trochee, the

Spondee, the Pyrrhic, the Dactyle, and the Anapest. But as no verse, nor even language, can wholly consist of syllables, which are all accented, or which have not any, the Spondee, and the Pyrrhic, are to be reckoned as feet, that occasionally, and by license, enter into verse; and not, like the remaining four, as being essentially necessary, and giving a character to the lines which they respectively constitute.

## CHAPTER II.

### OF THE KINDS OF ENGLISH VERSE.

OUR verses are of four kinds, which have their respective names from the feet of which they are composed, viz. iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic. Each kind is divisible into subordinate species, according to the number of feet contained in it; the line of two feet, for instance, not being properly of the same species with that of three or four.

#### SECTION I.

##### *Of the Iambic Verse.*

An iambic verse may consist of one foot only, or of any greater number to six, and even to seven; of course it comprises as many species.

The first is never employed alone, and is seldom, if ever, to be found, at all in any modern poetry of note, except in the Transactions of the Irish Society, vol. i. for 1786, in these lines of an Ode to the Moon :

Smote by thy sacred eyes,  
He feels an icy dart  
Transfix his coward heart,  
And dies.

Donne, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, who admitted great variety of measures into his poems, has used this : for example,

As men do when the summer sun  
Grows great,  
Though I admire their greatness, shun  
Their heat.

*Poems, vol. v. p. 141. Chalmers's edit.*

Iambic lines of two, three, four, and five feet, are too well known and common to need showing by examples.

The sixth species of iambic verse, or that of six feet, is usually called the alexandrine. Like that of one foot, it is unemployed now, except

along with others of a shorter measure. Yet, in a former age, Drayton composed a long poem, his *Polyolbion*; entirely in lines of this length. Such also was that of Spenser, on the death of Sir Philip Sidney, entitled "The Mourning Muse of Thestylis;" which Milton appears to have had in view when he wrote his *Lycidas*.

The iambic of seven feet is that which is now divided into two lines. Originally it was but one: as in this example from Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* :

The princely palace of the Sun stood gorgeous to behold,  
On stately pillars builded high of yellow burnish'd gold.

A line of so great length could not well be recited without a pause; which was found to be most agreeable to the ear, if made after the eighth syllable: the line, therefore, became two, of four and three feet; and each of them had frequently a rhyme, after this manner :

Trust not in worldly princes then,  
    Though they abound in wealth;  
Nor in the sons of mortal men,  
    In whom there is no health.



## SECTION II.

*Of the Trochaic Verse.*

The shortest line which this measure will admit of, is that of three syllables; such is this in Pope's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,

Hollow groans,  
Sullen moans.

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a species of iambic verse of eight feet, "The longest verse which I have seen used in English consisteth of sixteen syllables, each two verses rhyming together; thus,

'Where virtue wants and vice abounds, there wealth is  
but a baited hook,  
To make men swallow down their bane, before on danger  
deep they look.'"

This species, therefore, did once exist, in form and show, as a single verse; but, in fact, it was two; "for," says he, "it is commonly divided each verse into two, whereof each shall contain eight syllables, and rhyme cross-wise, the first to the third, and the second to the fourth."



Trochaic lines of four, five, and six syllables were not uncommon among our earlier poets; now they are very seldom in use. Those of seven and eight syllables are frequent: of the first sort is this of Gray;

Ruin seize thee, ruthless king.

Of the eight syllable, or four feet complete, this is an example :

Hence away, thou Siren, leave me.

This last is seldom, if ever, employed alone; sometimes, but not often, it is the concluding line of a stanza; thus,

Sweet, I do not pardon crave,  
Till I have  
By deserts this fault amended;  
This, I only this desire,  
That your ire  
May with penance be suspended\*.

But most commonly it was followed by the

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\* Davison's Strephon's Palinode; Ellis's Specimens of English Poetry, vol. iii. p. 14.

line of seven syllables, and these two, taken so together, make precisely that verse which the Greeks called trochaicum tetrametrum catalecticum, i. e. the trochaic verse of eight feet curtailed; and of which the following lines, inserted in more than one of their tragedies, are an example:

Ω πατρας Θηβης εν οικοι, λευσσετ', Οιδιπυς ἰδε,  
 'Ος τα κλειν' ἀινιγματ' ἔδει' και κρατισος ην ανηρ\*.

If we translate these two lines, preserving the same measure, they will form the ordinary stanza of four English trochaics.

O ye Thebans, here behold him;  
 This is Œdipus you see:  
 He that solved the dire enigma,  
 Wise, and great, and good was he.

Of the line of seven syllables it has been said, that it is a truncated verse, and differs in nothing from the four foot iambic, but in wanting the first syllable. That it is a truncated verse, is

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\* Sophocl. Œdip. Tyran. ad finem.

true; but what is cut off, or wanting, is not at the beginning, but the end. Besides this, it differs surely from the iambic, in estimation and character. It has always been estimated and called a trochaic line; and it is more sprightly in character and sound: in short, there is as much difference between the verses, as between the trochee and iambic, the feet of which they are composed. In certain poems, where the leading measure is the iambic of four feet, our poets have frequently intermixed the seven syllable trochaic, as Milton in his *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, and others, more especially since his time: but in lyric poems, where, by the settled laws of composition, the same measures are to be repeated in every corresponding stanza, there they respect the difference between these lines, and have not used them indiscriminately. Of this Gray, in his *Pindaric odes* \*, is an instance; so are our earlier authors, as Donne; and of the same age, W. Browne, a delightful poet, and

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\* In those odes there is a single exception to the rule; but it is observed above forty times.

excellent versifier. We have likewise many entire poems in the trochaic verse of seven syllables, without any mixture of iambic lines, which is another proof, showing that the authors considered them to be of distinct kinds. The *Boadicea* of Cowper is an example. That poet, whose judgment on versification is unexceptionable, composed various pieces in both the measures just mentioned; but throughout the whole he studiously kept them separate.

## SECTION III.

*Of the Anapestic Verse.*

This is a kind more usually employed upon subjects of a light cast; yet it is not unfit for graver, in some of its measures; which may be either of two feet, as,

See the furies arise—*Dryden*;

or three, as,

They have nothing to do but to stray,  
I have nothing to do but to weep—

*Shenstone*;

or four, as,

At the close of the day, when the hamlet is still.

*Beattie.*

The nature of our language is not favourable to this kind of verse; which, to be perfect, should have, in each foot, two syllables, both unaccented and short, to one syllable accented. The English does not afford short syllables in that proportion. There being then great difficulty to compose in it, agreeably to legitimate measure, it is not surprising that the attempt has often proved unsuccessful. But a more complete failure can hardly be produced than in these two lines of Pope's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day :

Though Fáte | had fást boúnd | her  
With Sty'x | níne tímes róund | her.

Here, dismissing the redundant syllables, true measure required six syllables to be short and unaccented; whereas there are but three unaccented; and not one short. By altering the lines thus,

The devil he bound her,  
And Styx ran around her—

five out of six faults would be removed, and the verses not much the worse in any other respect.

Those among our writers in anapestic verse, who have succeeded as well as any, are Shenstone, Cunningham, and Byrom, whose well-known pastoral (his best production in that measure) first appeared in the eighth volume of the Spectator; but none have excelled Cowper.

#### SECTION IV.

#### *Of the Dactylic Verse.*

This kind is not of very extensive use, it not being adapted to such a variety of subjects as either of the preceding. It has been so little regarded, that some have omitted to notice it in their accounts of our poetry, others have taken it for a variety of the anapestic. It is, however, a separate kind, distinct from the anapestic, to which it bears the same relation

as the trochaic does to the iambic; each being the reverse of the other. Its character too is different, and lighter than any of the rest. It is, therefore, generally appropriated to pieces to be set to music, and, for the most part, to gay and airy songs.

The species of dactylic verse are three; for rhymes of one foot, such as, *lavishing, ravishing*, are omitted, as hardly worthy of the name.

Our national song of *God save the King*, furnishes an example of the dactylic verse of two feet: the measure is most apparent in these lines,

Send him victorious,  
Happy and | glorious,  
Long to reign | over us.  
God save the | King.

The second species, or lines of three feet, is exhibited in the following stanza :

Come let us | sit and be | merry, lads,  
Here we se|curely can | hide ;  
Here we have | claret and | sherry, lads,  
Port and Ma|deira be|side.

The third species, which is more common

than either of the former, contains four dactyles; example :

Sound an a|larm to the | slaves of a | tyranny,  
Let the de|fender of | freedom a|rise.

It will be observed, in each of the instances here given, that the concluding verse is terminated by an accented syllable. The last foot is curtailed; and, in this point, it resembles the trochaics mentioned above. Such a curtailing, in words, accompanied with music, appears to be necessary; in every case, it makes a more agreeable conclusion. It was not, however, constantly practised by our earlier poets: Puttenham, in his *Art of Poetry*, p. 106, has given a stanza of dactylic lines, where the last is not contracted, but of full and equal measure with the rest.

Let no nobility, riches, or heritage,  
Honour, or empire, or earthly dominion  
Breed in your head any peevish opinion,  
That ye may safer avouch any outrage.

This kind of verse, like the anapestic, is of difficult construction, and for the same reason.



## CHAPTER III.

### OF LICENSES IN POETIC MEASURES.

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#### SECTION I.

#### *In the Iambic.*

THE four kinds of English verse are then esteemed to be regular when they are composed, each kind of them, of those feet only which give name to it. By the licenses now to be noticed, are meant any allowed deviation from that regularity.

The Iambic line of five feet, or heroic verse, being that which is of chief dignity and use in our poetry, it will be right to examine its construction more particularly. Concerning this,

and all other iambic measures, we are taught that the accents are to be placed on even syllables; and that every line, considered by itself, is more harmonious, as this rule is more strictly observed\*. This is true of a line taken singly; but as no poem is composed of a single line, it is more important to know what is most harmonious, or at least what deviation from the rule is allowed, when many lines stand together; for variety then becomes pleasing, and also unavoidable.

The regular heroic line is common enough, if to have accented syllables in the even places be all that is required to form it:

Achilles' wráth, to Gréece the díreful spríng  
Of wóes unnúber'd, héavenly Góddess, síng;

but if quantity be regarded, together with accent; if the syllables in a regular verse ought to be not only accented and unaccented, but also long and short, very few such will be found in our poetry. This line is of the sort,—

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\* Johnson's Grammar.

Or hungry wolves that howl around the fold ;  
so are the following, from a celebrated poem,  
whose numbers are most highly polished :

When o'er the blasted heath the day declin'd.  
But why prolong the tale? his only child.

*Rogers.*

The next approaches very near to the same regularity :

'Twas all he gave, 'twas all he had to give.

*Ibid.*

It bears a strong resemblance to a line of Gray's  
Elegy, which is perfect,

He gain'd from heaven, 'twas all he wish'd, a friend.

It may surprise those who have been taught to depreciate the versification of our earlier poets, to be informed that such perfect verses as are here quoted, are not so rare among them, as among the moderns. A few instances to prove this are given in the notes \*. *Campion*, in his book, has these three lines together ;

\* Nor under every bank and every tree.—*Hall*.

The more opprest, the more she strives to peep.

*Peacham.*

The more secure, the more the stroke we feel  
 Of unprevented harms ; so gloomy storms  
 Appear the sterner if the day be clear.

*Observations on the Art of English Poesy.*

These he calls *pure* iambics ; which, considering them according to quantity, they are : the accents too are placed on the even syllables throughout, except on *if*, the sixth in the last verse. Such lines as want this perfection, he distinguishes by the name of *licentiate* iambics ; i. e. lines in which some other foot is substituted for an iambic : to what extent this is allowable, we now proceed to state.

But first, be it remembered that in these feet the syllables are considered as accented or unaccented, not as long or short : and that

To this, to that to fly, to stand, to hide.—*Daniel.*

For every gift and every goodly meed,

With humble hearts to heaven uplifted high,

Amongst the seats of angels heavenly wrought.—*Spenser.*

Delight to ride, to hawk, to hunt, to run.—*Lodge.*

With weeping eyes, her eyes she taught to weep.—*Sidney.*

These verses are all from poets of Queen Elizabeth's time.

where quantity is to be noticed, it will be expressly pointed out.

The pyrrhic (two unaccented syllables) may supply the place of an iambic, and is substituted for it oftener than any other foot. It may stand in any part of the verse.

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Foot { | 1. Is he   a ch <sup>u</sup> rch man? th <sup>e</sup> n   he's f <sup>o</sup> nd   of p <sup>o</sup> wer.            |
|        | 2. A r <sup>e</sup> bel to   the v <sup>e</sup> r y k <sup>i</sup> ng   he l <sup>o</sup> ves.                       |
|        | 3. Has m <sup>a</sup> de   the f <sup>a</sup>  ther of   a n <sup>a</sup> me less r <sup>a</sup> ce.                 |
|        | 4. But q <sup>u</sup> ite   mist <sup>a</sup> kes   the sc <sup>a</sup> ffold for   the p <sup>i</sup> se.           |
|        | 5. The d <sup>u</sup> ll   fl <sup>a</sup> t f <sup>a</sup> lse hood s <sup>e</sup> rves   for p <sup>o</sup> l icy. |

*Popc.*

This foot may have place twice, or even three times in the same line ;

You l<sup>o</sup>se | it in | the m<sup>o</sup>|ment you | det<sup>e</sup>ct.—*Ibid.*  
It is | a cr<sup>o</sup>ck|et of | a p<sup>i</sup>n|nacle.

But as an unaccented foot weakens a line, this last has the utmost degree of weakness that is consistent with a verse, there being in it only two syllables accented, and for quantity, not one long.

The spondee (two accented syllables) may

be substituted for the iambic; and in as many places as the pyrrhic.

- |      |   |  |
|------|---|--|
| Foot | { | 1. Tó  m strú  ts   a só    dier, ó    pen, bó    ld   and brá    ve.        |
|      |   | 2. The plá    in   ró    ugh hé    ro tú    rn   a crá    f    ty kná    ve. |
|      |   | 3. When flá    tt    ery glá    res   ál    há    te   it in   a qué    en.  |
|      |   | 4. Thát gá    y   freethín    k    er, a   fí    ne tál    ker ó    nce.     |
|      |   | 5. Yet tá    mes   not thís,   it stí    cks   to our   lá    st sán    d.   |

*Pope.*

This foot may be repeated, and the following line will show to what extent.

Mó| | re wí| | se, | mó| | re lé| | arn'd, | mó| | re jú| | st,—mó| | ré| | év| | ery thín| | g.

*Ibid.*

The iambic verse admits likewise the trochee, but not in such abundance. Pope, who furnishes all the examples here given, from a poem of 260 lines, has not, in that compass, any trochaic foot, except in the beginning of a verse. For such examples we must turn to a poem of a different structure, and to a greater master of poetical numbers. Any foot of the heroic verse may be a trochee, except the last.

1. Hé| | re in | the heart | of hell | to work | in fire.
2. Anon, | ó| | ut of | the earth | a fab| | ric huge.

3. For one | restraint, | Lórd's of | the world | besides.

4. Abject | and lost | lay these, | cóvering | the flood.

*Milton.*

The same verse will admit two trochaic feet,  
as

Hóv'ring | on wing | únder | the cope | of hell.

Smóte on | him sore | besides, | vaúlted | with fire\*.

*Ibid.*

But not a greater number; for the last foot cannot be a trochee; neither can two trochees stand close together in one line: but different feet, as the spondee and pyrrhic, may so stand: and all the three may be introduced into the same

\* It is to be noted, that in every one of these instances there is a pause immediately preceding the trochaic foot: the introduction of it without such a pause is always harsh; as

Of Eve, whose eye | darted | contagious fire.

*Paradise Lost.*

In some places so much so as to destroy the metre; and is therefore not to be allowed, as

Burnt after them to the | bottom|less pit.—*Ibid.*

Shoots in|visi ble virtue ev'n to the deep.—*Ibid.*

line, instead of iambics. The beginning of the third book will afford examples.

Háil, hó|ly Líght; | óffspring | of Heáven | first-bórn,  
 Máu I | expréss | thee únblámed ? | sínce Gód | is líght,  
 And né|ver but | in ún|approá|ch|ed líght,  
 Dwélt from | etér|nity | dwélt thén | in thee,  
 Bríght áff|luence of | bríght éss|ence ún|créate.

*Ibid.*

The licenses here taken are so many, that they exceed the number of iambic feet in these lines.

Another kind of license permitted to the heroic verse, is to have an additional syllable at the end; as,

His wish and best endeavour, us asunder.

*Paradise Lost.*

or even two; as,

For solitude sometimes is best society.

*Ibid* \*.

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\* This line is quoted, because it has been called an alexandrine: Mitford's Essay on the Harmony of Language, p. 133, 1st edition, where an alexandrine is defined to be



But all such syllables must be unaccented: for an accent upon the last syllable, when two are added, would make an alexandrine, which is

“a verse of the heroic cadence, and consisting of six feet.” By *heroic cadence*, is meant such measures (or feet) as an heroic verse is made of. It is true, that an alexandrine must contain six iambic feet; but it is not true, that every verse of six such feet, the last being unaccented, must be an alexandrine. If it must, then it follows that a line of five such feet must be an heroic verse; and these in *Hudibras*,

She laid about in fight more busily,  
Than th' Amazonian dame Penthesilé,

*P. i. c. 2.*

are not doggrel, as is commonly supposed, but of a higher order, and may claim to be ranked with the heroics of Pope and Dryden. The line in Milton is exactly like the following in *Othello*:

For sure he fills it up with great ability,  
With any strong or vehement importunity;

*Act III. sc. 3.*

and like numberless others that occur in our tragedies, which were never yet reckoned as alexandrine, but as heroic verses with two redundant syllables.

another species of verse; and one additional syllable, accented, would destroy every known measure of verse. This license ought not to be taken often in serious poems; because the unaccented terminations have the lightness of the trochee and dactyle, which is unsuitable to pieces of a graver character. The drama, which claims peculiar licenses in versification, uses them more freely.

To these some critics \* have added the license of using trisyllable feet; as,

Ominous | conjecture on the whole success.

and such lines as this,

Many a repast he gave to many a friend.

But as this license, whatever it be accounted, does not belong exclusively to iambic verse, we shall say no more of it till we come to treat of elisions.

The same licenses which are given to the

\* Tyrwhitt's Essay on the Versification of Chaucer, p. 55.

heroic line are allowed to the other species of iambic measure; and, by observing upon what ground they stand, it will be seen how many of them may be taken in each species.

From the account of the numerous licenses which are permitted by substituting some other foot for that which is fundamental to this measure (the iambic), will appear what a variety the English heroic verse is capable of exhibiting: much greater than the Latin or Greek hexameter can produce, whatever has been advanced to the contrary. But this is a point that does not rest upon opinion; it is a matter of computation: neither is the variety such as is allowable only, but not in usage; it is to be seen in all our poems of that measure; and it will not be foreign to our subject to establish these facts by evidence and proof.

The measures which enter into the composition of an hexameter, are the dactyle and spondee, and no other; and the last foot of the verse being invariably a spondee, there remains a line of five feet to receive all the varieties that can be made by two different measures.

Now the first foot admits of two, and the second of the same number; which, combined with the first, is four; the third of twice four, viz. eight; the fourth of twice eight, viz. sixteen; the fifth of twice sixteen, viz. thirty-two. And this was precisely the number of varieties which the ancient grammarians recognized in the hexameter; as the rhetorician Hermogenes\* informs us.

But the English heroic verse admits of four different feet; and according to the same rate of combination, its varieties in the second foot would be four times four, viz. sixteen, and so on; but because (as has been said) two trochees cannot stand together, nor two pyrrhics, the varieties will not be so many; yet they will amount to a much greater number than those of an hexameter.

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\* The grammarians were literary characters, who employed themselves particularly in studying and commenting upon the poets. The passage of Hermogenes is in the tenth chapter of his second book upon the various species of eloquence.

And that this variety is not imaginary, but continually employed by our poets, may be shown from any of their works. The same epistle of Pope, to which we have already had recourse, will afford the proof. The first two feet of each verse will be sufficient for the purpose.

## Varieties.

- Two Iambics, And yét | the fáte | of all extremes is such. Line 9.  
 Trochee and Iambic, Gránt but | as ma|ny sorts of mind as moss. Line 18.  
 Spondee and Iambic, Quick whirls | and shifting eddies or our minds. Line 24.  
 Pyrrhic and Iambic, And in | the cún|ning truth itself's a lie. Line 68.  
 Pyrrhic and Spondee, Nor will | life's stréam | for observation stay. Line 7.  
 Iambic and Spondee, We grów | móre pá' | tial for the observer's sake. Line 12.  
 Trochee and Spondee, Sée the | sámé mán | in vigour and the gout. Line 71.  
 Iambic and Pyrrhic, His prin|ciple | of action once explore. Line 27.

In this example, taken from a poet who is more distinguished for the smoothness than the variety of his measures, the varieties in two feet amount to eight, which is double the number that the hexameter is capable of making within the same compass: the varieties of our entire heroic line must therefore exceed those of the hexameter in a still greater proportion.

## SECTION II.

*Of Licenses in the Trochaic, Anapestic, and Dactylic Measures.*

There being some affinity between the trochaic and iambic measures, the licenses permitted in each will be similar, as far as consists in the substitution of some other foot for that which is characteristic of the kind. But beside these, there is another license very generally extended to the trochaic; viz. that of cutting off part of the concluding foot. This is allowed in every species of the trochaic verse, whether of two, three, or four feet; so that we have lines of three, five, and seven syllables, and some specimens of them have been given already.

The pure trochaic line is composed of trochees without the intermixture of any other foot: and if quantity concurs with accent to form the measure, it is then perfect; as in the

following example, where the accented syllables are all long, and the unaccented all short :

Richly paint the vernal arbour.—*Gray*.

A perfect line is not oftener found in this kind, than in the heroic verse.

I now proceed to the licenses; and shall exemplify them from lines of eight and seven syllables indiscriminately.

The first foot admits a pyrrhic,

On a | rock, whose haughty brow.—*Gray*.

or a spondee,

Nó, blést | chiefs ! a hero's crown.—*Sir W. Jones*.

or an iambic,

To brísk | notes in cadence beating.—*Gray*.

The second foot admits a pyrrhic,

Mute, but | to the | voice of anguish.—*Gray*.

or spondee,

Wakes thee | nów, though | he inherit.—*Ibid*.

The third foot admits the same.

Pÿrrhic,

With Harmodius | shall repose.—*Sir W. Jones.*

spondee,

Rome shall perish— | write thát | word.—*Cowper.*

In the line of eight syllables, the last foot is necessarily a trochee, and therefore the seventh syllable accented; but in the line of seven, the last syllable may be short; as,

And with godlike Diomed.—*Sir W. Jones.*

We do not find an iambic in the second or third foot of any authentic composition. In the first, it has obtained a place by the authority of Gray, and others: it is nevertheless so harsh a violation of the regular foot as hardly to be approved of. The well-known ballad of Admiral Hosier's Ghost is composed in trochaic measure, but with this, and frequent other deviations from regularity; allowable, perhaps, in such a piece, yet not expected from a writer, who is said to



have been accurate and even fastidious in the arrangement of his numbers\*.

The anapestic verse allows but few licenses. One is a redundant syllable at the end of a line; another, an iambic, or spondee, in the first foot. And where the former of these is introduced, the other ought to be taken in the line next following, as in this example:

To invite the gods hither they would have had reason,  
And Jove | had descended each night in the season.

*Byrom.*

This rule, though but little attended to, is good and proper; because the observance of it will keep the measure entire, which otherwise is sometimes overloaded, and produces a bad effect on the ear.

Prithee, pluck up a good resolution,  
To be cheerful and thankful in all.—*Byrom.*

The second line begins with an anapest; and

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\* Glover. See Dr. Pemberton's Observations on his Leonidas.

by the word *to*, the measure is broken? omit it, and the whole will run smoothly and agreeably.

Another license claimed by some writers is that of dropping a syllable in the middle of the verse; Swift takes it very often, as here,

And now my dream's out; for I was a dream'd  
That I saw a huge rat—O dear how I scream'd!

But this license is questionable at least: it may be called unwarrantable, because it occasions such halting metre\*.

\* Our old version of the 104th Psalm is in anapestic measure; but it contains something peculiar. The first half of every stanza appears to be defective, for it halts like the lines here quoted, while the other half is full and perfect. But the translator arranged it not in four lines, but eight;

With light as a robe,  
Thou hast thee beclad;  
Whereby all the earth  
Thy greatness may see:  
The heavens in such sort  
Thou also hast spread,

A license more suitable to this kind is the use of words as three syllables, which in iambic or trochaic verse would stand for two only, and of others as two syllables which there make but one; and generally, whatever syllable may be

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That they to a curtain  
Compared may be.

By this arrangement he was allowed the license of trenching a syllable at the beginning of each line: still the want of a syllable between the first and second, and again between the third and fourth, produces a disagreeable effect. The omission was not casual, but studied: for in every stanza of the Psalm, which extends to twenty-four, the same precise measure is repeated to a syllable. This strictness was an unnecessary restraint, but such as was not unusual for the versifiers of that age to lay upon themselves; as Webbe, in his Discourse of English Poetry, informs us. He says, "there are infinite sorts of fine conveyances (as they may be termed) which are much frequented by them, both in the composition of their verse, and the wittiness of their matter;" and he gives some curious instances. (P. 65.)

sounded in the pronunciation of a word, to reckon it in the measure\*.

Whose humour, as gay as the *fire* †-fly's light.

*T. Moore.*

Would feel herself *happier* here,

By the nightingale *warbling* nigh.—*Cowper.*

Such a division of syllables helps the line to move lightly ; and is a reasonable indulgence to a measure which, more than others, is apt to suffer by the clogging of accented words and consonants.

\* Drayton makes *April* three syllables. (See note\* in page 98.)

† This is one of those combinations (the diphthong *i* with *r*) which cannot be pronounced without the interposition of another letter (here the short *u*), as Tucker has remarked : and he adds, “ I think *hire* and *dire* have as fair claim to be counted dissyllables as *higher* and *dyer*, though we will not allow them the same rank in verse.”

*On Vocal Sounds*, p. 17.

Any long or accented syllable, standing first or second in the foot, is a deviation from this measure; but it is less offensive to the ear in the second place than in the first:—

While a parcel of verses the hawkers were hollowing.

*Byrom.*

Wine the so|vereign cordial of God and of man.

*Cambridge.*

Far above | all the flowers | of the field,  
When its leaves | are all dead | and its col|ours all lost. |

*Watts.*

And while | a false nymph | was his theme,

A willow supported his head.—*Rowe.*

The licenses taken in dactylic verse are sometimes such that they disguise the measure, and render it equivocal; as in this uncommon specimen:—

Oh! what a pain is love!

How shall I bear it?

She will unconstant prove,

I greatly fear it.

Please her the best I may,

She looks another way;

Alack and well-a-day,

Phillida flouts me!

*Ellis's Specimens*, v. iii. p. 338.

Every line of this stanza, but the last, is divisible into iambic feet, and they all make verses in that measure\*; they are nevertheless de-

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\* Drayton has a poem in this kind of verse: and Mitford has made the same observation on the ambiguous measures (as he calls them) of that piece. A few lines will show Drayton's manner of versification, and what liberties he has taken:

Our mournful Philomel,  
 That rarest tuner,  
 Henceforth in April  
 Shall wake the sooner;  
 And to her shall complain  
 From the thick cover,  
 Redoubling every strain  
 Over and over.  
 For when my Love too long  
 Her chamber keepeth,  
 As though it suffered wrong,  
 The morning weepeth.

*Chorus.* On thy bank,  
 In a rank,  
 Let thy swans sing her;  
 And with their music  
 Along let them bring her.

*Drayton, Shepherd's Sirena.*

signed for the dactylic, as appears by these next, which cannot be so divided without violence:—

Thou shalt eat curds and cream  
 All the year | lasting ;  
 And drink the crystal stream,  
 Pleasant in | tasting.

*Ibid.*

But this great confusion of measure is not often made. The allowed licenses are—to curtail the last foot, sometimes by one syllable, as in the lines quoted above; but more usually by two; which, as compositions of this kind are chiefly for music, makes a better close: such is—

Under the blossom that hangs on the | bough.

It is allowed in the beginning of a line to substitute for the proper foot a trochee, as—

Songs of | shepherds and rustical roundelays.

*Old Ballad.*

Or a single accented syllable may stand for it, even for two feet together, as—

Come, | see | rural felicity.

The license has been carried still in farther the singular measure following :—

One | long | Whitsun | holiday,  
 It was a jolly day,  
 Stout | Ralph, | buxom | Phillida, &c.

The writer of this, a man renowned in our annals, as a maker and singer of ballads, and familiarly called Tom Durfey \*, is said to have contrived this odd metre in order to puzzle the composer, Purcell, how to frame a tune for it: but the story is probably without foundation; for the words readily accommodate themselves to music, and the bare recital would direct any musician to set them to jig-time.

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\* The Guardian, No. 67, contains a very humorous and benevolent account and recommendation of Tom Durfey, by Addison.



## CHAPTER IV.

### OF THE COMBINATIONS OF VERSES.

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#### SECTION I.

VERSES, as they have been now considered, differ in species, and in kind; in the same respects they admit of combination.

A combination of the same species is made by verses which differ in the number of their feet, as in the examples here given; where the figures denote the number of feet in each verse:—

- |                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Combinations in<br>the Iambic. | { | 5. In realms long held beneath a tyrant's sway,             |
|                                |   | 4. Lo! Freedom hath again appear'd!                         |
|                                |   | 3. In this auspicious day                                   |
|                                |   | 6. Her glorious ensign floats, and high in Spain is rear'd. |

- |                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| In the<br>Trochaic.  | } | Banded despots hate the sight ;                          |
|                      |   | 2. And in spite  |
|                      |   | 4. Arm their slaves for war and plunder                  |
|                      |   | 4. But the British lion's roar,                          |
|                      |   | 3. Heard on every shore,                                 |
| In the<br>Anapestic. | } | 5. Soon shall break their impious league asunder.        |
|                      |   | 3. Then Spaniards shall set at defiance                  |
|                      |   | 2. Their foes that advance :                             |
|                      |   | 4. They shall laugh at the threats of the Holy Alliance, |
|                      |   | 4. And baffle, indignant, th' invasion of France.        |
| In the<br>Dactylic.  | } | 2. On to the field !                                     |
|                      |   | 4. Heaven will assist the defenders of Freedom :         |
|                      |   | 4. Prayers, and arms in your cause if you need 'em,      |
|                      |   | 3. Every Briton will yield *.                            |

## SECTION II.

The other combinations are those of different kinds of verse ; viz. the iambic with the three others ; the trochaic with the anapestic and dactylic ; and the two last together.

These combinations are made according to the

\* These lines were written in the beginning of the year 1823.

fancy of the writer, in a variety of degrees; sometimes no greater than single verses, or even parts of a verse; as in this of Dryden's Ode, the anapestic with the iambic :

And amazed | he stares | around.

Another line in the same ode is of ambiguous measure. The latter half is anapestic; so the first may be, but it reads and scans better as trochaic :

These are | Grecian | ghosts | that in battle were slain.

Such combinations are to be observed as matters of curiosity rather than imitated.

The two following lines exhibit a combination of the anapestic with the dactylic :

More sweet than the pleasure the muses can give ;  
Come, smile, damsels of Cardigan.

*Sir William Jones.*

Ariel's Song in the Tempest combines the trochaic with the dactylic :

On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily ;  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.

The ode just quoted has, within the compass of six lines, half as many combinations :

Behold a ghastly band,  
Each a torch in his hand :

These are Grecian ghosts that in battle were slain,  
And unburied remain  
Inglorious on the plain :  
Give the vengeance due.

In the poems attributed to Shakspeare is a lyric piece, intituled, *Love's Labour Lost*: the stanza is formed by a curious combination of verses; some of them of a measure very uncommon; being trochaics of five feet, the last curtailed :

Clear wells spring not, sweet birds sing not,  
Green plants bring not forth their dye:  
Herds stand weeping, flocks all sleeping,  
Nymphs black peeping fearfully.

Trochaic }  
five feet. } All our pleasure known to us poor swains,  
All our merry meetings on the plains,  
All our evening sport from us is fled ;  
All our love is lost, for love is dead.

Farewell, sweet love, thy like ne'er was,  
For a sweet content, the cause of all my  
woe ;

Poor Coridon must live alone,  
 Other help for him, I see, that there is  
 none.

But the most extraordinary combination of English verse that is, perhaps, any where to be found, is this song by T. Campion, who has been quoted in a former chapter. Campion was eminent as a musician, as well as a poet; which may account for so singular a specimen of metre.

What if a day, or a month, or a year,  
 Crown thy delights with a thousand wish'd contentings;  
 Cannot a chance of a night, or an hour,  
 Cross thy delights with a thousand sad tormentings?  
 Fortune, honour, beauty, youth, are but blossoms dying;  
 Wanton pleasure, doting love, are but shadows flying.  
 All our joys are but toys,  
 Idle thoughts deceiving;  
 None hath power, of an hour,  
 In their live bereiving.

*Alex. Gill's Logonomia Anglica, p. 27.*

Other combinations of larger portions than these are sometimes made; which it is needless, for the present, to specify\*.

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\* Such combinations fill up the poem called the Cantata: where the recitative is in one kind of verse, and the

In every combination there should be a design of producing some effect: to introduce a combination without any design is a mark of carelessness, or inability to keep the just rules of versification. The effect designed may be merely to please, by a change of the measure, for the sake of variety; but the change is made more properly, when it is done to accommodate the verse to the sentiments; to express, for example, what is grave by a suitable kind, as the iambic; what is sprightly by the trochaic, and the like. Gray, in his Ode on the Progress of Poesy, has pro-

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airs in some other: they are not unfrequently made in the drama, by the introduction of lyrical verses for music: in the epic they are not allowable; though Cowley has admitted them into his *Davideis*, without "authority or example," as he acknowledges. But here we may refer to Aristotle, who condemns such a practice, and gives his reason for it. "To write a long narrative poem (he means an epic) in any other verse than hexameter, or in a variety of measures, would be evidently improper; for the hexameter is the most stately and majestic of all." *Treatise on Poetry*, Sec. 41. Now what the hexameter was to the Greeks, the iambic of five feet is to us; viz. the most stately verse in which an English poem can be written.

duced a very striking and happy effect by such a combination of verses: the tripping measure which represents the *frisky dance* of the Cupids, is finely contrasted with the smooth iambic which describes the gentle gait of Venus.

Now pursuing, now retreating,  
 Now in circling troops they meet:  
 To brisk notes in cadence beating  
 Glance their many twinkling feet.  
 Slow melting strains their queen's approach declare:  
 In gliding state she wins her easy way.

But combinations would produce a disagreeable effect, if they were made contrariwise to this: i. e. if, in this instance, the trochaic and iambic should change places.

## SECTION III.

Combinations may be esteemed good or bad, according as they preserve, or break the measure and flow of the verse. The following is good:

The listening Muses all around her  
 Think 'tis Phœbus' strains they hear.

*Hughes.*

Here is an iambic line, with a redundant syllable, followed by a trochaic. This satisfies the ear; for the verses flow smoothly on to the end of the period, because the iambic measure is continued unbroken. The combination below is bad:

A mind that's truly brave  
 Stands despising  
 Storms arising,  
 And can't be made a slave.

The last line, being an iambic, which follows a trochaic, (not curtailed, but full) produces an unpleasing effect; for it seems to have a syllable too much. It offends the ear, because the measure is broken: strike out that syllable, and the offence will be removed; the trochaic measure will be preserved to the end.

In fact, the objectionable line is owing to a mistake of Bysshe. In his *Art of Poetry*, he quoted the passage from Dryden incorrectly: in that author, the last line runs thus:

And can ne'er be made a slave,

which is a trochaic verse, and gives the measure contented for.



In serious poetry the combination is bad (generally speaking) which subjoins a short line to a long one, especially if they rhyme together; as,

Be thou thine own approver: honest praise  
Oft nobly sways  
Ingenuous youth.

*Akenside.*

One reason is, that such a combination wants dignity; which is the more apparent, in this instance, because the preceding line is the stately heroic verse. To give another example

By Euphrates' flowery side  
We did bide;

and

When poor Sion's doleful state,  
Desolate.

*Donne.*

In these lines the quick return of the rhyme nearly destroys the gravity of the matter.

Another reason why these combinations are bad, is the disproportion between the length of the lines. And, upon this account, if lines as

disproportionate as these were set in a contrary order, the combination would be faulty; as here :

As if great Atlas from his height  
Should sink beneath his heavenly weight,  
And with a mighty flow the flaming wall,  
As once it shall,  
Should gape immense, and, rushing down, o'erwhelm  
this nether ball.

*Dryden.*

But a good combination is made by two lines, or more, increasing, as they proceed, in a moderate degree: i. e. by one or two feet; example :

All real here the bard had seen  
The glories of his pictured queen :  
The tuneful Dryden had not flatter'd here,  
His lyre had blameless been, his tribute all sincere.

*T. Warton.*

It is this gradual increase above the preceding lines which makes the alexandrine so graceful in the close; for it has no beauty if set in the beginning of a poem, or stanza, as it has been by some of our poets, particularly Ambrose Philips.

After this manner the verse of fourteen syllables may be brought in, and follow the alexandrine with good effect :

The sylvans to their shades retire ;  
Those very shades and streams new shades and streams  
    require,  
And want a cooling breeze of wind to fan the raging fire.  
*Dryden.*

A singular example of the gradation meant occurs in Sir John Beaumont's Epithalamium to the Lord Marquis of Buckingham :

Severe and serious Muse,  
Whose quill the name of love declines,  
Be not too nice, nor this dear work refuse ;  
Here Venus lights no flame, nor Cupid guides thy  
    lines,  
But modest Hymen shakes his torch, and chaste Lucina  
    shines.

The lighter sorts of poetry are not to be considered as necessarily subject to this rule. In epigrams, for instance, where wit is often most happily expressed by brevity, the point or concluding line may very properly be shorter than the preceding ; as in this :

What a frail thing is beauty ! says Baron le Cras,  
Perceiving his mistress had one eye of glass :  
And scarcely had he spoke it,  
When she more enraged, as more angry she grew,  
By a negligent rage proved the maxim too true :  
She dropt the eye and broke it.

*Prior.*

## CHAPTER V.

### OF RHYME.

HITHERTO the constituent parts of verse only have been treated of; the ornamental are now to be considered; the principal of which is generally taken to be rhyme.

The terms rhyme and rhymes have various significations, which, for the present, do not concern us. By rhymes are meant syllables or words corresponding in sound; as *dalc, bale, alc*. To describe these rhymes more in detail, they are partly the same, and partly different, in sound. They are the same in the vowel *a*, and all that follows it, and they are different in what precedes it: that difference is, first, between the consonants *d* and *b*: second, between having some consonant there and none; *balc, alc*. Rhymes, then, are syllables or words similar in sound, but not identical.

Rhymes are of one syllable, or more ; which latter are called double rhymes, and will be separately considered hereafter.

The great and extensive use of rhymes makes it necessary to treat of them under divers heads ; and first of their quality.

#### SECTION I.

##### *Of the Quality of Rhymes.*

It might seem, from the description of rhymes just given, that it is easy to decide upon all syllables which may be brought into question, that they are either rhymes, or not ; and that to class them accordingly would be sufficient. But the difficulty of rhyming in English is such, that some indulgence is due to words which profess to be rhyme, though they do not exactly answer that description. To distinguish, according to their quality, the rhymes which offer themselves to notice, in the works of our poets, it will be proper to divide them

into those which are disallowèd and bad; those which are defective, but admissible; and those which are good and perfect.

## SECTION II.

*Of bad Rhymes.*

Of rhymes which cannot be allowed are, first, those that are widely different in the vowel sound; as,

Beauty and youth, and wealth and luxury,  
And sprightly hope, and short-enduring joy.  
*Dryden.*

Or which are different, both in the vowel-sound and in the consonants which follow it; as,

All trades of death that deal in steel for gains  
Were there; the butcher, armourer, and smith,  
Who forges sharpen'd falchions, or the scythe.  
*Ibid.*

Second, those in which the consonants preceding the vowel are of the same sound; as,

But this bold lord, with manly strength endued,  
 † She with one finger and a thumb subdued.

Pope.

These are called identical rhymes : they were allowed, and common, in our early poetry\*.

Third, those in which the preceding consonants have the same sound, but the vowel, and what follows it, differ in sound ; as,

\* I am inclined to think that identical rhymes were dismissed from English poetry rather by fashion than any other cause: by fashion, I mean the custom of poets. For at one time they were in frequent use, and admitted without scruple: and if another custom of rhyming had not prevailed to exclude them, they might have been still as agreeable to an English ear as to a Frenchman's; with whom, to make identical rhymes, is called rhyming *richly*. The reason of this opinion is, that identical rhymes are sometimes found in our most correct versifiers, as in Pope repeatedly. Whether or not they were unperceived by his ear, may be a doubt; but certainly they did not offend it. I believe, that Cowley is the latest who avows the use of these rhymes; at the same time, however, he apologises for it, saying, that he admits them only into his free kind of poetry (his Pindaric Odes), and there into triplets, when, beside the identical rhyme, he has put another.



And for misjudging some unhappy scenes,  
Are censured for 't with more unlucky sense.

*Butler upon Critics. See Chalmers, vol. viii. p. 199.*

In this example that part is identical which should differ, and that which should be identical differs. It would be hard to produce any thing which passes for a rhyme that is more exceptionable than this.

Other rhymes which are not allowed are those made by polysyllables; as,

Upon his back a heavy load he bare  
Of nightly stealths, and pillage several,  
Which he had got abroad by purchase criminal.

*Spenser.*

There may be an exception to this, when the last syllables of such words are long; and, at least, one of them accented: but it is a case that very rarely happens. Here is an instance:

By deep surmise of others' detriment,  
Losing her woes in shows of discontent.

*Shakspeare.*

## SECTION III.

*Of Rhymes defective but admissible.*

We now proceed to another species of rhymes, viz. such as are admissible into verse, but are not of the best quality. These form a most extensive class; they are found in the works of all our poets, and into some of them they enter very largely. They are admissible; but they generally labour under some defect: either they want the proper correspondence of sound, or they are made of little insignificant words, or they are stale and hackneyed. Examples will be given of all these.

According to what has been already said of rhyme, it is evident that a word may fail of making an exact one, in three parts; first, in the letters which go before the vowel; second, in the vowel itself; third, in the letters (if any) that follow it. By failing in the first part, viz. by making no difference before the vowel, the rhyme will be inadmissible, because it will be

identical, or worse: a failure in either of the other parts may yet leave a rhyme which is passable, though defective. And as it is this particular defect, more than any other inaccuracy, which marks the rhymes of our poetry, it will not be unfit to enlarge upon this head; and, at the same time, to show what an extensive choice of rhymes our language is capable of supplying.

The vowel-sounds in English, the long and short being divided, and the diphthongs included, amount to sixteen: we have, besides these, nineteen consonants; not, indeed, represented in the alphabet by as many characters, but making nineteen different sounds in combination with a vowel.

The long vowel-sounds are :—

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| a, as in psalm, of which the short is, a, as in Sam. |                |
| a, .... ale, .....                                   | e, .... ell.   |
| a, .... hall, .....                                  | o, .... holly. |
| e, .... seen, .....                                  | ɪ, .... sin.   |
| i, .... file   | } no short.    |
| o, .... hole   |                |
| u, written pool, .....                               | u, .... pull.  |

The short vowel-sounds are :—

a, as in Sam.

e, . . . pen.

i, . . . sin.

o, . . . on.

u, . . . pull.

u, . . . pun, of which there is no long.

The diphthongs are :—

ew, as in Jew, adieu, June.

oi, . . . toil.

ou, . . . out.

There are then five vowels, each having two sounds ; three vowels and three diphthongs, with one sound each, making in all sixteen.

The consonants are :—

b	l	s, as in hiss.	th, as in bath.
d	m	t,	th, . . . bathe.
f	n	v,	sh, . . . ash.
g	p	z, . . . his.	zh, . . . azure.
k	r.		ng, . . . sing.

Now to make a round computation upon these letters : sixteen vowels being capable of forming syllables with nineteen consonants, each with each gives above three hundred for the sum ; and this without including the syllables that might be made, if the vowel were followed by more than one consonant, or by none ; which

would increase the number to more than double. So that every writer, who sits down to compose in rhyme, has at least six hundred to take from; yet, notwithstanding this ample field for choice and variety, there will not be found one, among all our poets, who, within the compass of thirty rhymes, does not usually make some repetition; who certainly does make it, upon an average taken of the whole of his works in rhyme.

To prove this assertion, which, perhaps, may surprise some readers, I will exhibit a specific account of such repetitions, and also of imperfect rhymes, taken from a considerable number of poets, the most celebrated, indeed from Dryden to the present age. These I have pitched upon for two reasons; one, to obviate what otherwise might be objected, that such faults do not occur in our best versifiers; the other, to prevent young writers from being misled by examples of such high and deserved authority.

The table subjoined shows the number of repeated rhymes, and of those which are imperfect, in the works of the authors whose names

are in the margin, taken from the first sixty rhymes of the pieces there specified.

<i>Authors.</i>	<i>Pieces, Translations.</i>	<i>Rhymes repeated.</i>	<i>Rhymes imperfect.</i>
Dryden .	Translation of Homer's Iliad, B. 1.	18	0
Pope .	Do. . . . .	24	0
Dryden .	Do. Virgil's Æneid, B. 1.	19	10
Pitt .	Do. . . . .	24	14
Rowe .	Do. Lucan's Pharsalia, B. 1.	18	14
Lewis .	Do. Statius's Theb. B. 1.	21	4
Fawkes .	Do. Apollon. Rhod. B. 1.	21	5
Grainger .	Do. Tibullus, Eleg. 2d. and 3d.	21	1
Francis .	Do. Horace, Epist. to Augustus	23	6
Hoole .	Do. Tasso's Jerusal. Delivered, B. 1.	22	12
Mickle .	Do. Camoens's Lusiad. B. 1.	19	5

*Originals.*

Dryden .	Knight's Tale, 1st 60 rhymes	21	13
Pope .	Moral Essays, Epist. 1, do.	19	0
Swift .	Baucis and Philemon, do.	10	2
Prior .	Solomon, do.	18	11
Goldsmith	Traveller, do.	26	2
T. Warton	Oxford Verses to Pitt and to the Queen, do.	16	2
Beattie .	Hares, do.	10	0
Cowper .	Retirement, do.	15	2
Sir W. Jones	Laura, do.	22	1

This selection has been made from pieces written in couplets, because, in such pieces, the rhymes being unconnected with other rhymes or lines, the versifier is less restricted in his choice than he would be if composing in any kind of

stanza. The repetitions are, nevertheless, very frequent. In stating the imperfections, the smallest have been taken into account. They are, generally, a difference in the vowel-sound; which, in most cases, is less offensive to the ear than a difference in the consonants. The imperfect rhymes in the extract from Pope's original piece are these:—gross, moss; view, do; desert, heart; charron, buffoon; revere, star; impell'd, field; breast, east; retreat, great; and one identical, known, none.

Some of these imperfections are very slight; and none of them less tolerable than this in the consonants:

For Britain's empire, boundless as the main,  
Will guard at once domestic ease,  
And awe th' aspiring nations into peace.

*Whitehead.*

But when there is a double imperfection, and the vowel-sound and consonant are both different, as in this couplet, the rhyme cannot be allowed:

Nor did your crutch give battle to your duns,  
And hold it out where you had built a sconce.

*Butler.*

From a review of the abstract given above, it will appear that, in the points under consideration, our modern versifiers, to speak of them generally, have improved upon those of a century ago, with an exception to Swift alone; who, as a correct rhymers, has never been excelled by any.

The introduction of little insignificant words to make rhyme, is a neglect which is not often chargeable on our modern poets: it was very common before the beginning of the last century; nor do such rhymes appear to have been considered then as any imperfection. The instances are numerous:

Who with his word commanded all to be,  
 And all obey'd him, for that word was he:  
 Only he spoke, and every thing that is  
 From out the womb of fertile Nothing ris'.

*Cowley.*

A frequent rhyme in Waller is the word *so*, which has been noted and censured by Dr. Johnson:

Thy skilful hand contributes to our woe,  
 And whets those arrows which confound us so:



A thousand Cupids in those curls do sit,  
Those curious nets thy slender fingers knit.

*Verses to Saccharissa's Maid.*

Who, naming me, doth warm his courage so,  
Shows for my sake what his bold hand would do.

*Verses for drinking Healths.*

We find in Dryden rhymes of the same class :

The Panther smiled at this, "and when," said she,  
"Were those first councils disallow'd by me?"

'Tis dangerous climbing ; to your sons and you  
I leave the ladder, and its omen too.—

Why all these wars to win the book, if we  
Must not interpret for ourselves, but she?

*Hind and Panther, Part 2.*

They occur more frequently in his prologues and epilogues ; but examples enough have been given ; for they are not introduced for the purpose of censure, but only to show what, in the present day, ought to be avoided.

Another defect in this part of versification is the employment of such rhymes as are become hackneyed by overmuch use. What these rhymes are, is described and exemplified by Pope : he calls them "the sure returns of still-expected rhymes ;" as in this couplet :

Where'er you find the cooling western breeze,  
In the next line it whispers through the trees.

*Essay on Criticism*\*.

There are some rhymes (and also some ends of verses) so hackneyed, that we might, at the first recital of them, do in the same manner as Demetrius Phalereus informs us the Athenians did sometimes, towards those orators who composed their speeches in studied and artificial periods. "The hearers were disgusted (says he), and being well aware how the sentence would end, they would often forestal the speaker, and utter it aloud †."

\* His own verses fall under this censure :

Her fate is whisper'd by the gentle breeze,  
And told in sighs to all the trembling trees.

In some still evening, when the whispering breeze  
Pants on the leaves, and dies upon the trees.

*Fourth Pastoral.*

The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze.

*Eloisa to Abelard.*

† *Treatise de Elocut.* sect. 15.

Many subjects for verse have these common rhymes accompanying, and, as it were, belonging to them. For example, in prologues and epilogues, it is, perhaps, necessary to mention the *stage*; this, being a very easy word to rhyme with, is readily taken; and then its partner shall be *age* or *rage*, and stand with it after this manner:

The plays that take on our corrupted stage,  
Methinks, resemble the distracted age.

While you turn players on the world's great stage,  
And act yourselves the force of your own age.

*Dryden.*

In his prologues and epilogues, which are about forty, these two words rhyme above a dozen times. In the same pieces the term *play* occurs as naturally as *stage*, and is made as serviceable; for its termination in *ay* affords as many rhymes as any in the language.

Pope's Prologue to *Cato* is another instance in point. It consists of twenty-three couplets, in which we find these rhymes: stage, age; stage, rage; fate, state; great, state; draws, was; cause, laws; laws, cause.

It may happen that a writer shall use a word to make rhyme so often that it appears hackneyed in his particular works. This was remarked of Pope in his repeated rhyming with the term *kings*. A repetition of the same kind, much more frequent and censurable, may be seen in the poems of Churchill. These were all satirical; and, therefore, the author had continual occasion to speak of *man*. To rhyme with this he seldom had any word but *plan*; and these two are paired together at least fifty times in his verses.

#### SECTION IV.

#### *Of good Rhymes.*

It remains to state what rhymes are to be accounted perfect and good.

They are, first, such as have an exact consonance in the vowel, and consonants (if any) that follow it; e. g.

Among the numbers who employ  
Their tongues and pens to give you joy,

Dear Harley, generous youth, admit  
 What friendship dictates more than wit.

*Swift.*

2. Such as have a marked and sensible difference between the consonants preceding the vowel: that is, consonants not of the same class, like these, *b, p; d, t; c, g; f, v; s, z;* which would rhyme in *bit, pit; den, ten; come, gum; fan, van; seal, zeal.* Such rhymes differ, indeed, in the sound preceding the vowel, and therefore, strictly taken, are regular; but the difference is so slight that they are not to be commended\*.

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\* In the words *sound* and *resound*, the difference of the *s* is very plainly to be heard; yet our writers of the present day avoid taking them together, and prefer *rebound* for a rhyme to the first; though it seldom expresses their sense so well. But Dryden more than once rhymes with the words *serve* and *deserve*, where the same letter, with the same difference, occurs.

Theirs is the toil, and he, who well has served  
 His country, has his country's wealth deserved.

*Sigismunda and Guiscardo.*

The want of sufficient difference is likewise perceptible in such rhymes as *bled, bed*; *pray, pay*; where the second consonant is dropped, and both words begin with the same letter: but the rhymes, *bled, led*; *pray, ray*; are perfectly good, because the consonants with which they begin are different.

3. Such as are made by syllables that, are long, and full-sounding, in preference to their opposites; among which last are the terminations of polysyllabic words. The lines last quoted may serve for an example; the second couplet of which, though the rhymes are regular and

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Dr. Johnson, in one of his poems, has used a very uncommon rhyme:

Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd,  
For such the steady Roman shook the world.

*Vanity of Human Wishes.*

One of these words is aspirated and the other not; so that here is a difference; and, therefore, both these couplets are to be acknowledged for legitimate rhymes: but they make the nearest approaches to identity that can be allowed, or, indeed, that can be uttered.

good, is yet inferior to the other, in that it has not such a long and full-sounding termination as is given by the diphthongs.

The observations of Mitford on this topic of good rhymes are well worthy of attention. The substance of them, extracted from his treatise on the Harmony of Language, will be found below \*. We are not to expect that such good

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\* "According to our preceding definitions, euphony and cacophony, in language, mean sound, pleasing and unpleasing. English speech has rarely any material cacophony in the middle of words, but in terminations it too certainly abounds. A well-eared poet will avoid cacophony in rhymes, and in the conspicuous parts, especially the last syllable, of any verse. Pope has had general credit for what are called rich rhymes; though his higher respect, justly directed to that powerful closeness of phrase, in which he singularly excels, has led him to admit some rhymes rather cacophonous. The word *king* is certainly not euphonous, nor of dignified sound: the vowel is short and close, and the following consonant, one consonant expressed by two characters, the most cacophonous in our pronunciation. Whether it was for the dignity of the idea conveyed, or for the opposite qua-

and approved rhymes as have been here described should constitute the major part in any composition. The difficulty of rhyming well, and the propriety of sacrificing what is orna-

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lity of the sound, that Pope chose it for the first rhyme of his *Essay on Man*, with cacophony doubled by an added *s*, appears doubtful. He has, indeed, not scrupled the termination in *ing*, for the first rhyme of his translation of the *Iliad*; but the example is not to be recommended. Terminations in a long vowel, or a liquid consonant preceded by a long vowel, will be most euphous. The termination in a liquid consonant, preceded by a short vowel, though less rich, will make a pleasant variety. That of a mute preceded by a long vowel will be wholly unobjectionable, rich without any cacophony, if a vowel begin the following word, as in the first verse of *Paradise Lost*. These, however, would, in our language, be limits too narrow for the poet: and the ear practised in our versification will take no offence at the conclusion of the second line of *Paradise Lost*, where a long vowel is followed by two consonants within the same syllable, and two consonants begin the next verse. The judicious poet, however, will be sparing of such accumulation of consonants." Sect. 16, second edition.



mental.(as rhyme) to what is more important, may always plead for as much indulgence as can be granted, without a gross violation of its necessary rules.

## CHAPTER VI.

### OF OTHER FAULTS IN RHYMING.

THE faults in rhyming, which have hitherto been noticed, arise from some imperfection in the rhymes themselves; but there remain other faults to be pointed out, which are independent of any such imperfection. Of these, some may be attributed to the inadvertence or negligence of the writer. Of this sort is the recurrence of the same rhymes at short distances. By the *same* rhymes is meant, all those which rhyme together, though consisting of different words; as, bay, day; lay, may; pay, say.

Our age was cultivated thus at *length*,  
But what we gain'd in skill we lost in *strength* :  
Our builders were with want of genius curst ;  
The second temple was not like the first ;

Till you, the best Vitruvius, come at *length*,  
Our beauties equal, but excel our *strength*.

*Dryden.*

Here the same rhymes, and even made by the same words, are separated by one couplet only.

A fault similar to this is the frequent repetition of the same rhymes, as in this example :

Shall funeral eloquence her colours spread,  
And scatter roses on the wealthy *dead* ?  
Shall authors smile on such illustrious days,  
And satirise with nothing—but their *praise* ?

Why slumbers Pope, who leads the tuneful train  
Nor hears that virtue, which he loves, complain ?  
Donne, Dorset, Dryden, Rochester, are *dead*,  
And guilt's chief foe, in Addison, is fled ;  
Congreve, who, crown'd with laurels, fairly won,  
Sits smiling at the goal, while others run :  
He will not write ; and (more provoking still !)  
Ye gods ! he will not write, and Mævius *will*.

Doubly distrest, what author shall we find,  
Discreetly daring, and severely kind,  
The courtly Roman's shining path to tread,  
And sharply smile prevailing folly *dead* ?  
Will no superior genius snatch the quill,  
And save me, on the brink, from writing *ill* ?

Though vain the strife, I'll strive my voice to raise ;  
 What will not men attempt for sacred *praisè* ?

*Young.*

Here, within the distance of ten couplets,  
 are two rhymes twice repeated, and one three  
 times. Again,

For where the tender rinds of trees *disclose*,  
 Their shooting gems, a swelling knot there *grows* :  
 Just in that space a narrow slit, we make,  
 Then other buds from bearing trees we take :  
 Inserted thus, the wounded rind we *close*,  
 In whose moist womb th' admitted infant *grows*.  
 But when the smoother bole from knots is free,  
 We make a deep incision in the tree ;  
 And in the solid wood the slip *enclose* ;  
 The battening bastard shoots again and *grows*.

*Dryden.*

The fault is still greater when two couplets  
 together have the same rhyme ; as,

With soothing words to Venus she *begin* ;  
 High praises, endless honours you have *won*,  
 And mighty trophies with your worthy *son* :  
 Two gods a silly woman have *undone*.

*Ibid.*

Nor is the fault much less, when the rhymes, though not the same, are so near as to differ only by a single letter : these are instances.

Ere this no peasant vex'd the peaceful ground,  
Which only turfs and greens for altars found :  
No fences parted fields, nor marks, nor bounds  
Distinguish'd acres of litigious grounds.

*Dryden.*

The lofty skies at once come pouring down,  
The promised crop and golden labours drown.  
The dikes are fill'd, and with a roaring sound  
The rising rivers float the nether ground.

*Ibid.*

The following couplets in Pope's *Rape of the Lock* are very remarkable :

The doubtful beam long nods from side to side ;  
At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.  
See, fierce Belinda on the Baron flies,  
With more than usual lightning in her eyes :  
Nor fear'd the chief th' unequal fight to try,  
Who sought no more than on his foe to die.  
But this bold lord, with manly strength endued,  
She with one finger and a thumb subdued :

Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew,  
A charge of snuff the wily virgin threw.

*Canto 5.*

The first three couplets have nearly the same rhymes; so have the two others: and to mark the poet's negligence in this passage, the rhymes of the first and fourth couplets have the additional fault of being identical.

These are faults which, though not inexcusable in a long work, are by no means to be allowed in short pieces: for in such, to be correct and polished makes a considerable part of their merit\*.

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\* This frequent repetition of rhymes may be, perhaps, allowed, or, at least, will not be severely condemned in lyric compositions, where the return of the regular stanza lays the author under a greater restraint. An instance of such repetition occurs in Gray:

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,  
Then whirl the wretch from high,  
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,  
And grinning Infamy.  
The stings of Falsehood these shall try,  
And hard Unkindness' alter'd eye.

*Ode on the Prospect of Eton Coll.*

Another fault to be mentioned here, is the introduction of words merely for the sake of rhyme. This is done in various ways. 1st, By unnecessary and superfluous words ; as,

Rome, the terror of the world,  
At length shall sink, in ruin *hurld*.

Again,

So, when a smooth expanse receives *imprest*  
Calm Nature's image on its watery breast.

*Parnell.*

That is, when a smooth piece of water reflects natural objects. Now, in both these instances the rhymes are made by words that had better been omitted ; and the last not only clogs the sentence, but gives a false idea ; for the objects which are reflected by a mirror are not *imprest* upon it.

This fault is sometimes committed when a rhyme is wanted for a word that has but few rhymes to it in the language. The term *world* is one of these ; there are not above five that will pair with it ; two of which are *furld* and *hurld* ;

and these being more pliable than the others, are therefore often worked up into some distorted phrase to furnish a rhyme;—for example,

Let Envy in a whirlwind's bosom hurl'd,  
 Outrageous, search the corners of the world.

*Churchill.*

Cudworth, whose spirit flew, with sails unfurl'd,  
 Through each vast empire of th' ideal world.

*Cawthorn.*

In him He all things with strange order hurl'd ;  
 In him, that full abridgment of the world.

*Cowley.*

Another way of making this fault is, by first pitching upon some rhyme, to which all the rest of the sentence is to be held subservient; and then, for want of a proper word to match with the rhyme already determined, the poet is often obliged to substitute such as he can get. A couplet from the epistle of Eloisa to Abelard will explain and exemplify what we mean. Pope had to express in rhyme and measure this sentence: "I would rather be the mistress of the man I love, than the empress of Cæsar." Of this he took the strong energetic part for his



close, "Make me mistress to the man I love;" and having thus fixed his rhyme, he sacrificed the other line to it: for, as the sentence afforded him no second word to match with the rhyme he had taken, he was driven to make out the sense, as well as he could, by some substitute. He, therefore, substituted the term *prove*, as an equivalent to *be*; and the ardent sentiment of Eloisa was enfeebled by these expressions:

Not Cæsar's empress would I *deign to prove*;  
No, make me mistress to the man I love.

*Pope.*

The notice taken of this fault leads to the mention of another very similar to it. Our versifiers, for the most part, are well acquainted with poetical language; and possess a store of terms and phrases which are very fit and proper to be employed in the composition of verse; but they often commit mistakes in the application of them. Among their errors one arises from this; that they consider certain words to

be universally synonymous, which are only partially so. For instance, a head of hair, and tresses, frequently mean the same thing; but we cannot properly give the name of tresses to every head of hair. Again, waves and water are the same; every wave is water; but water in every situation and quantity is not to be called a wave. The misapplication of such terms as these, and the indifferent use of one for the other, as if they had the same signification in all cases, is a blemish in our poetry, and it deserves animadversion. It is admitted, sometimes for the purpose of supposed poetical ornament, and sometimes for the more urgent purpose of supplying a rhyme. It is found oftenest among young versifiers, yet traces of it are to be seen in writers of a much higher order. In Pope's Windsor Forest the river Thames is described thus :

In that blest moment from his oozy bed  
Old Father Thames advanced his reverend head.  
His *tresses* dropp'd with dews, and o'er the stream  
His shining horns diffused a golden gleam.

Tresses \* are braided hair, and the term is generally, if not always, used to signify the hair of a female head. They would make an incongruous appearance in the head-dress of a *reverend old man*, if taken according to their meaning; but they are here put for hair of the head in general, which is a misuse of the word.

The following expression occurs in the epitaph which Mason composed for his wife, who died of a decline at Bristol wells :

To Bristol's fount I bore with trembling care  
Her faded form : she bow'd to taste the *wave*.

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\* Milton had occasion to use this word when describing Adam and Eve in Paradise; and he marks, by many distinguishing circumstances, the wide difference between the male and female head of hair, in those whom he represents as perfect models of human beauty.

His hyacinthine locks

Round from his parted forelock manly hung  
Clustering, but not beneath his shoulders broad :  
She, as a veil, down to the slender waist,  
Her unadorned golden *tresses* wore  
Dishevell'd, but in wanton ringlets waved,  
As the vine curls her tendrils.—*Par. Lost*, b. 4.

This phrase, which is to signify *drinking a glass of water*, had never been brought into the verse but for want of a rhyme to this just preceding it :

Take that best gift which Heaven so lately gave.

Beside these faults it has been reckoned another to make the great majority of rhymes with monosyllables. Goldsmith was censured for this in the sixth volume of the Transactions of the Irish Academy, p. 101\* ; and Gray, in

\* He was farther blamed for admitting as rhymes monosyllables of the most familiar class: *fire* and *round* were given as proofs; and objection was made to this couplet:

Whatever fruits in different climes are found,  
That proudly rise, or humbly court the ground.  
*Traveller.*

But the blame is unjust; the terms *fire* and *round* are not so familiar, as rhymes, as to be rejected for that: on the contrary, they are fit and eligible before a great number of our words, because they are long and sonorous syllables. In fact, the versification of Goldsmith is excellent, and not liable to censure, except for the want of more variety in his rhymes.

his remarks on the poems of Lydgate, says, " We (the English) are almost reduced to find our rhymes among the monosyllables ; in which our tongue too much abounds. In Pope's *Ethic epistles* (that to Lord Burlington), I find, in the compass of forty lines, only seven words at the end of a verse which are not monosyllables \*."

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\* In this passage, to which Gray refers, none of the rhymes are made by little insignificant words. The ground of his objection therefore is, probably, that those monosyllables he speaks of will encumber the last foot of the verse with consonants ; and so make rough measure in that part of the line which particularly ought to be smooth and flowing. If this be his objection, the passage does not bear him out : for, of the thirty-three lines, which, he says, end with monosyllables, the majority end likewise with a pure iambic foot ; as in these four together :

What brought Sir Visto's ill-got wealth *to waste* ?  
 Some demon whisper'd, " Visto, have a *taste*."  
 Heaven visits with a taste the wealthy *fool*,  
 And needs no rod but Ripley with a *rule*.

*Pope.*

That it is a fault to rhyme with such monosyllables, as are insignificant or trifling words, is

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Neither, to speak of our language in general, is the frame of it such, that a writer should hesitate to admit a monosyllable at the end of his verse, through the fear of being embarrassed with consonants. For although the monosyllable should begin with a consonant, yet the language supplies so many words terminating in a short vowel, viz. both the articles, the sign of the infinitive mood, the numerous class of adjectives and adverbs ending in *y*, beside various others, that he who, with these materials, cannot make an iambic foot as often as it is proper, and he chooses, has not a sufficient mastery of style to compose in verse.

*The* clouds are black, and heaven begins *to* frown,  
*A* sheet of fleecy snow falls thickly down.

Here the class of words above-mentioned join with monosyllables to form pure iambic feet. The pronouns *we*, *you*, *he*, &c. are serviceable to the same end, for example :

*We* straight pursued where'er *you* led the way,  
 And the close act *he* did *they* soon brought into day.

Pope has often employed the relative, *who*, for the same purpose.

acknowledged, and has already been observed; but to object to monosyllables for rhymes, merely because they are so, is fastidious; nor is any reason apparent why the objection is made.

But there still remains a fault connected with rhyming, which ought not to pass unnoticed. It is the insertion of a word in the course of a line which rhymes with the end of it; as,

Here passion *sways*, but there the muse shall *raise*  
Eternal monuments of louder praise.

*Waller.*

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The young *who* labour, and the old *who* rest.

*Epistle to Lord Bathurst.*

*Who* plants like Bathurst, or *who* builds like Boyle.

*Epistle to Lord Burlington.*

We have adduced all these instances to show, that monosyllables may enter into a verse without any injury to the smoothness of its measure, that they can be introduced without difficulty, and that no just objection, upon these accounts, will lie against the use of them either in the end of a line, or in any other part of it.

Tyrannic rhyme, that cramps to equal chime  
 The gay, the soft, the florid, and sublime.

Smith.

When the rhyming word is accented, and happens at a pause, as in these instances, it is more open to notice, and, of course, more offensive. Such a rhyme in an unaccented syllable will sometimes pass with little observation; it ought, however, to be avoided: so likewise are any rhymes which come together in a verse, though they do not rhyme with the end; example:

And nearer *hears* the rider's threatening voice.

Hoole.

To teach each hollow grove and shrubby hill.

Bp. Hall's Sat.

This last line was noted and ridiculed by Milton, in his Apology for Smectymnuus.



## CHAPTER VII.

### OF DOUBLE RHYMES.

UNDER the name of double rhymes are comprehended all those which are made by more than one syllable, of how many syllables soever they may consist. And they may consist of as many syllables as follow the last accented syllable of a word, together with that syllable. Example, *glory, story : beautiful, dutiful : censurable, commensurable*. As in single rhymes it is required that all which follows the vowel shall be identical in sound ; so in double rhymes all which follows the last accented vowel, both consonants and syllables, should in sound be identical : see the examples above.

Double rhymes are but sparingly used in our serious poetry : the reason may be that they are

considered as having too sprightly a character to accord with it, the rhyme of two syllables being a trochee, and that of three, a dactyle: but in earlier times this discordance was either not perceived, or not regarded. The double rhymes in Shakspeare's Rape of Lucrece sometimes occupy an entire stanza, as this:

Besides, the life and feeling of her passion  
She hoards, to spend when he is by to hear her:  
When sighs, and groans, and tears may grace the fashion  
Of her disgrace, the better so to clear her  
From that suspicion which the world might bear her.  
To shun this blot, she would not blot the letter  
With words, till action might become them better.

The rules or custom of a more correct age abridged, in serious poems, this large use of double rhymes; and what was still allowed, was under certain limitations; as, first, that the rhyme should not consist of more than two syllables; and second, that it should not, like some in the stanza above, be made of two words\*.

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\* This rule is to be understood of the grave and higher kinds of poetry. in familiar subjects it may be neglected, as Pope has done:

Under these restraints the double rhyme sometimes appears, and not without grace, in our lyric poetry; as here,

O lyre divine! what daring spirit  
Wakes thee now? though he inherit  
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,  
That the Theban eagle bear,  
Sailing with supreme dominion  
Through the azure deep of air.

*Gray.*

But the most suitable place for the exhibition of double rhymes is where ludicrous subjects are treated of in a burlesque style.

In verses of this class, the rhyming syllables may be as many as follow the last accented syllable of a verse, including that syllable. (We mean here that verse which ends with a polysyllable.) Our language has not many polysyllables where the accent is thrown farther back than the antepenultima; and therefore we have but few rhymes of four syllables; and these are

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The piece, you think, is incorrect? why take it,  
I'm all submission; what you'd have it, make it.

*Prologue to the Satires.*

hardly made, but by some whimsical and far-fetched expressions. Swift, who indulged himself much in these trifles, will furnish an example :

For this, I will not dine with *Agmondesham* ;  
And for his victuals let a *ragman dish 'em*.

Words, accented on the fifth syllable from the end, are extremely rare, and, of course, rhymes to them nearly impossible to be found. I have met with a single instance\*.

Why did old Euclio take his only child,  
And shut her in a cloister *separatory* ?  
Because she was a rebel whig, and wild,  
And he resolved to tame and *keep her a tory*.

\* The rhyme is extended to five syllables in the following couplet :

Dick, you 're as faithless as a *Carthaginian*,  
To court at once Doll, Susan, *Martha, Jenny, Anne*.

But this is not according to rule, or the genius of English rhyme ; for the last accented syllable, in *Carthaginian*, is not the fifth, but only the third from the end ; which, therefore, was the proper limit of this rhyme.

In this species of rhyme there are some faults which cannot be allowed, some licences which may be taken, and some particulars which make a rhyme better than common.

The faults are, a discordance in the first syllable; as,

Whose thread of life the fatal sisters  
Did twist together with its whiskers.

*Hudibras.*

Or, on the other hand, identity; as,

Or idly play at boo-peep with her,  
To find out cloudy or fair weather.

*Ibid.*

In the second and following syllables, any difference is a fault, as in these:

We read in Nero's time, the heathen,  
When they destroy'd the Christian brethren.

*Ibid.*

As if hypocrisy and nonsense  
Had got the advowson of his conscience.—

*Ibid.*

The licences that may be taken are, first, such in the leading syllable as are permitted in single

rhymes; viz. a slight difference of the vowel sound; and, second, any small difference in the remaining syllables.

So lawyers, lest the bear defendant  
And plaintiff dog should make an end *on't*.

*Hudibras.*

Love is a fire, that burns and sparkles  
In men, as nat'rally as in charcoals.

*Ibid.*

Hail! doubly-doubled mighty merry one,  
Stronger than triple-body'd Geryon.  
I chose these rhymes out for their difficulty;  
Will you return as hard ones if I call t'ye?

*Swift to Sheridan.*

In these last instances the difference is in the unaccented syllables; and therefore passes with little offence to the ear; so that such licence may be allowed.

The common double rhymes are those made by single words, and particularly that endless tribe which terminates in *ion*; example:

Why should not conscience have vacation,  
As well as other courts o' th' nation?

*Hudibras.*

But when more words than one are taken to make up the rhyme, it gives opportunity, by the combination, to frame new rhymes, which is pleasing, and not unexpected, in this species of composition. When Butler wrote, this was a new rhyme :

The oyster-women lock'd their fish up,  
And trudg'd away, to cry No Bishop.

*Hudibras.*

And when the rhymes are of more than two syllables, though the difficulty of making them will be much greater, the opportunity of new combinations for rhyme will be increased proportionably.

To produce this novelty is a species of wit ; of a very inferior order indeed, yet such as cannot be exercised without great facility in composition, and command of language. There are poems of a very modern date which will prove this assertion, from whence we conclude that our contemporaries, some of them at least, are superior in these points to the generality of former writers. But the verses of Swift, upon the

ancient dramatic authors, exhibit the most extraordinary specimen, of the sort of rhymes we are now considering, that the English language contains. He had superior abilities in rhyming, and he appears to have set himself down to this piece, merely for the purpose of exerting them. The following lines are an extract :

I went in vain to look for Eupolis  
 Down in the Strand, just where the new pole is ;  
 For I can tell you one thing, that I can,  
 You will not find it in the Vatican.  
 He and Cratinus used, as Horace says,  
 To take his greatest grandees for asses.  
 Poets, in those days, used to venture high ;  
 But these are lost full many a century.  
 Thus you may see, dear friend, *ex pede* hence,  
 My judgment of the old comedians.

Proceed to tragics: first, Euripides  
 (An author where I sometimes dip a' days)  
 Is rightly censured by the Stagirite,  
 Who says his numbers do not fadge aright.  
 A friend of mine that author despises  
 So much, he swears the very best piece is,  
 For aught he knows, as bad as Thespis's ;  
 And that a woman, in these tragedies,  
 'Commonly speaking, but a sad jade is.



At least, I'm well assured, that no folk lays  
The weight on him they do on Sophocles.  
But, above all, I prefer Eschylus,  
Whose moving touches, when they please, kill us.  
And now I find my muse but ill able  
To hold out longer in trisyllable.

*To Dr. Sheridan.*

We shall conclude this subject of double rhymes with laying before the reader what Dryden has said upon it. "The double rhyme (a necessary companion of burlesque writing) is not so proper for manly satire; for it turns earnest too much to jest, and gives us a boyish kind of pleasure. It tickles awkwardly, with a kind of pain to the best sort of readers: we are pleased ungratefully, and, if I may say so, against our liking. He (Butler, of whom he is writing) might have left that task to others, who, not being able to put in thought, can only make us grin with the excrescence of a word of two or three syllables in the close. It is, indeed, below so great a master to make use of such a little instrument. But his good sense is perpetually shining through all he writes; it affords

us not the time of finding faults. We pass through the levity of his rhyme, and are immediately carried into some admirable useful thought."

*Dedication to Juvenal.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OF THE ASSEMBLAGE OF RHYMES.

UNDER this head rhymes will be considered; first; as to the distance at which they stand; and 2d, the number which rhyme together.



The simple and most natural distance is that, when adjoining verses rhyme together, as in the couplet: the next seems to be that of alternate rhymes in the stanza of four lines. But as rhymes are frequently disposed, both in distance and number, very differently from the instances here given, it is proper to notice how that is done; not indeed every licentious manner of doing it, but only some of the most approved examples.

To describe this verbally would at least be tedious: we shall therefore borrow, from Put-





tenham's Art of Poetry, his method of showing the disposition of rhymes, which is compendious and clear, and applicable to every rhyming poem.

It is a bracket, by the points of which the rhymes are represented; and the part which connects those points shows the connexion and place of the rhymes.

By this method the couplet will be represented thus :

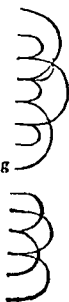
O parent of each lovely Muse,   
 Thy spirit o'er my soul diffuse.   
*J. Warton.*

And thus the alternate rhymes in a quatrain :

How meanly dwells th' immortal mind !   
 How vile these bodies are !   
 Why was a clod of earth design'd   
 To enclose a heavenly star ?   
*Watts.*

A more complicated form of the bracket will be seen if applied to the sonnet :

I once may see when years shall wreck my wrong ;  
 When golden hairs shall change to silver wire,  
 And those bright rays that kindle all this fire  
 Shall fall in force, their working not so strong :  
 Then Beauty (now the burden of my song)  
 Whose glorious blaze the world doth so admire,  
 Must yield up all to tyrant Time's desire ;  
 Then fade those flowers that deck'd her pride so long  
 When, if she grieve to gaze her in her glass,  
 Which then presents her winter-wither'd hue,  
 Go you, my Verse, go tell her what she was ;  
 For what she was she best will find in you :  
 Your fiery heat lets not her glory pass,  
 But, phoenix-like, shall make her live anew..



*Daniel.*

By these brackets may be seen the disposition of the rhymes : i. e. how they are connected and placed : and it is evident that such brackets may be formed as will show the same thing in any poem by mere inspection of them, independent of the words which they represent. This we shall have occasion to exemplify when we come to treat of lyric poetry.

The sonnet which is here given is in the regular form of that species of poem. It came to us from the Italians, and, according to Ellis, (*Specimens of English Poets*, vol. ii. p. 3) who

calls it "a difficult novelty \*," was introduced here, probably by the court poets of the reign of Henry VIII. But in that age the name of Sonnet was very loosely applied. "Some think, (says Gascoigne, in his Instruction concerning the making of Verse in English,) that all poems, being short, may be called sonnets; as indeed it is a diminutive word derived of *sonare*; but yet I can best allow to call those sonnets which are of fourteen lines, every line containing ten syllables." P. 10.

Even this limitation is not strict enough for the regular sonnet: for there the rhymes of the first eight lines are to be such, in number and place, as in the example above. In the remaining six lines the composer has liberty to arrange

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\* Although our poets in that century did not choose to encounter the difficulty of composing regular sonnets, they were not backward to contrive and execute various difficulties of composition in verse, of which some ridiculous specimens may be seen in Webbe's Discourse of English Poetry, edited by Haslewood, p. 64, 65.

his rhymes at discretion. It may be added, that our early writers very seldom constructed their sonnets upon the regular plan. Three quatrains with alternate rhymes, and a couplet in the close, was the most usual form of their composition. Such are the sonnets of Lord Surrey, Gascoigne, Spenser, and Shakspeare; those of Sir Thomas Wyatt are an exception, for they are all regular.

It has been already observed that the quick return of rhyme is inconsistent with sublimity in verse: by which was meant a return at the end of every line of eight, or fewer, syllables; but, on the other hand, the extent to which correspondent rhymes may be separated is not easy to determine. When three heroic lines intervene, they seem to be set as far asunder as can be allowed with propriety. The following verses, from a sonnet of Milton, exhibit an example.

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,  
Of attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise  
To hear the lute well touch'd, or artful voice  
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?

He who of these delights can judge, and spare  
To interpose them oft, is not *unwise*.

If rhymes should be set further apart than in this instance, their correspondence on the ear, which is the main purpose of rhyme, would be lost.

As a quick return of rhyme destroys the gravity and dignity of verse, so a continuance of the same rhyme, for many lines together, tends to produce a similar effect. A very licentious repetition of rhymes occurs in the following stanza of Cowley's Ode, addressed to Brutus :

Virtue was thy life's centre, and from thence  
Did silently and constantly dispense  
The gentle vigorous influence  
To all the wide and fair circumference.

And all the parts upon it lean'd so easily,  
Obey'd the mighty force so willingly,  
That none could discord or disorder see  
In all their contrariety :  
Each had his motion natural and free,  
And the whole no more moved than the whole world  
could be.

A rhyme continued for three lines together is



allowable, and often graceful if the last be an alexandrine, as here.

Waller was smooth, but Dryden taught to join  
The varying verse, the full resounding line,  
The long majestic march, and energy divine \*.

*Pope's Imitations of Horace, Epist. 1.*

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\* It is not unlikely that the bracket which used to be set against such triplets as this, and which the printers have lately omitted to insert in our books, had the same origin with those adopted by Puttenham; and that its design was to apprise the reader of the connexion of the rhymes.

The criticism contained in these celebrated lines seems to have been received by subsequent critics as a sentence of decisive authority. Dr. Johnson's account of Waller and Dryden is a sort of commentary upon them. He says, Waller "certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers, who were living when his poetry commenced. The poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies (on the Immortality of the Soul), which though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified." Of Dryden he affirms that "veneration is paid

Such an assemblage as this, which is called a Triplet, was frequently used by Dryden, even

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to his name by every cultivator of English literature ; as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers, of English poetry : that after about half a century of forced thoughts, and ragged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham ; they had shown that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables." —*Life of Dryden.*

It is unpleasant to contradict such grave authors, when they are treating of a subject with which they must have been well acquainted : but unless we will suffer some of our chief poets to lie under the reproach of great ignorance and incapacity ; unless we are ready to acknowledge that the art of modulation which existed in Queen Elizabeth's age was neglected or forgotten ; that for half a century afterward nothing was produced but ragged metre ; that our writers did not perceive, till Waller and Denham showed them, that the arrangement of syllables, as well as the number, was necessary to make a verse ; that till they were taught by Dryden, they knew not how to compose ; that neither energy nor majesty, nor sono-

to excess, for he sometimes puts two of them together, as here,

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rous lines, nor variation of numbers, is to be found in their works; unless we will acquiesce in the justice of these injurious censures, we cannot permit them to pass without contradiction. In fact, they are altogether unfounded. Waller indeed was smooth; yet not (as Pope would insinuate) the first by many who wrote smoothly in English verse; and some of them equally so with Waller himself, for example William Browne: but Dryden taught nothing of what is attributed to him. If the poets who wrote before him should be examined, there will be found, in some one or other of them, each particular quality for which he is here praised; and all of them in Milton. Neither is it true that the art of modulation was ever forgotten by our poets. After the time of Queen Elizabeth it was preserved by many, besides William Browne above-mentioned; namely, by the brothers Beaumont, by Giles and Phineas Fletcher, by Sandys, to whom others might be added: and when Dr. Johnson speaks of "ragged metre," he must have had in his recollection only Donne, and Ben Jonson, and the disciples of their school.

The following commendatory verses are subjoined not only as an authority for the character given of W.

The queen, determined to the fatal deed,  
 The spoils and sword he left, in order spread ;  
 And the man's image on the nuptial bed.

And now (the sacred altars placed around)  
 The priestess enters, with her hair unbound,  
 And thrice invokes the Powers below the ground.

*Virg. Æn. 4.*

The proper place for a triplet is at the close of a paragraph; but Dryden did not so confine

Browne's poetry, but also as a proof that before Waller began to compose there existed examples of English versification, not inferior in smoothness to the most polished of his.

*To his friend Mr. Browne.*

All that do read thy works and see thy face  
 (Where scarce a hair grows up thy chin to grace)  
 Do greatly wonder how so youthful years  
 Could frame a work where so much worth appears:  
 To hear how thou describ'st a tree, a dale,  
 A grove, a green, a solitary vale,  
 The evening showers, and the morning gleams,  
 The golden mountains, and the silver streams;  
 How *smooth thy verse is*, and how sweet thy rhymes,  
 How sage, and yet how pleasant are thy lines,  
 What more or less can there be said by men,  
 But Muses rule thy hand, and guide thy pen?

*The Author, Thomas Wenman; about the year 1613.*

himself; he introduced one wherever it suited his convenience, as in the instance above quoted. ²

But if the lines be of a measure shorter than the heroic, the continued rhymes suit not so well with grave as with light subjects: as this,

His helmet was a beetle's head,  
Most horrible and full of dread,  
That able was to strike one dead,  
Yet it did well become him:  
And for a plume a horse's hair,  
Which, being tossed by the air,  
Had force to strike his foe with fear,  
And turn his weapon from him.

*Drayton's Court of Fairy.*

In some burlesque poems may be found more than three lines rhyming together, but our serious versification admits of no such licence.

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The sonnet by Daniel, at p. 161, is another instance of smoothness before Waller's time.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OF THE ARRANGEMENT OF RHYMES.

By arrangement is to be understood the order in which rhymes ought to stand, that they may produce the best effect, i. e., to satisfy the ear: for the ear will be better pleased with rhymes that are perfect, if they stand in one order than another; and a skilful management, in ordering those that are imperfect, will render them less displeasing.

In the arrangement of rhymes, whether perfect or not, for serious poetry, care is to be taken to set them at due distance from each other. A rhyme returning at the distance of three or four syllables only is intolerable. This was touched upon when we treated of the combination of verses: but it will not be superfluous to give

here other instances of good and bad arrangement. Cowley will afford both.

I little thought, thou fond ingrateful Sin,  
When first I let thee in,  
And gave thee but a part  
In my unwary heart,  
That thou would'st e'er have grown  
So false and strong to make it all thine own.

*Love's Ingratitude.*

These verses, however false and unnatural the thought may be, are of a serious character: but the arrangement of rhymes in the first couplet tends to destroy that character; for the quick return gives to the second line a levity unsuitable to the preceding: this arrangement is therefore bad. On the contrary, in the concluding couplet, the rhymes are arranged properly, being set at such a distance that the last line is an heroic verse; which is a grave and dignified measure.

A proper arrangement of imperfect rhymes will, in many cases, take off from the offence which they are apt to give to the ear; while, on

the contrary, by an improper arrangement, the imperfection will appear more striking.

All feed on one vain patron, and enjoy  
The extensive blessing of his luxury.

*Pope.*

Beauty, and youth, and wealth, and luxury,  
And spritely hope, and long-enduring joy.

*Dryden.*

It is plain to sense which of these two arrangements is the better ; and we shall endeavour to assign the reason of it ; but first we will produce some instances, to show the different effect of these imperfect rhymes according as they are differently arranged.

The stream of Lethe, and the dread abodes  
Of forms gigantic, and infernal gods.

*Mickle.*

If only thus our heroes can be gods,  
And earth must pay for their divine abodes.

*Rowe.*

Whom thus the Queen address'd ; since mighty Jove,  
The king of men, and sire of gods above.

*Pitt.*



She, for the crime of Ajax, from above  
Launch'd through the clouds the fiery bolts of Jove.

*Pitt.*

To the late revel, and protracted feast,  
Wild dreams succeeded, and disorder'd rest.

*Prior.*

Sublime my court, with Ophir's treasures blest,  
My name extended to the farthest east.

*Ibid.*

Some fell by laudanum, and some by steel,  
And death in ambush lay in every pill.

*Garth.*

Swept off the deck, the pilot from the ship,  
Stunn'd by the stroke, shot headlong down the deep.

*Pitt.*

Upon reviewing these couplets it will be found that, in each of them, the vowel-sound of one rhyme is broader or longer than that of its corresponding rhyme; and, when it stands in the first line of the couplet, that the discordance between them is not so disagreeable as when it comes in the close.

A careful arrangement may likewise salve the imperfection of rhymes when it arises from the different sound of consonants; such as the differ-

ence between the hard and soft sound of *s*, *th*, and some others; example :

Fly where thou wilt, O sea,  
 And Jordan's current cease !  
 Jordan, there is no need of thee ;  
 For at God's word, when'er he please—

*Cowley.*

Here the hard sound of *s* is in the concluding line : the rhyme is better arranged thus,

Her empire, boundless as the main,  
 Will guard at once domestic ease,  
 And awe th' aspiring nations into peace.

*Whitehead.*

Concerning words of many syllables, which have no accent on the last, and which, therefore, some critics will not allow to be capable of making a rhyme, it is generally understood that they ought to stand in the second line; yet they are sometimes put in the first, even by very correct authors: as,

Learn each small people's genius, policies ;  
 The ant's republic, and the realm of bees.

*Popc.*

The rhymes made by such words are often imperfect, always weak; their right place, therefore, is after the word to which they correspond\*.

Now in each of the foregoing rhymes it may be remarked that one of the rhyming syllables has a longer, or a harder, sound than the other; which, if it be set in the conclusion, must dwell longer upon the ear, and so render the imperfection more manifest: whereas, if the rhyming syllable which has the shorter, or lighter sound, be set in that place, the imperfection will not be so observable; because the dissonance will pass more quickly, and leave but a slight and transient impression upon the sense.

There is also an arrangement respecting double rhymes which ought not to be neglected. For the purpose of making such rhymes it is

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\* Some polysyllables have their last accented, as, *amateur*, *disappoint*, *unadorn'd*: of course this rule does not apply to them; neither should it be extended to words that are to be set to music; because the closing note of a grave tune requires, if any way practicable, to be sustained by a long and full-sounding syllable.

allowable to change, in a word, the place of its accent; thus,

And Mars we all know was a quarrelsome bully,  
That beat all his neighbours most unmercifully.

*Byrom.*

Or to require an accent for a word which properly had none,

When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,  
Was beat with fist instead of a stick.

*Hudibras.*

In both these instances, the word that has not changed its accent stands in the first verse, which is its proper place; because it prepares the ear for that licence of rhyme, which would sound harsh or affected if the verses stood in the contrary order: whereas, if they are arranged as here, the reader is led, by the expectation of rhyme, to pronounce the words so as to make it, though he deviates from the usual manner of accenting them.

## CHAPTER X.

### OF THE SPECIES OF POETRY WHICH ADMIT OF RHYME.

RHYME is to be esteemed an ornament of verse, but not of the highest order: it may therefore not merely be dispensed with as unnecessary, but is to be rejected as improper in some kinds of poetry. Other kinds there are in which it is required; to some of these it is suitable, and to some attached by custom. Blair says of rhyme “that it finds its proper place in the middle, but not in the higher ranges of poetry:” and he suggests good reason for its exclusion from these when he adds, that it is “suitable to subjects where no particular vehemence is required in the sentiments, nor sublimity in the style.”

The ornament of rhyme is proper, and required in the shorter pieces of verse; as, epigrams, songs, madrigals, sonnets, epitaphs, elegies, and the like; and in general, all pieces that are written in stanzas, or in any other measure than the heroic. It is likewise commonly thought necessary to give to translations the embellishment of rhyme; and this rather from custom and compliance with the public taste, than for any reason that has been alleged. The translations of Virgil and Homer into blank verse failed, and are forgotten; though we have no translation of the latter which represents the Greek so faithfully. In the present day another attempt in blank verse has been made with better acceptance, and well-deserved success: the translation of Dante by Mr. Cary, for fidelity to the original and good versification, is not surpassed by any in the English language.

Some of the lighter kinds admit rhymes, either single or double, in the middle of the line; which King James, in his Treatise on Scottish Poesie, calls broken verse, and gives this example.

Lo, how that lytil God of love  
Before me then appear'd ;  
So myld-like and chyld-like, with bow three quarters  
skant ;  
So moylie and coylie he lukit like a sant.

But such rhymes are of so little repute that English critics have passed them by without name or notice.

It is further to be observed concerning the kinds of poetry now mentioned, that in strictness of propriety they require different measures, according to the subjects treated of: The Elegy, for instance, being (as its name denotes) of a mournful nature, is most fitly composed in a staid and grave kind of verse ; viz. the heroic \*.

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\* The form in which English Elegy has most commonly appeared is the stanza of four lines, in which the rhymes alternate. Dr. Johnson seems to censure this form ; for he says, "Why Hammond or other writers have thought the quatrain of ten syllables elegiac, it is difficult to tell. The character of the elegy is gentleness and tenuity : but this stanza has been pronounced by Dryden, whose knowledge of English metre was not in-

The same kind of verse is likewise best adapted to the epitaph. We have, indeed, epitaphs of great merit in other measures; such is that of Gray on Mrs. Clarke, beginning with these lines,

considerable, to be the most magnificent of all the measures which our language affords."—*Life of Hammond*.

In alleging the authority of Dryden, Dr. Johnson has not dealt fairly with his readers; for, granting that Dryden had a perfect knowledge of English metre, he did not always speak according to that knowledge: and this the Doctor knew; for, in his *Life of Dryden*, he says of him, "his occasional and particular positions (in criticism) were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp says, *novimus viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo iudice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur*. He is therefore by no means consonant to himself." Such, according to Dr. Johnson, was the judgment of Dryden in his occasional criticisms. It is needless, we think, to vindicate the practice of our elegy-writers against so disputable an authority. When Dryden gave that high character to the quatrain, he was composing his *Annus Mirabilis*, which is written in that measure.



Lo, where this silent marble weeps,  
A friend, a wife, a mother, sleeps :

which yet we cannot but consider as defective, in that the verses, being of eight syllables only, want the gravity of the heroic line, and the solemnity which is required by their subject \*.

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\* The following stanzas, by Ben Jonson, are part of an epitaph on a child of Queen Elizabeth's chapel.

Weep with me, all you that read  
This little story :  
And know, for whom a tear you shed  
Death's self is sorry.  
'Twas a child that so did thrive  
In grace and feature,  
As Heaven and Nature seem'd to strive  
Which own'd the creature ; &c. &c.

It would not be easy to frame any thing more different from what it ought to be, than the combination of short measures, double rhymes, and false thoughts, which enter into this epitaph.

We shall presume on the reader's patience to lay before him a Latin epitaph, of a most singular form ; it being in Sapphic verse : in other respects of much pro-



## CHAPTER XI.

### OF THE CÆSURA, OR PAUSE, IN VERSE.

By cæsure, or pause, is meant the rest which the voice makes in pronouncing a verse, especially of many syllables. It has been said of the pause "that it remained, till later times, unnoticed:" but in fact, one of the earliest writers on English versification (Gascoigne) expressly mentions it, and gives these rules concerning it. "In mine opinion, in a verse of eight syllables, the pause will stand best in the midst; in a verse of ten, it will best be placed at the end of the first four syllables, in a verse of twelve in the midst; in verses of twelve in the first and fourteen in the second, we place the pause commonly in the midst of the first, and at the end of the

first eight syllables in the second. In rhyme royal it is at the writer's discretion \*." —

From hence it appears that this ancient English critic and poet had not only noticed the cæsura, or pause, but also had pointed out in general where it might best stand, and the variety of place which it admitted. To what he has said we shall add something respecting the iambic verses of ten and twelve syllables: i. e. the heroic and alexandrine.

In the heroic verse, if taken singly, the pause will be most grateful to the ear when at the middle, or near it; viz. at the fifth, fourth, or sixth syllable: so likewise in a couplet; and so generally in poems of that sort, i. e. in couplets and rhyme: but, for the sake of variety, it may be put at any syllable, from the first to the ninth. Pope, so eminent for the smoothness and re-

\* George Gascoigne's Instructions concerning Verse, &c.; edited by Haslewood, § 13. Rhyme royal is the stanza of seven heroic lines rhyming after a certain rule: thus .....



gularity of his verse, admits a pause upon each ; for example, on the first.

Strange ! by the means defeated of the ends :

and, to omit others, on the ninth,

But an inferior not dependant, worse.

*Moral Essays, Epist. 2.*

But his most usual and favourite pause was on the fourth, as in these lines.

That changed through all, and yet in all the same,  
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame,  
• Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,  
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,  
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.

*Essay on Man, Epist. 1.*

These lines have been praised and censured upon the same account, namely, the pause. The censure was that they wanted variety because of the repetition of the pause upon the same syllable, in every line, the last only excepted. On the contrary it was said, that this repetition gave to the lines a good and proper effect. Without

deciding any thing here, we shall apprise the reader that in this same poem, and likewise in others of Pope, above half the lines have the pause at the fourth syllable, which we consider as too frequent a recurrence.

The heroic line admits of more than one pause, especially if it occurs near the beginning or the end; as in this,

Die, and endow a college, or a cat.

For the place or number of these pauses there is no rule. But it is a rule, observed by careful versifiers, that, in general, there should be some pause at the end of each couplet. It is a fault to terminate the couplet in the middle of a sentence, as here,

He spoke; the heavens seem'd decently to bow,  
 With all their bright inhabitants; and now  
 The jocund spheres began again to play,  
 Again each spirit sung Halleluia:  
 Only that angel was straight gone: even so  
 (But not so swift) the morning glories flow  
 At once from the bright sun, and strike the ground:  
 So winged lightning the soft air doth wound.

*Cowley's David. Book 1.*

A principal reason why this construction of the couplet is faulty is, that, for want of a pause, the rhyme is nearly lost: it does not dwell upon the ear to produce that effect which is the purpose of making rhyme. This fault, which since the time of Pope had almost disappeared from our poetry, seems to be returning at the present day. In the last century it was seldom admitted, but by those who valued themselves upon the rough structure of their verse. Such was Churchill; and the following is one instance of many in his satires.

By Him that made me, I am much more proud,  
 More inly satisfied, to have a crowd  
 Point at me as I pass, and cry—"That's He—  
 A poor, but honest bard, who dares be free  
 Amidst corruption," than to have a train  
 Of flickering levee-slaves, to make me vain  
 Of things I ought to blush for; to run, fly,  
 And live but in the motion of my eye.

*Churchill. Independence.*

Another fault respecting the cæsura is made, when the line is so constructed that the sense does not terminate where the pause falls; i. e.

the measure requires a pause, and the sense would reject it, as in these,

Is the great chain that draws | all to agree.

*Pope's Essay on Man, Ep. 1.*

And from about her shot | darts of desire.

*Milton's Paradise Lost.*

If, in pronouncing either of these lines, the pause were to be made where the sense requires it, the iambic measure would be changed for another of a very different character, viz. the dactylic, ex. gr.

Is the great | chain that draws | all to agree.

This forced pause therefore, though countenanced by such high authorities, is hardly within the bounds of poetical licence.

For the alexandrine verse it has been laid down as a rule, without any exception, that the pause must be at the sixth syllable. That certainly is the best place; but it may stand at the seventh without impairing the measure, if the next syllable be strongly accented: examples,



And Cupid's self about her | flutter'd all in green.

*Spenser's Fairy Queen.*

From out his secret altar | touch'd with hallow'd fire.

*Milton's Christ's Nativity.*

But if that syllable (the eighth) be not accented, the measure will suffer in some degree; as,

And birds of calm sit brooding | on the charmed wave.

*Milton, ibid.*

Swindges the scaly horror | of his folded tail.

*Ibid.*

On any other syllable of the alexandrine verse, except these two, the pause is not to be endured; as from a few instances will be evident.

She strikes an universal peace | through sea and land.

Than his bright throne | or burning axletree could bear.

Make up full consort | to the angelic symphony.

The dreadful Judge | in middle air | shall spread his throne.

Isis and Orus | and the dog Anubis | haste.

*Milton, ibid.*

In every one of these lines the character of the alexandrine is destroyed. Instead of its

“long majestic march,” we have only hobbling verses with broken measure.

The cæsura, besides giving variety to the numbers, is sometimes introduced to give expression to the sentiment. Under this head it may be sufficient, for the present, to observe, that, when placed at the fourth syllable, it is suitable to what is brisk and sprightly; when at the sixth, to that which is more grave and dignified.

## CHAPTER XII.

### OF IMITATIVE HARMONY AND EXPRESSION IN VERSE.

By imitative harmony is meant a resemblance, real or fancied, which a verse bears to the matter it treats of: Expression includes, besides this, other qualities in verse, which will hereafter be specified.

Language, which expresses every thing it has to utter by sound, has taken occasion, in many instances, to imitate the sounds which natural objects make, when it would express the name or action; such are the names, *Cuckoo*, *Pewit*; the actions, *Neigh*, *Grunt*, and the like. And the faculty, which our language possesses, of

expressing certain things by imitative sounds, as the *baaing* of a sheep, the *cooing* of a dove, the *hissing* of a serpent, and various others, has led some authors to assert, that in the native words of our tongue there is to be found a great agreement between the sound of letters and the thing signified. Sheridan, in his *Art of Reading*, sect. 2, has treated the matter at large, in which he was preceded by the most learned of our grammarians, Wallis: see particularly Chap. XIV. sect. 2. of his *Grammar*. These letters, in their various combinations, may be considered as the elements of imitative harmony in verse, and are applied to that purpose, often with good effect, though it must be acknowledged that, in some cases, it is not real but imaginary only. Again, syllables, according to their different sounds of broad or slender, rough or smooth, will contribute to imitative harmony.

Nor is imitative harmony produced by sound only, but likewise by motion. Syllables, as they are longer or shorter in themselves, or slower or quicker in succession, may form it. But as

the quality of verse is not peculiar to the English, but is found in other languages, the Greek and Latin for instance, and is specially noticed by their critics, it will not be improper to hear what they say concerning it.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his Treatise on Composition, having explained the nature of letters and syllables, and their differences in respect to length and sound, proceeds to observe that nature has taught mankind to form words, which express by imitation the thing signified, in various particulars, as, the voice, the shape, the action, the disposition, the motion, and many others. He says that these words are frequently introduced by the poets into their compositions, of which he gives instances from Homer\*. Quintilian informs us that the formation of such words was not allowed in his (the Latin) tongue; but that there existed a great number, which were made by those who first gave names to things.

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\* Section 16.

Vida, in his *Art of Poetry*, has not omitted this topic: he thus advises the poets in the following passage:

Multa adeo incumbunt doctis vigilanda poetis:  
 Haud satis est illis utcunque claudere versum,  
 Et res verborum propria vi reddere claros;  
 Omnia sed numeris vocum concordibus aptant,  
 Atque sono quæcunque canunt imitantur, et apta  
 Verborum facie, et quæsito carminis ore.

*Poet. Lib. 3.*

He proceeds to give many examples of this imitation from Virgil, which he has very dexterously interwoven with his own lines.

Imitative harmony in verse, therefore, is produced when such terms are employed as are mentioned above; and this imitation, by sound, is legitimate and real.

Another species of imitative harmony is produced by motion, that is, by the quicker or slower succession of syllables, which compose a verse. That a series of long syllables, when uttered, must proceed more slowly than short ones, is evident to sense; and that they proceed more slowly, according to the number of dif-

ferent consonants \*, which enter into them, is demonstrable †.

Again: accented syllables, in continued succession, cannot be pronounced so quickly, i. e. in the same time, as unaccented. When two or more accented syllables stand together, the voice in uttering them makes a pause ‡ between each, nor can they be pronounced otherwise; this any one who chooses may put to the proof, and will find upon trial. And this pause will

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• The consonants here meant are, of course, those only which are pronounced, not others.

† To pronounce two different consonants requires two different positions of the organs of speech, but the change from one position to another cannot be made without taking up some time. See Dion. Hal. sect. 22.

‡ This circumstance attending the utterance of such syllables is stated in a Treatise entitled *Prosodia Rationalis*, p. 134. The author was *Joshua Steele*, a man distinguished for his ingenious researches in this book, but much more for an illustrious example of humanity, by the emancipation of his Negro slaves in the island of Barbadoes.

occupy about as much time\* as the pronunciation of an unaccented short syllable in the same recital.

This celebrated couplet of Pope exhibits a specimen of imitative harmony, which consists in expressing slowness of motion, by a slow succession of syllables.

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,  
The line too labours, and the words move slow.

*Essay on Criticism*, v. 380 †

\* The passage in the *Prosodia Rationalis* to show this is the following :

You must méan Péter coming from the hall.

You must méan as Péter was coming from the hall.

The variation, by the addition of the word *as* (says the author), makes no alteration either in the rythmus or metre of the cadence, since its quantity, when omitted, passes in a silent pause. P. 135.

† The rules which this author has given, and exemplified by instances in this part of his *Essay*, are not difficult to be observed by any one who possesses a sufficient command of the English tongue, to justify his attempt of composing in verse. But there is one of these rules



Here, in the last line, the accented syllables are six, which is one more than the number

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which must not be extended. When he censures a line of monosyllables by this,

And ten low words oft creep in one dull line,

he must be taken strictly; the words must be *low*, and the line must be *dull* to make it reprehensible.

Pope with the pomp of magisterial speech,  
Proud by example as by rule, to teach,  
In artful shackles, magically wrought  
To twist and torture each reluctant thought,  
The unbending polysyllables confines,  
And mocks dull bards who botch up ten-word lines.

But Pope himself has many good verses formed of such words; so likewise have our other poets, nor will there be found in the whole body of English poetry better lines than some composed of monosyllables. If it were necessary to admonish versifiers respecting the length of words, it would be fitter to caution them against the admission of those that extend to five or more syllables, which, on account of more than one defect, seldom appear in a verse but to its disadvantage.

“ I think it not amiss to forewarn you that you thrust as few words of many syllables into your verse as may

contained in a regular heroic verse. It therefore passes more slowly, and, by that circumstance, imitates the thing expressed, which imitation is not imaginary but real, for it requires a longer time in the pronunciation than a regular verse would do.

Suppose the couplet to be altered thus ;

When Ajax strives a weighty rock to throw,  
The line too labours, the rough words move slow.

The first line, now being regular, with an

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be ; and hereunto I might allege many reasons. First, the most ancient English words are of one syllable ; so that the more monosyllables you use, the truer Englishman you shall seem, and the less you shall smell of the inkhorn : also, words of many syllables do cloy a verse, and make it unpleasant, whereas words of one syllable will more easily fall to be short or long, as occasion requireth."

*Gascoigne's Instructions for English Verse, p. 7.*  
*Hawlewood's Edition.*

Upon this subject of monosyllable lines, see Mitford's Inquiry into the Harmony of Language, 2d Edition, p. 414, and the passage there quoted from Shakspeare's King John, Act III. Scene 3.

equal number of accented and unaccented syllables \*, would not imitate nor express any

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\* Between the number of accented syllables, which our heroic verse requires and admits of, there is a considerable latitude: two may suffice, viz. on the fourth and the eighth, as,

To the résemblance of his áncestor.

But these measures are extremely weak, and of such a verse, it may be said that it has hardly a foot to stand upon. With three accented syllables, an heroic verse is tolerably strong and musical, as,

Rejoicing in the brightness of his cóurse.

Spenser has an alexandrine with no more ;

And is a spéctacle of rúinous decáy.

*Fairy Queen, Book III. Chap. 3. Stan. 41.*

But such a line is barely allowable.

On the other hand, we find verses in our poets of chief authority, containing no fewer than eight accented syllables, as this,

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death.

*Paradise Lost, Book II.*

Chaucer, too, has a line with seven such syllables, which is not unmusical.

As oke, fir, birch, aspe, alder, holm, popléré.

*Knight's Tale, v. 2923.*

thing relative to the subject; the other, by having an additional accented syllable (viz. seven) would perhaps carry the imitation to an excess.

The next lines of the Essay are these:

Not so when swift Camilla scours the plain,  
Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.

Here the second verse, which was intended to represent a swift and light motion, has been censured, not unjustly, as presenting rather a contrast to it: for of the first eight syllables not one is short, and beside that, four of them are accented. There would be little difficulty or merit in framing a couplet upon the same subject, which should be free from these objections, such as the following:

But if an Oread trip it in the chase,  
Your imitative line will emulate her pace.

I shall not proceed to give any other instances under this head, lest I should produce some that might appear to be of a more doubtful character, for, as Dr. Johnson says, "the desire

of discovering frequent adaptations of the sound to the sense, has produced, in my opinion, many wild conceits and imaginary beauties." The reader is referred to his *Life of Pope*, for what he has said more upon this topic.

It is to be observed, however, that when he advances a criticism in poetry, which is contrary to the general opinion, he is often unfair, as in that animadversion upon imitative harmony. Having quoted from Pope the lines above mentioned, he adds, "when he had enjoyed for about thirty years the praise of Camilla's lightness of foot, he tried another experiment upon sound and sense, and produced this memorable triplet:

Waller was smooth, but Dryden taught to join  
The varying verse, the full resounding line,  
The long majestic march, and energy divine.

Here are the swiftness of the rapid race, and the march of slow-paced majesty, exhibited by the same poet in the same sequence of syllables, except that the exact prosodist will find the line of *swiftness*, by one time longer than that of *tardiness*." *Life of Pope*.

It is true that Addison, Spectator No. 253, gave some praise to the general passage in which Camilla is mentioned; but it is notorious that the line designed to represent her swiftness was a complete failure, and not at all deserving of praise. Again, the line describing the march, &c. is not designed to describe tardiness; that is more evidently described in the couplet, When Ajax strives, &c. To infer, therefore, from what Pope did here, that imitative harmony is *commonly fancied*, is to make a wrong conclusion from false premises.

But the famous lines of Homer, in the Odyssey, must not be omitted, which describe the unavailing toil of Sisyphus; and however the imitation may be represented as fanciful (as it is by Dr. Johnson in the place above quoted), they have been celebrated by critics, and imitated by poets, both ancient and modern.

To exhibit them in a new translation may be presumptuous, yet perhaps escape censure.

Then Sisyphus I saw, with ceaseless pain  
Labouring beneath a ponderous stone in vain.

With hands and feet striving, and all his might,  
 He push'd th' unwieldy mass up a steep height :  
 But ere he could achieve his toilsome course,  
 Just as he reach'd the top, a sudden force  
 Turn'd the curst stone, and slipping from his hold,  
 Down again, down the steep rebounding down it roll'd\*.

Expression †, as we have said, while it includes

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\* The same in Latin.

Sisyphus est illic, quem vidi dura ferentem :  
 Ingens ingenti saxum molimine agebat,  
 Scilicet, et nixus graviter manibus pedibusque  
 Saxum obrudebat contra latera ardua montis,  
 In culmen tentans imponere ; verum ubi summum,  
 Jamjam attingebat, subito vis cæca repellens  
 Rursus ad ima revolvit inexcuperabile saxum.

The artificial structure of the original lines, and in what it consists, is explained at length by Dion. Hal. Sect. 20.

† Music, as well as poetry, employs in its composition both imitation and expression ; and Avison gives this account of the difference between them.

“ As dissonance and shocking sounds cannot be called musical expression, so neither can mere imitation of several other things be entitled to this name, which, how-

imitative harmony, extends to other qualities of verse; but, since letters and syllables are con-

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ever, among the generality of mankind hath often obtained it. Thus, the gradual rising or falling of the notes in a long succession, is often used to denote ascent or descent; broken intervals, to denote an interrupted motion; a number of quick divisions, to describe swiftness or flying; sounds resembling laughter, to describe laughter: with a number of other contrivances of a parallel kind. Now, all these I should choose to style imitation, rather than expression; because it seems to me, that their tendency is rather to fix the hearer's attention on the similitude between the sounds and the things which they describe, than to affect the heart and raise the passions of the soul.

“What then is true musical expression? I answer,—it is such a concurrence of air and harmony, as affects us most strongly, with the passions or affections which the poet intends to raise: and, on this account, the composer is not principally to dwell on particular words in the way of imitation, but to comprehend the poet's general drift or intention; and on this to form his airs and harmony, either by imitation (so far as imitation may be proper to this end) or by any other means. But this I must still add, that if he attempts to raise the passions by imita-



stituent parts of imitative harmony, it will be proper to say something of these, so far as they conduce to that effect."

Dionysius, in his Treatise above-mentioned, having divided the Greek alphabet into its several classes, of vowels, semi-vowels (or liquids), and mutes, and given to each its character, shows how, by a proper selection and use of these in composition, an expression is produced corresponding to the sense; and this he does by a number of instances from Homer and other authors, both in verse and prose, in the many varieties of long and short, smooth and rough-sounding letters and syllables; from all which it appears, that they were not inattentive to this artifice\*. Our own language contains let-

tion, it must be such a temperate and chastised imitation, as rather brings the object before the hearer, than such an one as induces him to form a comparison between the object and the sound."—*Essay on Musical Expression*, sect. 3.

The kind of expression here recommended is not less applicable to versification, than to musical composition.

\* Sect. 14 and 16.

ters and syllables, which are capable of yielding the same kind of expression for every purpose that may be required. To instance in the opposite qualities of sweetness and strength in syllables. The quality of sweetness is produced by the union of long vowels and diphthongs with the semi-vowels. On the contrary, the short vowels united with the mutes form the harsher and less pleasing syllables, and the intermixture of these, i. e. long vowels and diphthongs with mutes, or short vowels with liquids, (viz. semi-vowels), compose an infinite variety of sounds of different degrees of sweetness, according to the nature of the letters that form them.

The strength of syllables depends on the same principle. But those letters which contribute most to sweetness are not so fit as others to produce strength; the harsh syllables form the most forcible sounds; and their strength depends on the greater impetuosity of the breath and voice exerted in pronouncing them. The sweetness of syllables, which takes from their strength, proceeds from the more equal flow of the voice in

their utterance; such are those consisting of long vowels and liquids. It may be added, that the concurrence, or blending of vowels, adds to the sweetness; and the union of two, or more consonants, gives greater strength\*.

And as the nature of syllables depends upon the letters of which they are composed, some coalescing with ease, and others not mixing without difficulty, so the nature of words depends on the same principle; and they are smooth or harsh to the ear, in proportion as each syllable is with ease or difficulty pronounced after that which goes before.

The ancient Greek musicians, as we are informed by Demetrius Phalereus †, made a distinction of words into smooth, rough, compact, and swelling (or high sounding). The smooth were those composed entirely, or for the most part, of vowels, as *Aias* (Ajax); the rough, on the contrary, were those in which consonants predominated; and the compact, a medium be-

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\* See Sheridan's Art of Reading, Lect. 1.

† Treatise on Elocution, sect. 178, &c.

tween the two. As an example of the high sounding, he gives *βροντα* the Doric word for thunder, which he says was at once rough and long, and broad; rough in the first syllable, because of the consonants; long in the second, by its vowel, and also broad, being *α* for *η*\*, which was the Doric dialect; and it was the character of that dialect to speak every thing broad.

The same author affirms, that a long syllable is naturally grand; and again, that a rough word, i. e. composed of letters which give an unpleasant sound, is expressive of greatness. This he shows, by examples from Thucydides and Homer; for (adds he) that which is smooth and pleasing to the ear is not admitted into grand composition, except in a few cases †.

Longinus also, in his Treatise on the Sublime, having brought an example from Demosthenes, to prove how much depends upon a due choice

\* η. The sound of this letter is heard in the voice of the sheep, and in *day, mane, grain.*

† Demet. Phal. on Elocut. sect. 39 and 48.

and order of words, quotes Euripides, to show that even common and vulgar words, when thus arranged, produce a sort of grandeur and sublimity. Sect. 40. Similar observations have been made by the Latin writers, upon the proper use and effect of syllables and words. Thus Quintilian :—“ Cum idem frequentissime plura (verba) significant, quod *συνηρημια* vocatur, jam sunt aliis alia honestiora, sublimiora, nitidiora, jucundiora, vocaliora. Nam ut syllabæ e litteris melius sonantibus clariores sunt, ita verba e syllabis magis vocalia; et quo plus quæque spiritus habet, auditu pulchrior. Et quod facit syllabarum, idem verborum quoque inter se copulatio, ut aliud alii junctum melius sonet. Diversus tamen est usus: Nam rebus atrocibus verba etiam ipso auditu aspera magis conveniunt.” Instit. Orat. lib. 8. cap. 3.

From these passages may be understood, not only what care the classic writers took to give expression to their compositions, but likewise by what means they effected it. If we now turn to the poets of our own country, we shall find that, in this particular of their art, they have

not been negligent nor unsuccessful. This we will proceed to show, by examples from various authors. But first, because Cowley has left something remarkable upon this point of expression, or, as he describes it, "Such a disposition of words and numbers, as that out of the order and sound of them, the things themselves may be represented," and has said what might induce his readers to believe that no such thing was to be discovered in English versification before his time—I will introduce his own account of what he performed, together with certain criticisms, to which it has given rise.

Cowley valued himself upon his skill in giving to his verses what he thought to be imitative harmony and expression, of which this line in the first book of his *Davideis* is an example :

Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless space.

Upon this line he took occasion to make the following observations.

"I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of readers, that it is not by negligence that this verse is so *loose*, long, and, as it

were, vast; it is to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem, that else will pass for very careless verses: as before,

And over-runs the neigh'ring fields with violent  
course.

In the 2d book,

Down a precipice steep, down he casts them all—  
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care.

In the 3d,

Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er  
His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.

In the 4th,

Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th' ignobler wood;  
*And,*

Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong;

and many more: but it is enough to instance in a few. The thing is, that the disposition of words and numbers should be such, as that out of the order and sound of them the things themselves may be represented. This the Greeks

were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our English poets observed it for ought I can find. The Latins sometimes did it, —their prince, Virgil, always; in whom the examples are innumerable, and taken notice of by all judicious men.”

“ I know not,” says Dr. Johnson, animadverting on this passage, “ whether he has, in many of these instances, attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A *boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass*, or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous and unsociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care*, I cannot discover; nor why the *pine* is *taller* in an alexandrine than in ten syllables. But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of representative versification, which perhaps no other English line can equal.

He who defers this work from day to day,  
Does on a river's bank expecting stay



Till the whole stream that stopp'd him shall be gone,  
*Which runs, and as it runs, for ever shall run on* \*"

When Dr. Johnson calls Cowley's line *boundless*, he is a little uncandid. Cowley himself does not call it so, nor mean it for such; but, as he says, "to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes." The resemblance, indeed, would have been merely fanciful, had his attempt succeeded; \*but it has failed entirely. By putting *glory* to stand there for a monosyllable, instead of producing an expressive line, he produced one which is neither measure nor verse.

To call another of these lines a *verse of brass* and of *strong brass*, is again a misrepresentation. Neither is the poet censurable here, for stating this couplet to be expressive of the thing described. For in justice to him, it ought to be observed (and the observation is to be extended and taken for general), that in a successful at-

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\* This line would have been still more expressive thus,  
*Which running as it runs, for ever will run on* ;  
 for there would have been a pause less.

tempt to produce imitative harmony or expression by syllables and words, their propriety and beauty is perceived; because, at the same time, their sense is perceived; and therefore the design of the poet is understood, being made evident by the sense. The same may be affirmed of the pauses, which are introduced for the sake of expression. In the lines under consideration, Cowley describes the formidable armour of a giant; and to give particular effect to his description, he selected terms of a rough and broad sound, *strong brass*. One of these he employed repeatedly, *brass* helmet, boots *brass*; and he made his verse irregular and harsh, by accented syllables in succession, introduced thrice. Now, in doing this (unless the authorities above quoted, and all the ancients are wrong), the terms and measures which he used were exactly suited to his purpose; and therefore, instead of incurring censure, entitle him to praise.

Johnson farther says, that he "cannot discover what there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care*." Perhaps no one else can do more than guess how the author's design

was here executed. The peculiarity is evident enough: it lies in the words *with loose*; the first unaccented, the second accented; just contrary to what the regular measure required. The author thought, perhaps, that when he admitted this irregularity, he made what he has called a *loose* verse; and that by admitting it intentionally (as he did) at the words *loose care*, he showed a care joined with negligence. This, however, is merely surmise; but the same measure and the same words occur in another poem of that age, where every ear will perceive the effect, and where a good imitative harmony is produced. It is in Rochester's verses upon Flatman,

———That slow drudge in swift Pindaric strains,  
Flatman, who Cowley imitates with pains,  
And rides a jaded muse, whipt, *with loose* reins.

*Allusion to the Tenth Satire of the 1st Book of Horace.*

Here the deviation from regular metre in the latter part of the last verse, and the accented syllables in succession twice occurring, make the line proceed haltingly and slowly along, in repre-

sensation of the spiritless and weary pace expressed by the sense.

Some other instances of expression will now be given to prove that, long before Cowley's time, it existed in English poetry, and particularly in Shakspeare. In the tragedy of Hamlet, that prince conjures his friend Horatio, who was desirous of dying with him, still to live. His words are,

If ever thou didst hold me in thine heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
*And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,*  
 'To tell my story.

*Act V. Scene 2.*

The composition of the third line is remarkable, for it is clogged with consonants, and the aspirate, and the hissing *s*; and all the syllables, but one, are long, either by quantity or position, i. e. two consonants following the vowel. By this artificial structure, the utterance of the verse is made to resemble the sense, for it does not admit of a quick or easy pronunciation.

In the first part of Henry the Fourth, Act 3, Scene 1, are these lines,

She bids you

Upon the wanton rushes lay you down,  
And rest your gentle head upon her lap,  
And she will sing the song that pleaseth you,  
And on your eye-lids crown the god of sleep,  
Charming your blood with pleasing heaviness,  
Making such difference betwixt wake and sleep,  
As is the difference betwixt day and night,  
The hou before the heavenly-harness'd team  
Begins his golden progress in the east.

The most obvious character of these lines is their monotonous flow; which, if they had been upon a different subject, would have been a fault; but in this case it was designed. They were framed to run evenly and uniformly along; that being the most proper movement to accompany and express their meaning, which is an invitation to rest and sleep. The author, to attain his purpose, has separated all the lines (except the 8th) by a stop at the end of each. This alone was enough to produce a monotony; but beside this, the single pause which he has admitted into every line is generally in, or near, the middle of it: then, the feet are all such as

contribute to smooth versification. "There is not one foot of two accented syllables ; on the contrary, some are unaccented ; but by far the greatest number are regular ; i. e. accented on the second syllable. By these means the verses contain the expression which Shakspeare undoubtedly designed to give them.

The excellence of these passages was long ago noticed by Webb, in his Dialogues on Poetry and Music. What is here done is only to explain the cause of that excellence ; and, as it were, to analyse them, by examining the nature of the feet and syllables which enter into their composition.

The methods of giving expression to verse are various ; but they may all be reduced under the two general heads of sound and motion. Expression, by the sound of broad and rough syllables, has been already exemplified in two instances ; from which may be collected how syllables of other sound are used to produce it. I will add a few lines made expressive by various means, and will take them indiscrimi-

nately. Milton, in his relation of the combat between the archangel Michael and Satan, introduces these circumstances :

The sword  
Of Michael, from the armoury of God,  
Was given him temper'd so, that neither keen  
Nor solid might resist that edge: it met  
The sword of Satan, with deep force to smite  
*Descending, and in half cut sheer* ; nor staid,  
But with swift wheel reverse, deep entering, shared  
All his right side: then Satan first knew pain,  
And writhed him to and fro convolved ; so sore  
The *griding* sword with *discontinuous* wound  
Pass'd through him.

P. L. b. 6.

The swift motion of the weapon is here very aptly expressed by the rapidity of pronunciation required in the second and third feet of the line which describes its descent and stroke : three of the four syllables are without an accent. If the line be transposed, thus, “Descending, and cut sheer in half,” the effect will be entirely destroyed ; which, as it now stands, is heightened by the contrast of the following foot (the 4th) consisting of two accented syllables.

Another mode of giving expression is to describe extraordinary things by extraordinary terms. An angel suffering a bodily wound was altogether most extraordinary: and Milton has described it by words that are no less so:

The *griding* sword with *discontinuous* wound  
Pass'd through him.

The terms *griding* and *discontinuous* are not, I believe, elsewhere to be found in English poetry, so uncommon are they; by that quality therefore they are well adapted to excite particular attention.

The following line, which describes the marine animals at their creation, is rendered expressive by a different circumstance; viz. a redundancy of syllables joined with their broad sound.

Part, huge of bulk,  
Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait.

But nothing in verse contributes more to expression than pauses judiciously managed. "Expression (says Mr. Mitford) is most emi-



nently assisted by the pause, when it immediately follows an emphatical word at the beginning of a line, or precedes one at the end of a line. Milton has very many striking instances of this,

All but within those banks where rivers now  
Stream, and perpetual draw their humid train.

*P. L. b. 7. 307.*

It has been observed of this last line, that you cannot read it otherwise than slowly, and so as to give your mind a picture of the thing described. The pause, by assigning so large a portion of the verse to that member of the sentence where the perpetual flow of the rivers is mentioned, very much helps the idea of the vast tract of country through which they flow. But Milton has not left the expression to the pause alone: he has made the line of a really unusual length.

*Streām ānd pērpētūāl drāw thēir hūmid trāin.*

Allowing two times to a long syllable, and one to a short one, this line has at least twenty times; a circumstance not common in the epic

pentaneter, and of itself sufficient to make the movement necessarily slow\*.”

Although I do not quite agree with the learned author in his measurement of the line, I think the comment well grounded, and therefore present it to the reader.

But a pause much more expressive than this occurs in the description of the lazar-house; where the sick are seen lying in a hopeless condition, while

Over them triumphant Death his dart  
Shook, but delay'd to strike.

*P. L. b. 11. l. 391.*

The impression made by such a pause as this is natural, and therefore not confined to the poetry of one language, but is felt in the verses of every other where it is introduced; and frequent instances to prove it are brought from Homer †.

\* Essay upon the Harmony of Language, 1st Ed. p. 140. 144.

† Iliad, 1. 52. 5. 147.

Another example of expression is this, in the description of carriage wheels descending and ascending a hill,

Which in their different courses as they pass,  
Rush violently down precipitate,  
Or slowly turn, oft resting, up the steep.

In the second line the expression consists in its rapidity, which is caused by having two unaccented feet, and six short syllables. On the contrary, the third line is made to move heavily along, by six accented syllables, and two pauses.

In Dryden's tragedy of *Edipus* there is a verse which we look upon as expressing very happily the sense by the measure: but whether so or not, the verse is eminently beautiful. The speaker announces the death of a person whose days had run on to a great length,

Till, like a clock, worn out with eating time,  
*The wheels of weary life at last stood still.*

The first four feet of this line, being pure iambs, proceed regularly and evenly on till they are contrasted by the fifth, which is admirably

composed to represent, by its consoñants, short vowels, and accents, the stop and ceasing of the motion. Change the order of words thus,

The wheels of weary life stood still at last,

and the expression is lost; so it would be if the vowels in the last foot were long.

Dyer is a poet whose successful attempts at imitative harmony and expression have been noticed by the critics; of which this is one, taken from his poem on the Ruins of Rome.

The pilgrim hears

Aghast the voice of time; disparting towers,  
Tumbling all precipitate down-dash'd.

The fall of buildings is well represented by the measure of this last line. Compare it now with the preceding one from Dryden, the concluding foot is of the same kind in each; but all the rest is so different, that he who understands versification would never employ, or admit, the measures of the one upon the subject of the other.

But Dyer was not always successful in these

attempts. Describing a voyage through the Indian ocean, he says,

With easy course

The vessels glide ; unless their speed be stopp'd  
By dead calms, that oft lie on those smooth seas.

*The Fleece, b. 4.*

The attempt at imitation here has destroyed the metre \*. The greater part of the line is rather anapestic than heroic; and the insertion of two short syllables would complete an anapestic verse; as thus,

By dead calms | that oft lie | on those smooth | *yellow*  
seas.

Under the head of expression may be introduced the celebrated couplet of Denham, which Dryden so particularly commends for its sweetness. See his Dedication to Virgil's *Æneis*.

\* The metre is destroyed by putting a trochee for the second foot without a pause before it. Without a pause immediately preceding, the trochee can hardly stand in any part of an heroic verse, except the beginning; where, indeed, the division between line and line is equivalent to such a pause.

Tho' deep, yet clear, tho' gentle, yet not dull ;  
 Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

He says, "there are few who can find the reason of that sweetness; and he propounds it as a riddle to be solved." It were to be wished that he had described these lines more definitely; for he himself acknowledges that two authors may be equally sweet, but that a great distinction is to be made in sweetness; as in that of sugar, and that of honey. What sweetness, or other character, belongs to a verse, may be known by scrutinizing its constituent parts, and considering the letters, the syllables, the feet, and the pauses which enter into it.

To examine now the verses propounded. The whole couplet is remarkably free from any hissing sounds; having only one letter with the sound or power of *s*, and not that at the end of a syllable to dwell upon the ear: neither has it any strong aspirate. In the first line there is no rough consonant, except one *r*; nor any great or harsh combination of consonants; neither is there any broad-sounding vowel or diphthong. Further, as *y* in *yet* makes part of a diphthong,

the line contains six long vowel-sounds, or diphthongs; and the four others, *gentle*, *not*, *dall*, are each combined with a semivowel, *n* or *l*. The second line is different in character; having a broader vowel, and a larger combination of consonants in the word *strong* than exists in the preceding. The letter *r*, likewise, and the diphthong *ou* occur in it repeatedly. These make it sonorous, but not rough; for they are tempered by letters of a different quality, viz. *o* and the short *i*. This line has also six long vowel-sounds; so that, in twelve of the twenty syllables composing the couplet, that sound predominates which renders a syllable tuneful, and pleasing to the ear. As to the feet, they are far from regular; there being six spondees, three iambics, and one trochaic; but not a single Pyrrhic (or weak) foot. The pauses are three in each line; in the first, at the second, the fourth, and the seventh syllables; in the other, at the first, the fourth, and the ninth.

Such are the constituent parts of this famous couplet; which, for agreeableness of sound, quality of feet, and variety of pauses, is truly

singular; but under what predicament it is to be ranked I pretend not to determine.

There is another circumstance which may be referred to the head of poetical expression.

It is a precept in composition that such periods as admit of it should gradually rise and exhibit a climax; which is no other than the general rule applied to writing; viz. that we should proceed from worse to better: that we should do this where it is practicable, and always avoid going in a contrary order. This rule has been often given for the thoughts, the images, the language of a period; but it extends likewise to the measure of it, to the structure of the verse; which ought to be more pleasing and perfect in the close: and it is but a subordinate part, a particular case of this rule, which the ancient writers upon oratory (Cicero and Quintilian) give, when they direct that in the close of a sentence the rhythm must be carefully laboured, while, in the middle, it requires less diligence and polish. Nor was this rule unobserved by their best poets. Addison has noticed the practice of it by Lucretius. When



the dry and untractable nature of his subject has obliged him to express himself in several harsh lines, he often slides into some description or simile, by which he can terminate his period in a pleasing flow of verse : ex. gr.

Fulmina gignier e crassis, alteque putandum est  
 Nubibus extractis ; nam cœlo nulla sereno,  
 Nec leviter densis mittuntur nubibus unquam.  
 Nam dubio procul hoc fieri manifesta docet res,  
 Quod tunc per totum concrescunt æra nubes  
 Undique, uti tenebras omnes Acherunta reamur  
 Liquisse, et magnas cœli complèsse cavernas :  
 Usque adeo terra nimborum nocte coorta  
 Impendent atræ formidinis ora superne,  
 Cum commoliri tempestas fulmina cœptat.—*L. 6. v. 245.*

The same contrivance may be seen in the structure of Milton's paragraphs : as in this, which is the conclusion of his catalogue of the fallen angels.

'The rest were long to tell, tho' far renown'd,  
 'The Ionian gods, of Javan's issue ; held  
 Gods, yet confess'd later than heaven and earth,  
 Their boasted parents : Titan, heaven's first-born,  
 With his enormous brood, and birthright seiz'd  
 By younger Saturn ; he from mightier Jove,  
 His own and Rhea's son, like measure found ;  
 So Jove usurping reign'd ; these first in Crete

And Ida known, thence on the snowy top  
 Or bold Olympus, ruled the middle air,  
 Their highest heaven ; or on the Delphian cliff,  
 Or in Dodona, and thro' all the bounds  
 Of Doric land : or who with Saturn old  
 Fled over Adria to the Hesperian fields,  
 And o'er the Celtic roam'd the utmost isles.—*P. L. b. 1.*

They but now who seem'd

In bigness to surpass earth's giant sons,  
 Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room  
 Throng numberless, like that pygmean race  
 Beyond the Indian mount, or fairy elves,  
 Whose midnight revels, by a forest side  
 Or fountain, some belated peasant sees,  
 Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon  
 Wheels her pale course : they, on their mirth and dance  
 Intent, with jocund music charm his ear ;  
 At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.—*Ib.*

The gradation then or climax here noticed is made by proceeding from irregular to regular measures, and by closing the period with one, or more, lines, composed, as nearly as may be, of those feet which are proper to that species of verse in which the poem is written : and the gradation will be more complete, and the verse more harmonious, if the quantity and the accent combine together.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### OF ALLITERATION.

By this figure, which sometimes gives expression to a verse, is commonly understood two or more words standing in the same sentence, and beginning with the same letter, so that this line

Apt alliteration's artful aid •,

at once describes its use, and presents an example of it. But alliteration does not absolutely require that the letter should stand at the beginning of words; it is sufficient, if it stand at the beginning of the accented syllable, as,

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• Churchill's Prophecy of Famine.

Now he *h*ides behind the *h*ill.  
Linnets with unnumbered *n*otes.

*Cunningham's Pastoral* ;

for in these and other instances, it is the accent that gives strength to the alliteration, and (as it were) forces it into notice.

Letters, to make alliteration, must have the same sound, whatever be their written character: *c*are and *c*ell, *g*ain and *g*em, do not make it, though written with the same letter ; neither will *s* with *sh*, nor *t* with *th*. On the contrary, it is made by *f* with *ph*, by the soft sound of *c* with *s*, and of *g* with *j*, though the characters are different, as, *f*ellow, *p*heasant ; *c*ell, *s*eller ; *g*entle, *j*ingle, &c.

Alliteration may be casual, and will sometimes occur without any intention of producing it. Such these lines seem to be,

He brought in triumph *b*ack the *b*eauteous dame.  
That others may have *t*ime to take their *t*urn.

*Dryden's Palamon and Arcite, Book I.*

But in general the design is marked, and evidently appears, making the alliteration in various

ways : 1st. By setting the letters in the emphatic words of the sentence, as,

I am a conqueror, she a captive ; I as fortunate as she fair.  
*Lilly's Campaspe, Act II. Scene 2.*

2d. By setting them in the word which correspond in the different parts of the sentence ; verbs with verbs, nouns with nouns, adverbs with adverbs, &c.

That will not feed my heart, yet shall it fill mine eye.  
*Ib. Act IV. Scene 4.*

In painting, the more colours the better counterfeit ; observing black for a ground and the rest for grace.  
*Act III. Scene 4.*

If she did not hate him deadly, she would love him dearly.  
*Shakspeare's Much Ado about Nothing, Act V. Scene 1.*

These examples are enough to show how studied alliterations are formed, where (to borrow a phrase of that time) the letter is hunted ; but all the manners of forming such it would be endless to enumerate.

∩ The practice of alliteration is as ancient as

Homer; and the rhetorician Hermogenes\* has quoted, from the *Iliad*, the following lines, as a remarkable instance :

Ἦτοι ὁ κακπεδιον το Αληιον οιοσ αλατο,  
 'Ον θυμον κατεδων, πατον ανθρωπων αλειων.

*Iliad*, 6, v. 201.

But he has omitted to notice a more remarkable circumstance in the second line, where every word ends with the letter *ν*, which is a singular kind of alliteration. The person, whose solitary condition the poet describes, is Bellerophon ;

The walks and haunts of men avoiding all,  
 He wander'd on the Aleian plain alone.

Or thus, for the English language is copious enough to express the original by many varieties of alliteration :

With sorrowful and silent steps he stole  
 Along the Aleian straths, a solitary stray.

In Latin poetry likewise, alliteration found a

\* *Ars Rhetor.* p. 193. Edit. Crispip.

place; and to Ennius is ascribed the extravagant and ridiculous use of it, in this verse,

O Tite, tute Tati, tibi tanta, tyranne, tulisti \*.

It was frequently introduced by Lucretius, and not without grace, as in the concluding line of this passage, which describes the damage occasioned by violent winds.

Et tamen interdum magno quæsitâ labore,  
 Cum jam per terras frondent, atque omnia florent,  
 Aut nimiis torret fervoribus ætherius sol,  
 Aut subiti perimunt imbres gelidæque pruinae,  
 Flabraque ventorum violento turbine vexant.

*Lib. 5. v. 214.*

Yet oft the hardwon produce of our toil,  
 Even in the leaf and blossom of their time,  
 Hyperion's heat o'erpowers, or sudden rains  
 And chilly frosts destroy them, or they fly,  
 The sport of hurricanes and whirlwinds wild.

Alliteration was introduced early into the poetry of this country, though it was not much

\* Isidor. Lib. 1. c. 35, vide etiam Ennii Vit. Hier. Columna auctore, p. 9, in Fragment. Ennii ex officin. Wetstein. 1707.

affected by Chaucer, or his contemporaries; but it spread by degrees, and, in less than a century, had become a studied ornament of verse, both among the English and Scottish poets. From one of these last named, Robert Henrysoun, who wrote in the fifteenth century, we shall give an example; it is the second stanza of his poem entitled "The Abbey Walk."

Thy kingdom, and thy great empire,  
Thy *royalty*, nor *rich array*,  
Shall nought endure at thy *desire*,  
But as the *wind will wend away*.  
Thy *gold*, and all thy *goodis gay*,  
When *fortune list will fra thee fall* :  
Sen thou sic samples sees ilk day,  
Obey and thank thy God of all.

The progress of alliteration still continued; till, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, compositions of prose as well as verse abounded with it, and it was in such general favour, that King James, in his Rules of Scottish Poesy, gives this direction concerning it: "Let all your verse be literal, as far as may be. By literal I



mean that the most part of your line shall run upon a letter, as this line runs upon F,

Fetching food for to feed it fast forth of the 'Fairy."

*Chap. III.*

But this excessive use of it offended some of better judgment, and the critics did not scruple to avow their dislike. The annotator, E. K., on Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, at this line of his author,

For lofty love doth lothe a lowly eye \*,

remarks, "I think this playing with the letter *bé* rather a fault than a figure." But he could not avoid the fault which he was censuring. Much more severe were the terms bestowed upon it by Thomas Campion, some years afterwards, when, according to his report, it had

\* *Ægl.* 10 October. The annotations were written in 1579. Puttenham, whose *Art of Poesy* was published in 1589, says of alliteration, it is a figure much used by our common rhymers, and doth well enough if it be not too much used, for then it falleth into the vice hereafter spoken of. *Book III. c. 16.* See again *c. 22. p. 213.*

gone out of fashion. He calls it "that-absurd following of the letter among our English, so much of late affected, but now hist out of Paul's Churchyard; which foolish figurative repetition (says he) crept also into the Latin tongue, as is manifest in the book of P's. called *Prælia Porcorum*, and another pamphlet all of F's." *Observations on English Poetry*, 1602, p. 4.

Since this period, few of our poets have offended by the immoderate use of alliteration. But it was not altogether rejected, nor thought "below the grandeur of a poem that aims at sublimity\*." The following alliterative lines are by men, whose judgment as well as execution of such poems will entitle them to great respect.

Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail.

*Gray's Bard.*

And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.—*Ibid.*

\* Dr. Johnson's *Life of Gray*, who condemns it in the terms above quoted

The • rising world of waters, dark and deep.

*Milton's Paradise Lost, Book III.*

I presume to think, that neither the ode nor the epic is debased by these alliterations, but that, on the contrary, they produce a good effect.

About the middle of the last century, alliteration was again regarded more favourably; and one or two poets of eminence indulged themselves in it, as far as was allowable; but we are not aware that it was carried to great excess by any, except by Cunningham, in whose pages it abounds, and whose elegy on the death of George II. contains these lines:

See the detestful owl, ill-omen'd, rise,

Dragg'd by *Despair* from her sequester'd cell;

And, by the discord of shrill shrieking cries,

Doubling the horrors of the deep-toned bell.

• The same alliterative phrase, together with another alliteration, may be seen in a verse of Spenser:

So to the sea we came; the sea, that is

A world of waters heaped up on high.

*Colin Clout's come home again.*

A practice of alliteration, different from the common, obtained in some of our ancient poems, of which the most celebrated is a piece entitled *Pierce Plowman's Visions*; it begins thus:

In a summer season,  
 When hot was the sun,  
 I shope me into shrubs,  
 As I a sheep were;  
 In habit as an hermit  
 Unholy of works\*.

In these lines (which are three distichs) there is no rhyme, neither are they measured by number or quantity of syllables. They are made by this rule. In every distich there shall be three syllables, beginning with the same letter, but not all in the same half of the distich.

This mode of alliteration resembles that which exists in the poetry of the Welsh, and of which a representation is offered in these lines:

\* See, for an account of this poem and alliteration, Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, vol. ii. p. 272, 4th edition. Likewise Warton's *History of English Poetry*, v. 1. sect. 10, on Alliterative Poetry.

There stood a palace by,  
With stately pillars built.  
Graceful and tall appear'd .  
This great victorious Prince.

Here the rule of composition is to have the letters, which make the alliteration, correspond with each other in the two parts of the distich ; those of the second line being of the same number (three), and in the same order as those of the first. We have been informed that this kind of alliteration is required in their good poetry, and beside, that it helps the memory of those who recite it, for one half of a couplet leads them to a recollection of the other, by knowing what letters must stand in it\*.

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\* A modern writer of good sense, and very probably of high authority in matters of Welsh literature, considers this alliterative manner as inferior to that which was more ancient in their country. He quotes a versification of the Lord's Prayer by Cadoc the wise, which he highly praises, and says "it was composed before the taste of the Welsh poets was corrupted by a jingling alliteration." Notes to a Visitation Sermon by Peter Roberts, 1812.

The principle on which alliteration is admitted may be this; as the repetition of a word is acknowledged to give energy to a sentence in certain cases, so some degree of energy may be given to a verse by the repetition of a letter. And if the assertion of Dr. Wallis be well founded, viz. that in the native words of our tongue is to be found a great agreement between the sound of the letters and the thing signified, the repetition of any such letters will impress the agreement more forcibly upon the ear, which is, or should be, the purpose of alliteration. But since the agreement here mentioned, though in some cases it is real, is only imaginary in others, I shall not farther insist upon it\*.

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\* Sheridan follows Dr. Wallis, and has treated the subject at large, in his *Art of Reading*, lect. 2, from whence this is an extract. "Besides mimical words and sounds borrowed from the animal world, we have sounds resembling those made by inanimate objects. Thus F sounds like the wind blowing through certain chinks. Sh is the sound made by squibs and rockets, previous to explosion, &c. All sounds too made by collision of bodies find letters in the alphabet peculiarly fitted to

As to the place, or extent, where alliteration may be introduced, no rule can be given, it must be left to the author's taste, which, in

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represent them. These sounds are strong or weak, clear or obtuse, long or short. The mutes and short vowels are best fitted to express short sounds; and semi-vowels, and long vowels, such as are of any continuance; the pure semi-vowels, the clear, the mutes, the obtuse; the aspirated letters, the strong, the simple, the weaker sounds. All words of these several kinds, being representatives of ideas that come into the mind through the ear, may have a natural resemblance to their archetypes from a similarity of sound; but there is also an expressive power in words, which represent ideas that come into the mind through the other senses, and which, though from the nature of things they cannot have the least similarity to those ideas, yet have a certain congruity with them, which makes them fitter to represent those ideas than words of a different construction. The words beginning with *str* signify force, and generally exertion of force; as, strong, strive, strain, stretch, &c. &c. This combination of consonants requires a strong exertion of the organs of speech, and therefore is well suited to express ideas of force exerted."

these cases, is a right judgment of what will generally offend or please \*.

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\* There is some resemblance to the figure of alliteration in our modern prose writers. It is where the sentence is so constructed, that the words of one part have their correspondent words in the other, not in sense only, but also in order, ex. gr. "A zeal of admiration, which cannot be expected from the *neutrality* of a *stranger*, or the *coldness* of a *critic*." Johnson's Life of Gray. This manner of construction, so frequent in Johnson's writings, is at least as much below grandeur as the alliteration, which he condemns in the poet, and indeed is farther removed from a dignified simplicity; for alliteration may be, and also may appear to be, casual; but these antitheses are palpably the effect of design and study. The sentence now quoted would have been arranged differently two hundred years ago; the words *neutrality* and *coldness*, *stranger* and *critic*, would not have been set opposite to each other in such formal order. Take the following:

"All which tends to beat down pride, whether it be advertisement from men, or chastisement from God himself," &c.

The words are Hooker's, but not the arrangement: he left them thus: [Sermon on Pride.]



“Whether it be advertisement from men, or from God himself chastisement.”

So that the correspondent phrases, *from men, from God himself*, stand in different order in the two parts of the sentence. Again: “Refer this command to the love of God, and it extinguisheth all heinous crimes: refer it to the love of thy neighbour, and all grievous wrongs it banisheth out of the world.” Eccl. Pol. B. I. 8.

This change of the order introduces a variety, and gives a more agreeable turn to the period.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### OF ELISIONS.

By this term is here meant the cutting off of syllables from words, in order to adapt them to the measures of a verse. The cutting off may be at any part of a word, whether the beginning, or middle, or end. An example of each is presented in this line,

Then 'gan th' obstrep'rous mob to rage :

'gan for *began* is an elision of the beginning, th' for *the* of the end, and *obstrep'rous* for *obstreperous*, of the middle. These different elisions have different technical names ; with which, as they do not concern the present subject, the reader shall not be troubled.

There is another way, similar to elision, by which words are adapted to a verse, and which

may be called contraction. It is when two syllables, made by adjoining vowels, are in pronunciation so contracted as to pass for one in the verse, example,

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit—  
the two last syllables in *disobedience* are an instance of this. In pronouncing them nothing is cut off; but they are sounded so short as to pass for a single syllable, without any violation of the measure.

Elisions, generally speaking, should not be such as to create words of displeasing sound, or difficult pronunciation. The complaint made against our language is, that its consonants are too many in proportion to its vowels\*; the effect of elisions is to increase that proportion.

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\* Steele, in the Treatise quoted above, says, "The number of vocal and consonantal sounds in Italian are nearly equal, or fifty-four consonants to fifty-three vowels; in Latin five consonants to four vowels; in French, supposing the orthography not as written, but as sounded in pronunciation, the consonantal to the vocal sounds are as four to three; and in English in the like manner, the proportions are as three to two."—P. 168, note.

The second person singular of our verb terminates with letters that do not well accommodate themselves to elisions, when the verb itself ends with a consonant ;

Ill thou consider'st that the kind are brave.

*Young's Merchant, Str. 5.*

That usher'st in the sun, and still prepar'st its way.

*Yalden's Hymn to the Morning.*

Thou mourn'st them living, as already dead.

*Patroclus's Request.*

These elisions are harsh : but where such a verb is regular, as love, loved, fear, feared, &c., the same person in the past time presents an obstacle almost insurmountable to any elision. Yet some few have attempted it, making indeed two elisions, as,

Thou shar'd'st their nature, insolence, and fate.

*Yalden.*

But to others this rough assemblage of consonants has appeared so formidable, that, rather than meet it, they have ventured to trespass upon their grammar rules.

The occasions for making such elisions as this ought to be avoided; but unfortunately they occur oftenest in those kinds of poetry where they are least admissible: for, with respect to elisions, it is to be observed, that, as in familiar discourse we use without scruple those which we should not allow in the solemn recital of a grave composition; so, in familiar verse, we may admit those which are to be excluded from the higher species; from epic and lyric poems, and the like.

The elisions which we meet with as frequently as any are of the verbs, substantive and auxiliary. Many of these are improper in grave poetry.

From Paran's height the One that's holy came.

*Parnell's Gift of Poetry. Habak.*

But have invoked them oft, I'm sure in vain.

*Cowley's Ode on Orinda.*

Kill him, and thou 'rt secure; 'tis only he.

*David, b. 1.*

These elisions of the verb substantive are none of them suitable to the rank of the poems in which they stand: neither are those made of the auxiliary verbs, as I'll, for I will, he'd, for he

would, &c. But they might all enter into light pieces without offence; perhaps into satires, as here,

'Tis sad  
To say you're curious when we say you're mad.  
*Young's Sat. 1.*

I'm very sensible he's mad in law.  
*Churchill's Independence.*

But Churchill's frequent elisions were blamed by men of correct taste,

We find in some of our poets other elisions which are faulty, not because of the consonants that meet, but because the letters which are left do not meet and coalesce (as they ought) into one syllable. The following are such:

We' allow'd you beauty, and we did submit,  
Shame and woe to us, if we' our wealth obey.  
*Cowley.*

Till swept away they' were cancel'd with a broom.  
*Jonson's Elegy.*

But a fault still greater is here,

Sha'p't I return the vengeance in my power?  
*Young's Ep. 1. to Mr. Pope.*

This term, *sha'n't*, is so deformed and vulgarized by elision as to be altogether unfit to appear in poetry. In justice to the poets of the present time, it is to be acknowledged that they are more correct and guarded against these blemishes; and to collect them we are forced to go back to a former age.

Other elisions, not much practised by our moderns, are made in words of more than one syllable, by cutting off the last, like these in Milton,

Th' specious deeds on earth which glory' excites,  
To be invulnerable' in those bright arms,  
So he with difficulty' and labour hard.

*Paradise Lost*, b. 2.

But among our earliest poets this sort of elision was common: Gower used it;

For ever I wrastle', and ever I am behind,  
As pray unto my Lady' of any help.

*Confessio Amant.* b. 8.

So did Chaucer \*;

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\* These poets made likewise an elision (now long out of use) by cutting off the syllable *eth* in verbs; as,

Then help me, Lord, to-morrow' in my battaille.

*Knight's Tale.*

Winnen thy cost, take here ensample' of me.

*Frere's Tale.*

My body' is ay so redy' and so penible.

*Sompnour's Tale.*

It occurs in that eminent Scotch poet, William Dunbar; and particularly in this stanza of his poem, entitled "No Treasure Without Gladness."

Follow' on pity; flee trouble and debate;  
 With famous folkis hold thy company;  
 Be charitable', and humble' in thine estate,  
 For worldly honour lastis but a cry:

Come'th ner, and take your lady by the hond.

*Chaucer, Knight's Tale.*

One lov'eth another now for virtue not for gain,  
 Where virtue doth not knit the knot, there friendship  
 cannot reign,  
 Which fram'eth the mind of man all honest things to do;  
 Unhonest things friendship ne crav'eth, ne yet consents  
 thereto.

*Edwards's Damon and Pythias, Scene last.*



For trouble' in earth take no meláncholy.  
 Be rich in patience, gif thou' in goods be poor ;  
 Who livis merry' he livis mightily :  
 Without gladnéss availis no treasúre.

*Ellis's Specimens of English Poetry*, v. 1. p. 384\*.

The reader will not fail to observe that, after all these elisions, the next word begins with a vowel, and that in general the syllables cut off are shórt.

Contractions are made, as has been said, of syllables which are not separated by any consonant; these our language contains in great number and variety; particularly a large class from the Latin, as *motion, region, occasion*. The two last syllables of these and other such words are now always contracted into one, when used in a verse. It was not so formerly :

His name was heavenly contemplation ;  
 Of God and goodness was his meditation.

*Spenser's Fairy Queen*, b. i. c. 11.

\* Donne has elisions like these in some of his smoothest lines :

All glory' of honours, beauties, wits—  
 Let us live nobly', and live, and add again.

*The Anniversary*.

Some willing men that might instruct his sons,  
And that would stand to good conditions.

*Hall's Satires, 6*

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\* Examples in other words :

To fly his step-dame's love outrageous.  
*Spenser's Fairy Queen, b. v. chap. viii. s. 43.*

This siege that hath engirt his marriage.  
*Shakspeare's Rape of Lucrece.*

Should bleed in his own law's obedience.  
*Crashaw's Sospetto d'Herode.*

Syllables like these were divided whenever it suited the poet's convenience. But Shakspeare in all his rhymed poetry has never divided the syllables *ion* to make rhyme. When he uses words where they occur, he always makes the rhyme double, as,

To kill myself, quoth she, alack ! what were it  
But with my body my poor soul's pollution ?  
They that lose half with greater patience bear it,  
Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion.  
*Rape of Lucrece.*

I will drink  
Potions of eysel 'gainst my strong infection ;  
No bitterness that I will bitter think,  
Nor double penance to correct correction.

Sonnet iii.

This division of syllables is found in our poetry as late as Cowley's time : but he was a licentious versifier :

At thy strong charms it must be gone,  
Though a disease, as well as devil, were call'd legion,  
*Cowley's Ode to Dr. Scarborough.*

Other words are fitted for admission into verse by a process opposite to elision or contraction, that is, by putting a syllable to lengthen them ; as *adown* for *down* ; *yklad* for *klad*, &c. A different manner of lengthening the word is seen in this example :

O how this spring of love resembleth  
The' uncertain glory of an April day !  
*Shak. Two Gent. of Ver. Act I. scene 3.*

where the word *resembleth* is pronounced *resemble-eth*, as having four syllables. But such licence would not be now permitted. In our early poets it could not be accounted a licence, for it was according to the ordinary pronunciation of many such words,

He came at his commandement\* on hie.

*Chaucer, Knight's Tale.*

Right in the midst of the threshold lay.

*Spenser's Fairy Queen, b. v. c. x. st. 37.*

To what has been said of the contraction and lengthening of words may be added, that there are some English words which are not allowed to pass in verse for two syllables, though in sound they are such, and cannot be pronounced in one †. Of these the following is an account, from a little "Treatise on Vocal Sounds," published under the name of Edward Search.

• "Our short *u* (says that author), sounded as in *but*, is pronounced easiest of all the vowels, and therefore is a great favourite with my country-

\* Some yet living may remember when the good women who taught children their Catechism used to ask, "How many *commandements* be there," making the word four syllables.

† But this allowance may be given to verses in the anapestic and dactylic measures. See the end of the next section.

men; it is commonly inserted between *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* (when long), and *r*; as in, there, fire, more, pure, which we pronounce *theur*, *fiur*, *mour*, &c. p. 14. I think hire and dire have as fair a claim to be counted dissyllables as higher and dyer, though we will not allow them the same rank in verse \*. If you repeat

For high renown the heaven-born poets strive,  
Actors for higher (*hire*) in toils incessant live,

a person may think you mean to reflect upon the players when you intend them a compliment, or *vice versa*; or, in describing a drunken quarrel, if you end with these lines:

\* Crying that 's good that 's gone: our rash faults.

*Shak. All's Well, &c.*

In this line, *our* stands for two syllables, which indeed it may fairly claim; for the organs of speech, after sounding any long vowel or diphthong, cannot proceed to sound the letter *r* without being in a position to sound the short *u* (sometimes, however, represented in writing by *e*), as *higher*.

The blood that streamed from the gash profound,  
With scarlet *dire* distain'd their garments round,  
Sad scarlet *dye* he who gave the wound.

should you, in reading them, transpose the *dire*,  
*dye*, into each other's places, you would not  
perceive the change, such is the force of custom  
and imagination to debauch the ear, that it does  
not know when one and one syllable make two.”  
P. 17.\*

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\* Tucker, the author of this Treatise, was a man remarkable for a right way of thinking ; and he was never more out of the way than when he thought that Latin hexameters could be successfully employed in making English verse

## CHAPTER XV.

### OF THE HIATUS.

THIS is a fault in versification, which is thus exemplified by Pope,

Tho' oft the ear the open vowels hire.

*Essay on Criticism.*

The vowels which he calls open are those that stand, one at the end of a word, and the other at the beginning of the next, as, *Tho' oft*, &c. without any consonant between them. When vowels so meet they cause, in the pronunciation, a gaping, called, after the Latin, an hiatus; which sometimes offends the ear, in prose as well as verse; and, therefore, both Cicero \* and

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De Orat. Lib. 3. § 43. Or. § 44. 45.

Quintilian have noticed it; the latter very particularly, as may be seen in the note subjoined\*.

Two of our own poets, most celebrated for their skill in versification, viz. Pope and Dryden, have repeatedly spoken of the hiatus as a fault: but, as they represent it to be of greater magnitude than I think it is in reality, I will here state their opinions respecting it, and their practice. Pope says, “the hiatus should be avoided with more care in poetry than in oratory; and I would try to prevent it, unless where the cutting it off is more prejudicial to

\* *Vocalium concursus, qui cum accidit, hiat et insistit et quasi laborat oratio. Pessimæ longæ, quæ easdem inter se litteras committunt, sonabunt. Præcipuus tamen erit hiatus earum quæ cavo aut patulo maxime ore efferuntur. E, plenior litera est, I, angustior; ideoque obscurius in his vitium. Minus peccabit qui longis breves subjiciet, et adhuc qui præponet longæ brevem. Minima est in duabus brevibus offensio. Atque cum aliæ junguntur aliis, perinde asperiores erunt, prout oris hiatu simili aut diverso pronunciabuntur.*

*Inst. Orat. L. 9. c. 4.*



the sound than the hiatus itself." Dryden is still more averse to the hiatus. "There is not, (says he, in his dedication to the *Æneis*), to the best of my remembrance, one vowel gaping on another for want of a *cæsura* (i. e. a cutting off) in this whole poem: but where a vowel ends a word, the next begins either with a consonant, or what is its equivalent; for our W and H aspirate, and our diphthongs are plainly such: the greatest latitude I take is in the letter Y, when it concludes a word, and the first syllable of the next begins with a vowel. Neither need I have called this a latitude, which is only an explanation of the general rule; that no vowel can be cut off before another, when we cannot sink the pronunciation of it, as he, she, me, I, &c." In another place, he mentions the hiatus with extreme severity. "Since I have named the *synalepha*, which is cutting off one vowel immediately before another, I will give an example of it from Chapman's *Homer*. It is in the first line of the argument to the first *Iliad*.

Apollo's priest to th' Argive fleet doth bring ;

Here we see he makes it not the Argive, but th' Argive; to shun the shock of the two vowels immediately following each other; but in the same page he gives a bad example of the quite contrary kind:

Alpha the prayer of Chryses sings ;  
The army's plague, the strife of kings.

In these words, the army's, the, ending with a vowel, and army's beginning with another vowel, without cutting off the first (by which it had been, th' army's), there remains a most horrible ill-sounding gap betwixt those words. I cannot say that I have every way observed the rule of the synalepha in my translation; but wheresoever I have not, it is a fault in the sound.—*Dedication to Translations from Ovid's Metam.*

As Dryden acknowledges that, in the verses to which this dedication is prefixed, he has sometimes admitted an hiatus, I will pass to his *Æneid*, where he professes to have avoided it throughout; only allowing himself a certain lati-

tude. But, indeed, what he allows himself is nothing less than an admission of the hiatus, as will appear by various instances.

On every altar sacrifice renew.

*Book iv. line 76.*

He claims a latitude in the letter *y*; but that letter is, here and everywhere else, at the end of a word, as much a vowel as any in the alphabet. He says, "W aspirates." It does so at the beginning of a word, but at the end it is either silent or makes a diphthong:

Or hid within the hollow earth to lie.

*Book xii. line 1293.*

Now low on earth the lofty chief is laid.

*Ibid. line 1346.*

She drew a length of sighs, nor more she said.

*Ibid. line 1280.*

He says further, "That no vowel can be cut off before another, when we cannot sink the pronunciation of it, as he, she, me, I, &c." This is very true; but it does not follow that there is

no hiatus where such a vowel is left. In each of these lines is an hiatus :

Whoe'er you are, not unbelov'd by Heaven.

*Book i. line 537.*

These walls he enter'd, and those words express'd.

*Book iv. line 515.*

False as thou art, and more than false, forsworn.

*Ibid. line 523.*

Weak as I am, can I, alas! contend?

*Book xii. line 1262.*

So is there when the last consonants of a word are not sounded, as, .

One bough it bears; but wond'rous to behold.

*Book vi. line 210.*

In all these, and many similar cases, which occur in every book of his *Æneid*, Dryden has left an hiatus, although he endeavours to 'explain it away.

Pope, in the poem where he stigmatizes the hiatus as a fault, has repeatedly committed the same fault; and done so in every one of those

instances which he exhibits as faulty: they are these,

Though 1. oft the 2. ear the 3. open vowels tire.

and these are his own faults;

1. Though each may feel increases and decays.

*Ess. on Crit.* 404.

2. And praise the easy vigour of a line.

*Ib.* 361.

3. As on the land while here the ocean gains.

*Ib.* 54.

as for their frequency, they recur sometimes as often as twice in one line,

Unlucky as Fungosa in the play.

*Ib.* 328.

Who, if once wrong, will needs be always so.

*Ib.* 569.

But taking the whole poem, there will be found, upon an average, an hiatus in every eleven lines: and, except the *Æneid* above-mentioned, the hiatus occurs nearly as often throughout all the poetry of Dryden and Pope. This observation is made, not to condemn their practice, but to show partly that the fault is not so great as

they seem to represent it, and partly that it is very difficult (if not impracticable) to avoid it. The judgment of Quintilian upon this point is right, and not less applicable to English verse than to Latin prose. Having given that account of the hiatus which is quoted in the note, p. 260, he adds, *Non tamen id ut crimen ingens expavescendum est; ac nescio an negligentia in hoc, an sollicitudo sit pejor. Quare ut negligentiae pars est hoc pati, ita humilitatis ubique perhorrescere* \*.

It is hardly necessary to say more of the hiatus; yet this may be added, that, whatever offence it may give, will be less noted, if it stands at a pause, as,

Works without show, and without pomp presides.

*Pope's Essay on Crit.* 75.

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\* In Milton's poetry, to compute from the fifty first and fifty last lines of *Paradise Lost*, and *Sampson Agonistes*, there is an hiatus at every fifth. In his other poems, it may not be so frequent perhaps; but he seems to have regarded it just as Quintilian did.

Nature, like liberty, is but restrained.

*Ib.* 90.

Immortal Vida! on whose honour'd brow.

*Ib.* 705.

In these instances the hiatus is better managed than in the three quoted above from the same poem. On the other hand, the hiatus will then be perceived most, when the two vowels which make it are such, that the organs of speech, in pronouncing them, keep the same position.

There is a different sort of hiatus, as it may be termed, which is made when a word or part of it stands for two syllables, that might be contracted into one; as, heaven, tower, violet, evening, &c. for then there is a gap; because the verse seems to want its full measure. The same want appears still plainer, when such words as glorious, earlier, have the two last syllables divided. But this observation is not extended to verse of the anapestic kind: for our language, being somewhat overstocked with consonants, does not readily supply short syllables in the proportion which that verse requires. - And therefore to divide syllables like these just

mentioned is, in that species of verse, a licence rather to be justified and applauded than condemned. Such is this,

Whose humour as gay as the fire-fly's light.

*Moore's Verses on the Death of Sheridan.*

The beau on a violet bank he beheld.

*Cunningham's Ant and Caterpillar.*

Blank verse, like an alöe, rears up its head.

*Byrom's Triumphs of Rh. and B. Verse.*



## CHAPTER XVI.

### OF PERSONIFICATION.

By this term is meant, giving to a thing the properties of an animated being ; as here,

Laughter holding both his sides.

Love Virtue, She alone is free.

*Milton.*

Personification has not much connexion with the subject of the present treatise ; yet it deserves some regard, because of the peculiar beauty which it gives to English poetry when judiciously introduced : this is owing to the nature of our language, which does not, so extensively as others, employ the distinction of sex and gender \*. Neither is it improper to

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\* Although the gender is not so constantly marked in English as in some other tongues, either by the termina-

notice the facility with which it may be abused, as it was by some among our eminent poets,

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tion of the substantive, or by the words accompanying it, yet, grammatically considered, all its substantives have a gender: for gender, in grammar, extending beyond the natural distinction of male and female, takes in also those things which have no sex, and makes of them a third class, viz. the neuter. Languages, therefore, being obliged to follow Nature in expressing some of her distinctions for the convenience of communication, (see Locke's Essay, b. 3. ch. 5. s. 7.) have consequently admitted the grammatical distinctions of gender, comprehending all their substantives: and each language, according to its peculiar genius, took, as it were, out of the common multitude, more or fewer words to distinguish by sex: yet it is not precision in the French, or any other tongue, to make a hat, a knife, masculine, and a chair, or a shirt, feminine. Of the English substantives few are masculine or feminine: viz. those only for which He or She may stand are such: all the rest (for which It may be substituted) are properly of the neuter gender. The modesty of the English language has uncovered no more than what necessity required.

Harris in his *Hermes*, says of "words denoting substances, that, though in Greek, Latin, French, and most modern languages, they are diversified with genders, yet

about the middle of the last century. It was the mode at that time to personify all the abstract qualities they had occasion to introduce. In an ode, written 1749, by Mason, are these lines,

Is there a plain, whose genial soil inhales  
 Glory's invigorating gales,  
 Her brightest beams where Emulation spreads,  
 Her kindest dews where Science sheds,  
 Where every stream of Genius flows,  
 Where every flower of Virtue glows?

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they never vary the gender which they have once acquired. But it is otherwise in English. We in our language say, Virtue is *its* own reward, or Virtue is *her* own reward: time maintains *its* wonted pace, or, *his* wonted pace.

“ There is a singular advantage (continues he) in this liberty; as it enables us to mark, with a peculiar force, the distinction between the severe or logical style, and the ornamental or rhetorical. For thus when we speak of the above words, and of all others naturally devoid of sex, as neuters, we speak of them as they are, and as becomes a logical inquiry. When we give them sex, by making them masculine or feminine, they are from thenceforth personified; are a kind of intelligent beings, and become, as such, the proper ornaments either of rhetoric or of poetry.” *Hermes*, p. 58, *Note*.

Thither the Muse exulting flies,  
 There loudly cries,  
 Majestic Granta! hail thy awful name,  
 Dear to the Muse, to Liberty, and Fame.

*Ode 1. for Music.*

His cotemporary and rival, T. Warton, composed in the same style. His poem on the death of king George II. begins with this couplet, dressed up in the most fashionable ornaments of the day, personification and alliteration ;

So stream the sorrows that embalm the brave,  
 The tears that Science sheds o'er Glory's grave.

Dr. Johnson fell into the same track, when he said of Shakspeare

Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,  
 And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.

*Prol. at Drury Lane, 1747.*

But Hayley, of all our poets, indulged in personification the most. In his hands it became a trick of composition, and its genuine beauty was destroyed by immoderate use.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### OF LYRICS.

LYRIC poetry admits every kind of feet and measures that can enter into English verse. I shall not dwell upon those which are vulgar and trivial, and often occur in Songs, Ballads, Madrigals, &c. they are not of consequence enough to require a particular discussion; neither are any peculiar rules for their versification to be given. The higher sort, which may be comprised under the denomination of Ode, is that to which the present observations will be confined.

The Ode is divisible into parts, usually called Stanzas; and these are either regular, or irregular. By the regular stanza is to be understood that which is formed by some rule, as to its measures and rhymes; so that as often as the stanza recurs in the same ode, the same mea-

sures and arrangement of rhymes are preserved. The irregular stanza is varied according to the writer's pleasure.

The regular stanzas which compose an ode may be either uniform, or otherwise, in such manner as will be explained presently.

The Stanza is not limited to any certain number of lines; it must however have three at least\*: such is the following from T. Randolph's poems,

Muse, be a bridemaïd ! dost not hear  
How honour'd Hunt and his fair Deer  
This day prepare their wedding cheer ?

*Epithalamium Ellis's Specimens of Eng.  
Poets, Vol. 3. p. 214.*

\* On the other hand, the regular stanza should not consist of too many lines. Gray has been censured by Dr. Johnson on this account, not without reason; for some of his stanzas contain no less than seventeen lines, others extend to twenty. The critic says "his stanzas are too long, especially his epodes: the ode is finished before the ear has learned its measures, and consequently before it can receive pleasure from their consonance and recurrence." *Life of Gray.*

Such, too, is the stanza in Rochester's celebrated poem upon Nothing :

Nothing ! thou elder brother even to shade,  
That had'st a being ere the world was made,  
And, well fix'd, art alone of ending not afraid.

The ear will perceive the superiority of this last, in the dignity and variety given to it by the Alexandrine.

The regular Stanza is used in a threefold manner : first, when it is uniform throughout the piece : this is the common way ; second, when it is used alternately with another of a different form : this is very rare in English poetry ; but an instance may be seen in Donne's Poems, under the title of Love's Growth. The third mode of employing the regular stanza is copied from the Greeks, particularly from Pindar ; on which account odes of this kind are called Pindaric. In this mode the ode is divided into parts, each containing three stanzas, of which the two first are alike ; and they are called strophe, anti-strophe, and epode : retaining the names of those

parts of the Greek ode of which they are the resemblance. No better examples of this kind are to be found in English than the compositions of Gray. A remarkable ode of this same description is that of Fenton to the sun: for it contains eight returns of the strophe, antistrophe, and epode, which is more than can be found in any other English composition of the sort.

Some regular Stanzas will here be introduced, for the purpose of a few remarks to be made respecting them.

Those of four lines are too well known to need quoting. In the disposition of their rhymes, they are capable of two variations only: the first is alternate; the second, when the first and fourth lines rhyme together, and the second with the third. In the length of the lines there is much more variety: the stanza of eight and six (so called) is derived from the old verse of fourteen syllables, broken into two at the eighth, on which account the first and third line are often without rhyme: such is the metre of our old translation of the Psalms, viz.



The Lord descended from above,  
And bow'd the heavens high,  
And underneath his feet he cast  
The darkness of the sky.

But the most stately and approved form of the four-line stanza is that in the heroic (ten syllable) verse with alternate rhymes.

This stanza is not proper for that species of poetry to which Davenant and Dryden applied it. Both these poets, however, have alleged their reasons for the choice, which it will be proper to hear: "I shall say a little why I have chosen my interwoven stanza of four, though I am not obliged to excuse the choice; for numbers in verse must, like distinct kinds of music, be exposed to the uncertain and different taste of several ears. Yet I may declare that I believed it would be more pleasant to the reader, in a work of length, to give this respite or pause between every stanza (having endeavoured that each should contain a period), than to run him out of breath with continued couplets. Nor does alternate rhyme, by any lowliness of cadence, make the sound less heroic, but rather adapt it

to a plain and stately composing of music; and the brevity of the stanza renders it less subtle to the composer, and more easy to the singer, which in *stilo recitativo*, when the story is long, is chiefly requisite. And this was indeed (if I shall not betray vanity in my confession) the reason that prevailed most towards my choice of this stanza, and my division of the main work into cantos; every canto including a sufficient accomplishment of some worthy design or action: for I had so much heat, which you, sir, may call pride, as to presume they might, like the works of Homer, be sung at village feasts\*.”—*Davenant's Preface to Gondibert*. Dryden's reasons are the following: “I have chosen to write my poem (*the Annus Mirabilis*) in quatrains, or stanzas of four in alternate rhyme, because I have ever judged them more noble, and of

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\* Lucien Buonaparte gives the same reason for the form of his heroic poem; but it has not yet, any more than *Gondibert*, acquired that high degree of popular favour, notwithstanding Dr. Butler's excellent translation of it into English.

greater dignity, both for the sound and number, than any other verse in use amongst us. I have always found the couplet verse most easy, though not so proper, for this occasion; for there the work is sooner at an end, every two lines concluding the labour of the poet; but in quatrains he is to carry it further on, and not only so, but to bear along in his head the troublesome sense of four lines together: for those who write correctly in this kind must needs acknowledge that the last line of the stanza is to be considered in the composition of the first.”—*Letter to Sir Robert Howard*. It may be remarked of Dryden, that, notwithstanding his high commendation of this stanza, he never afterwards composed in it: perhaps (says Johnson) from experience of its difficulty.

I shall now give a variety of stanzas, together with certain judgments respecting their character. The first is of five lines from Sir John Beaumont:

Severe and serious Muse,  
Whose quill the name of love declines,  
Be not too nice, nor this dear work refuse.

Here Venus stirs no flame, nor Cupid guides thy lines,  
 But modest Hymen shakes his torch, and chaste Lucina  
 shines.

*Epithalamium to the Marq. of Buckingham.*

*Chalmers' Eng. Poets, vol. 6. p. 36.*

This author, whose versification is remarkably good, seems to have made trials of new combinations of verse for his stanzas. The following of six lines is not displeasing :

Muse, thou art dull and weak,  
 Opprest with worldly pain,  
 If strength in thee remain  
 Of things divine to speak,  
 Thy thoughts awhile from urgent cares restrain,  
 And with a cheerful voice thy wonted silence break.

*Ode to the Trinity. Ibid. p. 23.*

The stanza of Shakspeare's Venus and Adonis was likewise of six lines, heroic measure, of which the four first rhymed alternately ; the two others formed a couplet, e. g.

Lo ! here the gentle lark, weary of rest,  
 From his moist cabinet mounts up on high,  
 And wakes the morning, from whose silver breast  
 The sun ariseth in his majesty ;

Who doth the world so gloriously behold,  
That cedar-tops and hills seem burnish'd gold,

Michael Drayton censures this form, as not being grave enough for the higher sorts of poetry.

The six lined stanza form, in which Parnell's Fairy Tale is composed, is liable to the same censure; but it is capable of much elegance. It is made by two couplets of eight syllables each, divided by a line of six syllables, which rhymes with another like it in the conclusion. Yet this, in the time of our early poets, was very little esteemed; and is the same that Chaucer calls doggrel. His ludicrous and interrupted rhyme of Sire Thopas is composed in it, viz.

Listeneth, lordinges in good entent,  
And I wol tell you *verament*,  
Of mirthe and of solas ;  
Al of a knight was faire and gent,  
In bataille and in turnament,  
His name was sire Thopas.

In this age, the stanza of seven ten-syllable lines was the measure thought suitable to the

highest subjects of poetry. The arrangement of the rhymes was this: the four first were alternate; the fifth was like the fourth; and the two last were a couplet. In this measure, after Chaucer, did Lidgate, Wyatt, Gascoigne, and others, write much. Shakspeare also composed his *Tarquin and Lucrece*, of which this is a stanza:

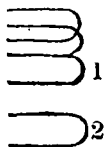
From the besieged Ardea all in post,  
Borne by the trustless wings of false desire,  
Lust-breathing Tarquin leaves the Roman host,  
And to Colatium bears the lightless fire,  
Which in pale embers hid, lurks to aspire,  
And girdle with embracing flames the waste  
Of Colatine's fair love, Lucrece the chaste.

“ This (says Gascoigne) hath been called *rhythme royall*; and surely it is a *royall kind of verse*, serving best for grave discourses.” *Instruction concerning the making of verse in English*, edited by Haslewood, p. 10.

After this time, however, it fell into disuse; and Drayton, having written a large poem (the *Barons' Wars*), in this stanza, altered the whole and composed it anew in stanzas of eight lines,

rejecting this of seven; and giving these reasons for his preference of the other.

“The stanza was of seven lines, wherein there are two couplets, as in this figure appeareth.



the often harmony thereof softened the verse more than the majesty of the subject would permit, unless they had been all geminals or couplets. Therefore (but not without new-fashioning the whole frame), I chose Ariosto's stanza, of all others the most complete and best proportioned, consisting of eight; six interwoven or alternate, and a couplet in base.



The quatrain doth never double; the quin-

tain too soon : the sestain hath twins in the base ; but they detain not the music, nor the close, as musicians term it, long enough for an epic poem. The stanza of seven is touched before ; this of eight both holds the tune clean through to the base of the column, which is the couplet at the foot or bottom, and closeth not, but with a full satisfaction to the ear for so long a detention. Briefly, this sort of stanza hath in it majesty, perfection, and solidity, resembling the pillar which in architecture is called Tuscan, whose shaft is of six diameters, and base of two."—  
Preface to the Barons' Wars.

Another form of stanza was adopted (or invented) by those harmonious versifiers and elegant poets, the brothers, Fletcher. This stanza was of seven lines, having alternate rhymes in the first four, and a triplet in the close ; as thus :—

So up they rose, while all the shepherds throng  
With their loud pipes a country triumph blew,  
And led their Thirsil home with joyful song :  
Meantime, the lovely nymphs with garlands new



His locks in bay and honour'd palm-tree bound,  
With lilies set and hyacinths around,  
And lord of all the year and their May-sportings crown'd.

*Phin. Fletcher's Purple Island, Canto 12.*

The stanza of eight lines, which we shall produce from the other Fletcher, is of a higher mood. The title of his poem is *Christ's Victory and Triumph*.

Witness the thunder that mount Sinai heard,  
When all the hill with fiery clouds did flame;  
And wondering Israel, with the sight afar'd,  
Blinded with seeing, durst not touch the same;  
But like a wood of shaking leaves became.  
On this dead Justice, She, the living law,  
Bowing herself with a majestic awe,  
All Heaven to hear her speech did into silence draw.

*Christ's Victory in Heaven.*

The fifth line here must excite the admiration of every reader; for the whole compass of nature does not present a more lively image to represent a multitude agitated by terror. The distinguishing circumstance in the form of the two foregoing stanzas is the triplet in their close; the very same form which Dryden after-

wards so frequently introduced into his poems : and whoever will examine the works of the two Fletchers, will there find the triplet, including the alexandrine, used with as much propriety and as good effect as in any instance to be produced from Dryden : so little ground had Pope to attribute the discovery to him, when he affirmed, that

Dryden taught to join

The varying verse, the full resounding line,

The long majestic march, and energy divine.

But the more approved stanza of eight lines was the Italian (as it may be called), being that used by their great poets Ariosto, Tasso, and others. The form of this is alternate rhyme for six lines, closing with a couplet ; all the lines of ten syllables. The scheme is given above by Drayton, who composed much in this stanza.

The unrivalled excellence of Spenser, in his walk of poetry, has procured for his stanza a reputation beyond any other of nine lines. Of this form one of his modern imitators (Dr. Beattie) has expressed his judgment as follows. “ I

am surprised to find the structure of Spenser's complicated stanza so little troublesome. I think it the most harmonious that ever was contrived. It admits of more variety of pauses than either the couplet or the alternate rhyme (he means the stanza of four), and it concludes with a pomp and majesty of sound, which to my ear is wonderfully delightful. It seems also very well adapted to the genius of our language, which, from its irregularity of inflexion, and number of monosyllables, abounds in diversified terminations, and consequently renders our poetry susceptible of an endless variety of legitimate rhymes." *Forbes's Life of Beattie.*

The harmony of the stanza will perhaps be more readily acknowledged, than the facility of making it: but our modern poets can imitate Spenser much better than was done a century ago\*.

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\* Prior has an ode written professedly in imitation of Spenser's style; but he observes not the arrangement of the rhymes, nor even the number of the lines in the stanza, (he adds one), nor the phraseology; neither does he equal

The form of this stanza shall be given from one of these imitations, the *Sir Martyn of Mickle*, a poem of great merit, but which never obtained the celebrity that it well deserves. *Sir Martyn* is a man of good natural parts and disposition, who, under the influence of a Concubine, wastes his years in idleness and dissipation, till they terminate in helpless and contemptible old age. The poet concludes with the following apostrophe:—

But boast not of superior shrewd address,  
 Ye who can calmly spurn the ruin'd maid,  
 Ye, who unmoved can view the deep distress  
 That crushes to the dust the parent's head,  
 And rends that easy heart by you betray'd,  
 Boast not, that ye his numerous woes eschew;  
 Ye, who unaw'd the nuptial couch invade,  
 Boast not his weakness with contempt to view,  
 For worthy is he still, compared, perdie, to you\*.

---

our later authors in the particulars which Shenstone selects as proper to be observed by Spenser's imitators, viz. "his language, his simplicity, his manner of description, and a peculiar tenderness that runs through his works." Shenst. in Chambers's Eng. Poets, V. 13, p. 326.

\* This poem was originally published under the title

I shall not here describe any stanzas of a greater length, but will subjoin a few instances of some forms that are uncommon.

Sweet, I do not pardon crave,  
 Till I have  
 By deserts this fault amended.  
 This, I only this desire,  
 That your ire  
 May with penance be suspended.

*Fr. Davison's Strophon's Palinode. From Ellis's  
 Specimens of Poets, V. 3, p. 17.*

When whispering strains do softly steal  
 With creeping passion through the heart,  
 And when at every touch we feel  
 Our pulses beat, and bear a part ;  
 When threads can make  
 A heart-string quake,

of the *Concubine*, which was afterwards changed to remove the suspicions of several, who fancied that under such a title some loose composition must be announced ; whereas the work is of a character directly opposite, as is evident from the high and indignant tone of moral reproof here quoted.

Philosophy

Can scarce deny

The soul consists of harmony.

*Wilm. Strode's Song in Comendation of Music.  
From Ellis's Specimens of Poets, V. 3, p. 174.*

More of my days

I will not spend to gain an idiot's praise :

Or to make sport

For some slight puny of the inns of court.

Then, worthy Stafford, say,

How shall we spend the day,

With what delights

Shorten the nights,

When from this tumult we are got secure ?

Where Mirth with all her freedom goes,

Yet shall no finger lose,

Where every word is thought, and every thought is pure.

*T. Randolph's Ode to Ant. Stafford. Ib. p. 211.*

When as my fancies first began to flee,

Which youth had but enlarged of late,

Enamour'd of mine own conceit,

I sported with my thoughts that then were free ;

And never thought to see

No such mishap at all,

As might have made them thrall.

When-lo, even then my fate

Was labouring to o'erthrow my prosperous state :

For Cupid did conspire my fall,  
And with my honey mix'd his gall,  
Long ere I thought that such a thing could be.  
*Lord Stirling's Aurora, Song 3. Chalmers's Eng. Poets,*  
*V. 5, p. 299.*

Our poets of former times often amused themselves by engaging in unusual modes of versification, for little other purpose than to exhibit their skill in mastering a difficulty. This seems to have been the author's object in the stanza last quoted, consisting of such a numerous consonance, and intricate arrangement of rhymes. Among these writers may be reckoned Donne, who composed in a greater variety of lyric measures than any other English poet; his works exhibiting about fifty different forms of stanza, from five to fourteen lines each, and repeated with a strict observance of the same disposition of rhyme, and the same kind and number of feet. Such is the "Epithalamium on the Count Palatine and the Lady Elizabeth (King James's Daughter) being married on St. Valentine's Day."

Hail, bishop Valentine, whose day this is,  
 All the air is thy diocese ;  
 And all the chirping choristers,  
 And other birds are thy parishioners ;  
 Thou marryest every year  
 The lyric lark, and the grave whispering dove,  
 The sparrow, that neglects his life for love,  
 The household bird with the red stomacher ;  
 Thou makest the blackbird speed as soon  
 As doth the goldfinch or the halcyon :  
 The husband cock looks out, and straight is sped,  
 And meets his wife, which brings her feather-bed.  
 This day more cheerfully than ever shine,  
 This day, which might inflame thyself, old Valentine.

*Chalmers's Eng. Poets, V. 5, p. 151.*

The Epithalamium contains eight of these stanzas.

Although lyric poetry admits, as has been said, of every kind of measure, yet it is to be remembered that short measures with quick returns of rhyme are contrary to sublimity. Dr. Young admired the following lines in Dryden's Ode,

Assumes the God,  
 Affects to nod ;



of which ode, his opinion was, that “its chief beauty consists in adapting the numbers most happily to the variety of the occasion; and that these are chosen to express majesty:” he therefore made them his pattern for his ode entitled *Ocean*; because (said he), “the subject of it is great. For the more harmony likewise he chose the frequent return of rhyme.” Of this studied composition here is a sample,

The main, the main  
Is Britain's reign;  
Her strength, her glory is her fleet;  
The main! the main!  
Be Britons' strain,  
As Triton's strong, as Syren's sweet.

*Young's Poems.*

And in these majestic and harmonious numbers, the subject is pursued through seventy-three stanzas.

But leaving these measures, which, in truth, are not unsuitable for a drinking song, we would observe, that where the “subject is great,” some of the lines ought to extend to the length

of an heroic verse ; and the effect will be better, if the lines proceed from short to longer, than after an opposite manner. The following is from Habington's Poems :

For I have seen the pine  
Famed for its travels o'er the sea,  
Broken with storms and age decline,  
And in some creek unpitied rot away.

*Chalmers, V. 6. p. 174.*

This construction is good, both in regard to numbers and rhyme, because the lines increase in length through the whole stanza, and the second rhyming lines are each longer than its correspondent \*. For, as it has been repeatedly inculcated, a quick return of rhyme is inconsistent with great subjects. By a quick return

\* See what Cicero says, de Orat. l. 3, c. 48. *Membra modificata esse debebunt: quæ, si in extremo breviora sunt, infringitur ille quasi verborum ambitus; sic enim has orationis conversiones Græci nominant. Quare aut paria esse debent posteriora superioribus, extrema primis, aut, quod etiam est melius et jucundius, longiora.*

is meant, that which returns in less than six syllables ; but it is particularly offensive when it follows close upon a longer line, as here :

By Euphrates' flowery side  
 We did bide,  
 From dear Judah far absented ;  
 Tearing the air with our cries,  
 And our eyes  
 With their streams his stream augmented.

*Donne's Trans. Ps. 137.*

Such a sudden recurrence of the rhyme comes upon the ear like the sound of an echo, and produces a ludicrous effect. Nor are the last lines in the following passage free from the same objection ;

O fool ! to think the man whose ample mind  
 Must grasp at all that yonder stars survey ;  
 Must join the noblest forms of every kind,  
 The world's most perfect image to display,  
 Can e'er his country's majesty behold,  
 Unmoved or cold !

*Akenside's Ode to Lord Huntingdon.*

But a long line which rhymes to one, however

short, preceding, as in these which immediately follow,

O fool! to deem

That he, whose thought must visit every theme, &c.  
*Ibid.*

This is allowable, because no such offence to the ear is then given.

When in a short verse the rhyme is removed to a greater distance, the displeasing effect is taken off, as here,

I hate the glory, friend, that springs  
From vulgar breath and empty sound :  
Fate mounts her upward with a flattering gale  
Upon her airy wings.

*Watts, Lyr. B. II. Happy Solitude.*

In this example, the rhyme of the short line standing so far distant from its correspondent rhyme, has nothing of that echo-like sound, which is perceivable in the two first.

Lyric poetry of the highest order requires the Iambic measure for its basis ; yet it admits other measures, as the Trochaic, and in certain cases, the Anapestic. These lines in Alexander's Feast are an instance :

Give the vengeance due  
To the valiant crew :  
Behold how they toss their torches on high !  
How they point to the Persian abodes,  
And glittering temples of their hostile gods.

Here, in the compass of five lines, the Trochaic and Anapestic are introduced together with the Iambic. The introduction of the Trochaic is common, but the Anapestic is hardly admissible, except in such odes as are made to be set to music. Dryden, by the changes of measure quoted above, designed to give expression to the sentiment; and he has succeeded, as every adequate judge must feel.

In the Lyric poetry, composed for music, it is to be noted, that the heroic line (of ten syllables) is not well suited to those parts of the piece which are called the airs. In the recitatives it is not out of place, but in the airs shorter lines are more fit. Hughes, who of all our poets appears to have considered and understood the subject as well as any (for he was also a musician), carefully excludes the heroic verse from his airs, while he admits it freely into the reci-

tatives. He produced above twenty compositions of this sort, many of which were set to music by the best masters of his time, Pepusch and Handel.

It is a part of correct versification in trochaic and anapestic measures, when the line terminates with a double rhyme, to preserve the measure unbroken through the next, as here :

Hence, away, thou syren, leave me !  
 And unclasp those wanton arms !  
 Sugar'd words can ne'er deceive me,  
 Though thou prove a thousand charms.

*Withers's Poems.*

So in anapestics \* ,

How gay is the circle of friends at a table,  
 Where stately Kilgarran o'erhangs the brown dale ;  
 Where none are unwilling, and few are unable  
 To sing a wild song, or repeat a wild tale.

*Sir W. Jones's Poems. Fete Champetre.*

\* This was a rule observed by the ancients, as Bentley has shown in his Notes on Horace, Book III. ode 12. See Dawes's *Miscell. Crit.* p. 352. Ed. Burgess.

The following are examples of broken measure :

All my joys to this are folly,  
 None so divine as melancholy.  
*Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy.*

'The first bout they had was so fair and so handsome,  
 That to make a fair bargain, 'twas worth a king's ransom ;  
 And Sutton such bangs to his neighbour imparted,  
 Would have made any fibres but Figg's to have smarted.  
*Byrom's Verses on the Prize Fighters.*

In every second line of these three couplets there is a redundant syllable which injures the measure.

Rhyme is so constant an attendant upon odes, that it has been generally considered as a necessary ornament to them ; a very few exceptions occur. One is in Milton, his translation of the 5th Ode of Horace. Collins, in his beautiful Ode to Evening, copied the form of that stanza.

If aught of oaten stop or pastoral string  
 May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear  
 Like thy own solemn springs,  
 Thy springs and dying gales.

• Another ode without rhyme was published

about the middle of the last century, in a volume of miscellany poems, entitled the *Union*. It is addressed to Arthur Onslow, and written in the regular Pindaric form, with strophe, antistrophe, and epode, thrice repeated. But these compositions, however well executed, have never become so popular as to induce other poets to follow their example, of discarding rhyme from lyric poetry.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OF BLANK VERSE.

UNDER this head will not be considered every verse, of what kind soever it may be, that is without rhyme, but that only which is commonly called heroic, that in which our tragedies and epic poems are composed, and which, in its perfect form, is an iambic line of ten syllables. But, strictly speaking, it is not the structure of a single line that we are now to treat of (for that has been already done), but the assemblage and combination of such lines, when unaccompanied by rhyme. Skilfully to make such a combination, however some critics have tried to

disparage it, is the highest attainment in the art of English versification.

Our blank verse is said to be derived from Italy, by which is to be understood, not the measure, but the practice of composing in heroic verse without rhyme. A translation of the 2d and 4th Books of Virgil's *Æneid* by Lord Surrey is said to be the earliest production of the kind: it begins thus,

They whisted all, with fixed face attent,  
When prince *Æneas* from the royal seat  
Thus gan to speak: O queen, it is thy will  
I should renew a woe cannot be told.

*Æn.* 2d.

These lines are indeed a favourable specimen of the work: not only is the measure smooth, but the pause is varied; in fact they would suffer little, if any thing, by comparison with Pitt's or Dryden's versification of the same passage.

The following verses in the same book are remarkable:

Thus said the aged man, and therewithal  
Forceless he cast his weak unwieldy dart;

Which repulsed from the brass, where it gave dint  
Without sound, hung vainly in the shield's boss.

Here is an evident design to produce imitative harmony: that of the original is noticed by the critics;

Sic fatus senior, telumque imbelles sine ictu  
Conjecit, rauco quod protenus ære repulsum,  
Et summo clipei necquicquam umbone pependit.

*Æn.* 2.

Lord Surrey's versification is better than that of some who followed him, as Gascoigne and Norton; but not equal to that of N. Grimboald, who was the second writer of English blank verse. The following lines are from his poem on the death of Zoroas, an Egyptian astronomer:

The Memphite Zoroas, a cunning clerk,  
To whom the heavens lay open, as his book;  
And in celestial bodies he could tell  
The moving, meeting, light, aspect, eclipse,  
And influence, and constellations all:  
What earthly chances would betide, what year  
Of plenty stored, what sign forewarned dearth:  
How winter gendereth snow, what temperature  
In the prime-tide doth season well the soil.

*Ellis's Specimens of English Poets*, v. 2. p. 75.

In this specimen are flowing numbers, varied pauses, and what is a greater advance towards good blank verse, the sentence twice broken at the end of a line, as in the third and sixth. For the Italian, which was the pattern for our poets, has little of such variety, or connexions of verses. Gascoigne's poem, intitled "The Steel Glass," will afford a just resemblance of the manner that he copied.

The Nightingale, whose happy, noble heart  
 No dole can daunt, nor fearful force affright,  
 Whose cheerful voice doth comfort saddest wights,  
 When she herself hath little cause to sing ;  
 Whom lovers love because she plains their griefs,  
 She wraies their woes, and yet relieves their pain ;  
 Whom worthy minds, always esteemed much,  
 And gravest years have not disdained his notes.

In this unvaried cadence the poem, for the greatest part, continues, extending to above eleven hundred lines ; of which not one in ten but has some stop at the end.

Both Surrey and Gascoigne close their lines with polysyllables : Surrey admits no redundant syllables ; Gascoigne does, but rarely.

Before the date of this piece (which was 1576)

blank verse had been introduced on the stage, in the tragedy of *Gorboduc*, by Lord Buckhurst and T. Norton; which is praised by Pope for “an easy flow in the numbers.” This praise is just: the verses are smooth and flowing; but, like those of the last specimen, they are generally separated from one another by a point, or pause, at the end of each: and there is something particular to be noticed in the manner by which they are made so. It is by taking two nouns substantive, and fitting such an adjective to each as the measure requires: these, with the necessary particles, fill up the line. The two first of the Play are instances:

The silent night that brings the quiet pause  
From painful travails of the weary day.

More than one twelfth of the whole are lines of this structure. In the first scene of the second act are these:

The wrekeful gods pour on my cursed head  
Eternal plagues and never-dying woes:  
The hellish prince adjudge my damned ghost  
To Tantalus' thirst, or proud Ixion's wheel:  
Or cruel gripe to gnaw my groaning heart,  
To during torments and unquenched flames.

Till the latter end of the sixteenth century our blank verse, though in some respects it might deserve commendation, had not that variety and extended compass in its periods, which constitutes the proper difference between blank verse and rhyme. The improvement appeared first in the drama, and particularly in Shakspeare, but it is likewise to be seen in Marlow; as in the following passage :

Lewen, the trust that we repose in thee  
 Begets the quiet of King Edward's land.  
 Therefore begone in haste, and with advice  
 Bestow that treasure on the lords of France,  
 That therewith all enchanted, like the guard  
 That suffered Jove to pass in showers of gold  
 To Danaë, all aid may be denied  
 To Isabel the queen, that now in France  
 Makes friends to cross the seas with her young son,  
 And step into his father's regiment.

*Tragedy of Edward II. Act 3.*

The character of good blank verse is well described in these words of Cowper; who himself practised successfully the directions which he laid down.

“ It is not sufficient that the lines of blank verse be smooth in themselves; they must also

be harmonious in the combination. Whereas the chief concern of the rhymist is to beware that his couplets and his sense be commensurate, lest the regularity of his numbers should be (too frequently at least) interrupted. A trivial difficulty this compared with those which attend the poet unaccompanied by his bells. He, in order that he may be musical, must exhibit all the variations, as he proceeds, of which ten syllables are susceptible: between the first syllable and the last, there is no place at which he must not occasionally pause, and the place of the pause must be perpetually shifted. To effect this variety, his attention must be given, at one and the same time, to the pauses he has already made in the period before him, as well as to that which he is about to make, and to those which shall succeed it."—*Preface to Translation of the Iliad*, p. 26.

A variety of pauses in the lines, and of extension in the periods, may be observed in the verses subjoined here.

Peace to the friends of peace! and liberty  
 ' To them that love it! Liberty and Peace,

And what may thence best follow ! wealth, content,  
Gladness of heart, and general good will ;  
That for these blessings men on earth may sing  
Glory to God on high ! So did I pray ;  
But pray'd in vain ; for Discord, waving wide  
Her fiery torch, set Europe in a blaze.  
Then let the bickering flames of war find out  
The rottenness of them that kindled it,  
And burn till they consume ! let gory Death  
Amidst the fight urge on his reinless steed,  
And trample on fallen kings !



## CHAPTER XIX.

### OF THE SUBJECTS TO WHICH BLANK VERSE IS SUITABLE.

BLANK verse is properly employed in epic and dramatic works: and this is so generally acknowledged, that a writer, who should now compose an epic poem or a tragedy in rhyme, would go counter to the best judgment and taste of the age. Other subjects of poetry rather admit than require blank verse. It is used however with great propriety in many, where grave sentiments and a lofty style may be introduced, as descriptive or didactic poems. But to some kinds it appears to be unsuitable, and is therefore excluded from them, as satire and elegy. It is likewise out of place when engaged in familiar or low subjects; and Dr. Johnson justly condemned the use of it

in J. Philips's Poem on Cyder, when he said, that "other measures and rhyme were fitter to decide the merit of the redstreak and pearmain."—*Life of J. Philips*. And again, when he applauded the Splendid Shilling of the same poet, he gratified his antipathy to blank verse, and enjoyed the triumph of seeing it held up to ridicule in that low parody.

If we reject blank verse from translations, it is not because such translations have not been sometimes well executed, but because they have not become popular. Cowper's translation of Homer bears a nearer resemblance to the original than any other in English. The only translation of this kind that has succeeded, as it well deserves, is the translation of Dante by Cary.

It was not till a late period that blank verse was used in short poems. Among the earliest of these was a copy of verses on the death of queen Caroline, 1736; first published in the Oxford Poems on that subject: the author, Jonathan Shipley, at that time a member of Christ Church, afterwards bishop of St. Asaph. These verses are remarkable for elegance, a correct taste, and

a versification equal to any in the language. The following lines are a specimen, in which Caroline is compared to other female sovereigns :

Such was the royal mind  
Of wise *Eliza*, name of loveliest sound  
To British ears, and pattern fair to kings :  
Or She who rules the sceptre of the North  
Illustrious, spreading o'er a barbarous world  
The light of arts and manners, and with arms  
Infests the astonish'd Sultan, hardly now  
With scatter'd troops resisting ; She drives on  
The heavy war, and shakes th' imperial throne  
Of old Byzantium.

## CHAPTER XX.

### OF DRAMATIC VERSE.

FROM the consideration of the manner in which dramatic verse is employed may be inferred, in part, what qualities it ought to have.

This verse is not the language of the poet himself (as in the epic) but of those persons whom he introduces upon the stage; and they are supposed to speak often under the influence of passion, always to speak the language of the world, and of business, according to their respective characters.

On this account therefore inversions are not often to be admitted: the natural order of words ought to predominate, and should not be changed

for the sake of the metre. This circumstance does not perhaps come strictly under the head of versification, yet is nearly connected with it, and is proper to be mentioned, because it is not unfrequently neglected, as in these passages :

Not then with raving cries I filled the city.

*Johnson's Irene, A. 3. S. 8.*

He is no more ; gone to that awful state

Where kings the crown wear only of their works.

*Thomson's Tanc. and Sig. A. 1. S. 2.*

Then, midst the slaughter, fell a sacrifice

To iron war our king's lamented son.

*Hoole's Cleonice, A. 1. S. 1.*

These instances are all from the narrative parts, where the arrangement of words ought to be the simplest.

With respect to dramatic versification, its characters are these :

It admits, or rather requires at intervals, the redundant syllable, at the end of the line, as here :

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,  
To give these mourning duties to your father.

*Shakspcare's Hamlet, A. 1. S. 2.*

Dr. Johnson has noticed as much as this, where he censures the versification of Fenton's *Mariamne*, which has few of such redundant terminations: "these," he says, "the drama not only admits but requires, as more nearly approaching to real dialogue." *Life of Fenton*.

Two redundant syllables are also allowable, as,

To accept of ransom for my son, their prisoner.

*Milton's Samps. Ag.*

but such lines are not required, nor to be so frequently admitted\*.

\* It has been said by some critics that polysyllables, unless accented upon the last syllable, did not make a fit rhyme. There have been those who held that they did not fill an heroic verse, unless the unaccented syllables were redundant. A Tragedy, entitled *Themistocles*, was published in London, in 1729, and acted in *Lincoln's Inn Fields*: in that drama the versification here noted occurs very frequently; so that it is evident the author thought a line defective, which had not this redundancy; example:

Through all our hosts proclaim a solemn festival. *A. 2.*

I am no slave to Persia, like Themistocles,

No slave to Xerxes, and oppressive tyranny. *A. 3.*

Dramatic verse allows of a redundant syllable in the middle of a line, as,

One that goes with him ; I love him for his sake.

*Shak. All's Well, &c. Act I. Sc. 1.*

The rest have worn me out

With several applications: nature and sickness.

*Ibid. Sc. 3.*

This is his majesty ; say your mind to him.

*Ibid. Act II. Sc. 1.*

It allows of feet of three syllables, such as cannot be contracted; as,

By the luckiest stars in heaven ; and would your honour.

*Ibid. Act I. Sc. 3.*

If he were honest

He were much goodlier : is't not a handsome gentleman ?

*Ibid. Act III. Sc. 1.*

Imperfect lines are admissible ; i. e. lines wanting one or more feet : of these it is unnecessary to give examples.

Another characteristic of dramatic verse is that the lines may be terminated with little insignificant words, such as other kinds of poetry would not admit in the like place ; viz. conjunctions, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs :

If by your art, my dearest father, you have  
 Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.—  
 Had I been any god of power, I would  
 Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er  
 It should the good ship so have swallow'd, and  
 The frightening souls within her.

*Shak. Tempest, Act I. Sc. 2.*

But the use of terminations like these may perhaps be carried too far, as by Massinger, who often closes a line with them; or sometimes with adjective pronouns; as,

Look on our court delights; but first from your  
 Relation, with erected ears I'll hear.

*Picture, Act I. Sc. 2.*

and even with the article; as,

The power I serve  
 Laughs at your happy Araby, or the  
 Elysian shades.

*Virgin Martyr.*

Lines of this construction, which were common in our elder poets, had fallen into disuse, till they were again revived in some dramas that lately appeared.



The peculiarities of dramatic verse are detailed here; but our dramatists have sometimes taken other and greater licences, which entirely destroy the verse, and are therefore passed over, as not belonging to a work which treats only of versification.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### OF MILTON'S VERSIFICATION.

THE singular excellence of Milton in constructing blank verse suitable to his subject, viz. the epic poem, being generally acknowledged, it will be the business of this section to point out some of its causes, or at least some of those qualities which are most apparent and eminent in his versification.

The great variety of feet which the English heroic line admits has already been mentioned. Milton has availed himself of this to its utmost allowable extent.

A part of this variety consists in the licences which he takes; such are these,

Drew after him the third | pārt öf | Heaven's host.

*Book v.*

Deliberate valour breath'd | firm and | unmoved.

*Book i.*

Of Eve, whose eye | dārtēd | contagious fire.

*Book ix.*

How art thou lost ! | hōw ōn | a sudden lost!

*Ibid.*

Uni|vērſāl | reproach, far worse to bear.

*Book vi.*

Anon, | ōt ōf | the earth, a fabric huge.

*Book i.*

These licences are all of one kind; viz. the substitution of the trochaic for the iambic foot\*,

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\* It is the introduction of this trochaic which offends the ear in some of Milton's lines; as in this,

Yet fell; remember, and | f̄ar to | transgress.

*Book vi.*

But it offends only because there is no pause before it: the following, which has exactly the same feet, is a musical line;

In wood or wilderness, | f̄or̄st | or den.

*Book iv.*

The former contains something like what the ancient cri-

which trochaic, being the direct opposite to the fundamental measure of the heroic line (the iambic), is the greatest licence that can be allowed, as may be gathered from hence, that it cannot stand for the last foot, whereas any other of two syllables is admissible there, either the pyrrhic or spondee, as :

Till even, nor then the solemn nightingale  
Ceased warbling, but all night tuned her soft lays.

*Book vii.*

Next to the variety of feet may be noticed the variety of pauses, with respect to their position in the line. Here again Milton's excellence appears :

However, some tradition they dispersed  
Among the heathen, of their purchase got,  
And fabled how the serpent, whom they call'd  
Ophion, with Eurynome, the wide-

tics have observed of Homer's lines ; viz. that his breaks or pauses sometimes make a new measure : so here, the four last feet are an anapestic verse :

Remem | ber, and fear | to transgress. |

Encroaching Eve, perhaps, had first the rule  
 Of high Olympus, thence by Saturn driven  
 And Ops, e'er yet Dictæan Jove was born.

*Book x.*

In this passage the pause is so varied, that no two lines together have it in the same place; and within the compass of seven lines, it stands in six different places. This is by no means a singular instance; a variety, similar if not so great, is one characteristic of this poem.

Millions of spirits for his fault amerced  
 Of heaven, and from eternal splendours flung  
 For his revolt; yet faithful how they stood,  
 Their glory wither'd: as when heaven's fire  
 Hath scathed the forest oaks, or mountain pines,  
 With singed top their stately growth, though bare,  
 Stands on the blasted heath.

*Book i.*

Here, from the second line to the sixth, there are as many different pauses as lines.

When a pause falls on the third, or fifth, or seventh syllable of a verse, the foot in which it stands will generally be a pyrric; because the connecting words of our language, as conjunctions,

&c., are all unaccented: it would therefore be a weak foot, which is sometimes to be guarded against, in order to preserve what Pope calls "the full resounding line, the majestic march," of the heroic measure. To this Milton has attended in many passages; for example,

Torments him, round he throws his baleful eyes.

*Book i.*

For these rebellious, here their prison ordain'd.

*Ibid.*

Breaking the horrid silence, thus began.

*Ibid.*

When Jesus, son of Mary, second Eve.

*Book x.*

Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs,  
Intestine stone and ulcer, colic-pangs,  
Demonic phrensy, moping melancholy,  
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,  
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence.

*Book xi.*

In every line here, except the last, the syllable following the pause is accented: this makes the foot an iambic, and gives a fulness to the measure.

Another circumstance remarkable in Milton's versification is his use of elisions. The practice of cutting off a vowel at the end of a word was not introduced by him into our poetry, but he revived it when it had become obsolete; so that his manner appeared as a novelty\*, and was indeed clearly different from that of other poets, and even from his own former productions. In his *Comus* there occur no elisions like these :

His temple right against the temple' of God—  
 Anguish, and doubt, and fear, and sorrow, and pain—  
*Book i.*

Abominable, unutterable, and worse.  
*Book ii.*

There may indeed be found, in his cotempo-

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\* The following is Addison's remark: "He has made use of several elisions, which are not customary among other English poets, as may be particularly observed in his cutting off the letter *y* when it precedes a vowel. This and some other innovations in the measure of his verse has varied his numbers in such a manner, as makes them incapable of satiating the ear, and cloying the reader."—*Spect.* No. 285.

aries, an instance or two of such elisions, as this of Cowley :

In all his robes of ceremony' and state.

*David. Book iii.*

But such are very rare : their usual elisions are of monosyllables, as the following :

By thine own flesh, thy' ungrateful son betray'd.

*David. Book i.*

To unjust force she' opposes just deceit.

*Ibid.*

By these the measure is injured, and the verse rendered harsh and unmusical, very different from the general effect of Milton's.

The length of periods, occasionally and judiciously introduced, is another distinguishing feature. Such is the following :

Sing, heavenly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of chaos.

*Book i.*

To these may be added the frequent inversions ; as this, which is most remarkable :



God, from the mount of Sinai, whose gray top  
 Shall tremble, he descending, shall himself,  
 In thunder, lightning, and loud trumpet's sound,  
 Ordain them laws.

*Book xii.*

But in Milton's versification nothing is more remarkable than the skilful manner by which his lines are connected, and run one into another. This is done by ending the line in that part of a sentence where there is no sensible pause. But to explain this it will be necessary to consider how, for this purpose, a sentence may be divided, and also what makes a pause.

And first to mention what, in a simple sentence, will produce a pause. Take a sentence in its natural order of words; viz. 1st, the article; 2nd, the nominative case, and what may be joined with it, as adjective or genitive case; 3rd, the verb; 4th, the noun, or other word governed by it; e. g.

The affable archangel had forewarn'd  
 Adam.

*Book vii.*

Whatever disturbs this natural order creates a pause; as,

1. Transposition; i. e. any change of that order; e. g.

The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
*From the safe shore* their floating carcasses.

*Book i.*

Ahaz his sottish conqueror, whom he drew  
*God's altar* to disparage.

*Ibid.*

2. The insertion of any phrase, or word, not necessary to make out the sentence :

———— the self-same place where he  
*First* lighted from his wing.

*Book x.*

———— my sudden hand  
*Prevented*, spares to tell thee yet by deeds.

*Book ii.*

On a sudden open fly  
*With impetuous recoil and jarring sound*  
 The infernal doors.

*Ibid.*

———— on each hand the flames  
*Driven backward*, slope their pointing spires.

*Book i.*

3. Apposition, or the introduction of a second word having the same signification as the

former: this differs but little from the preceding; e. g.

———— or that sea-beast  
*Leviathan*, which God of all his works—

*Book i*

———— yea, often placed  
 Within his sanctuary itself their shrines  
*Abominations*, and with cursed things.

*Ibid.*

Hid Amalthea, and her florid son  
 Young *Bacchus* from his step-dame Rhea's eye.

*Book iv.*

By any of these means a pause is made, even in a simple sentence.

It has been shown that dramatic writers sometimes end a line with such words as would hardly be allowed in other kinds of serious poetry: such are the articles, the adjective pronouns, and some few others. Now there is no pause between the article and its noun, nor between the pronoun adjective and its substantive: on the contrary, these have too close a connexion to be separated. But verses may be made to run into one another by dividing a sentence in other parts, where yet there is no pause. 1. Between

two substantives; 2. between the nominative case and the verb; 3. between the verb and the accusative case; 4. between two verbs. These breaks are of the most frequent occurrence, and allowed practice: but there are others; as, 5. between the adjective and its substantive; 6. between certain pronouns and the verb; 7. between some prepositions, and the word governed by them.

The following instances are subjoined to show Milton's use of these divisions.

1. Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree.

*Book i.*

2. ——— whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world.

*Ibid.*

3. Sing, heavenly muse that  
——— didst inspire  
That shepherd.

*Ibid.*

4. ——— He now prepared  
To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend.

*Ibid.*

5. God their creator and th' invisible  
Glory of him that made them to transform.

*Ibid.*

———— the gray  
 Dawn, and the Pleiades before him danc'd,  
 6. And feel thy sovran vital lamp; but thou  
 Revisit'st not these eyes.

*Book iii.*

———— that thou art naked, who  
 Hath told thee? hast thou eaten of the tree?

*Book x.*

7. That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
 This downfall.

*Book i.*

Sole Eve, associate sole, to me beyond \*  
 Compare above all living creatures dear.

*Book ix.*

\* These prepositions are dissyllables; the smaller seldom if ever occur at the end of a line. We find, but very rarely, the auxiliary separated from its verb;

That with reiterated crimes he might  
 Heap on himself damnation.

*Book i.*

and once a compound epithet is divided at the end of a verse;

Ophion, with Eurynome, the wide-  
 Encroaching Eve perhaps.

*Book xi.*

All these qualities enumerated in the present section appear throughout Milton's versification, which indeed he himself has described in his note prefixed to the *Paradise Lost*, where he says, "true musical delight consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another." Such, according to his judgment, are the constituent parts; and, by due attention to what he here laid down, he attained to his distinguished eminence in this, which is the highest species of English versification.

Dionysius Halicarnassus, in his *Treatise* above quoted, has a section (26), the title of which is, "How Epic or Lyric Verses may appear like Prose;" he means, with the flow and variety of oratorical compositions. And he brings an example from Homer, and another from Euripides (Iambics), to show that it is by the different length of the sentences, and by not concluding the verse and the sentence together, that it is effected. The manner, in a word, is just the same, that good English blank verse is constructed. It is observed by critics, that

other ancient poets have, in this respect, done the like, especially Virgil. Sim. Biron has given instances at the end of *Dion. Halic.* Edit. London, 1747. 8vo.

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NOTES TO MILTON.

THE following note concerning Milton, though not his versification, it is hoped the reader will allow.

Lowth, in his *Grammar*, p. 116, 2d edition, having plainly shown that Bentley was wrong, who altered this phrase to *him descending*, has himself mistakenly altered another phrase of Milton in these lines :

For only in destroying I find ease  
 To my relentless thoughts ; and, *him destroyed*,  
 Or won to what may work his utter loss,  
 For whom all this was made, all this will soon  
 Follow, as to him linked in weal or woe.

*Book ix.*

“ It ought to be,” says Lowth, “ *he destroyed*, that is, *he being destroyed*. Bentley corrects it, ‘ and *man destroyed*.’ ” Lowth, *Gr.* p. 117.

Milton’s text is correct in both places, and though in the

latter the arrangement is very unusual, is strictly grammatical. *him destroyed* is not put for the case absolute, as the former is supposed, but for the accusative, governed by the verb *follow*: all this will soon follow him destroyed. A phrase so constructed is probably not to be found, except in Milton; in his pages it occurs more than once.

King Sebert's sons coming into the church where Mellitus the bishop was ministering, they required him to deliver to them the consecrated bread; and *him refusing, drove* disgracefully out of their dominion. *Hist. of Eng. Book iv.*

Harold sent spies before him to survey the number and strength of his enemies. *Them, discovered such* the duke (William of Normandy), causing to be led about, and after well filled with meat and drink, *sent back.* *Ibid. Book vi.*

*His* (Harold's) *body lying* dead, a knight or soldier *wounding* on the thigh, was, by the duke, presently turned out of military service. *Ibid.*

If, in any of these instances, the phrase be taken for the case absolute, the grammar will be imperfect; because there will be no object for the verbs (which are transitive) to act upon.

Another circumstance in Milton's prose compositions, which is remarkable, and not altogether foreign to the subject of this treatise, will here be added. He frequently admits into his prose a verse of the heroic measure,



may, sometimes two together. This is mentioned rather to show what sort of rhythm pleased his ears, than to blame him. Cicero, indeed, would have said, *vehementer est vitiosum*. In his Orator he informs us of one Hierodolymus who examined the writings of Isocrates, to detect the verses contained in them; and says, *Elegit ex multis Isocratis libris 30 fortasse versus, plerosque senarios, sed etiam anapæsta; quo quid potest esse turpius? etsi in eligendo fecit malitiose; prima enim syllaba dempta in primo verbo sententiæ, postremum ad verbum primam rursus syllabam adjunxit insequentis.* Or. § 56.

Now, without picking unfairly, like the Greek above-mentioned, we may show many verses in Milton's prose. His speech, entitled *Areopagitica*, begins thus,

They, who to states and governors of the commonwealth *direct their speech, high court of Parliament*, or wanting such access in a private condition, write that which they foresee may advance the public good, I suppose them as, *at the beginning of no mean endeavour*, not a little altered and moved inwardly in their minds; some with doubt of what will be the success, *others with fear of what will be the censure*; some with hope, *others with confidence of what they have to speak.* And *me perhaps each of these dispositions*, as the subject was whereon I entered, may have at other times variously affected; and likely might, in these foremost expressions, now also disclose which of them swayed most, but that *the very attempt of his address thus made*, and the

thought of whom it hath recourse to, hath got the power  
 within to a passion, far more welcome than inci-  
 dentally to a reface. Which though I stay not to con-  
 fess ere any ask, I shall be blameless if it be no other  
 than the joy and gratulation which it brings to all who  
 wish and promote their country's liberty.

He, whose ear was so attuned to this cadence, might  
 well say that

He fed on thoughts that voluntary move  
 Harmonious numbers. *B. 3.*

And that his celestial patroness  
 inspired

Easy his unpremeditated verse. *B. 9.*

But there are no Anapestics in him, which Cicero par-  
 ticularly blames in Isocrates; for they are farther re-  
 moved from prose, and of a light cadence: the verses he  
 falls into are of the graver iambic measure, and heroic.

Our old translation of the Psalms, viz. that read in the  
 church, contains many Anapestic verses; as these in the  
 first.

That will bring forth his fruit in due season. *V. 3.*

And look, whatsoever he doth it shall prosper. *V. 4.*

Away from the face of the earth. *V. 5.*

Be able to stand in the judgment. *V. 6.*

And the way of the ungodly shall perish. *V. 7.*

An Anapestic cadence is prevalent through the whole  
 book.



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