

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

Coventry Patmore's "Essay on
English Metrical Law":

A Critical Edition with a Commentary

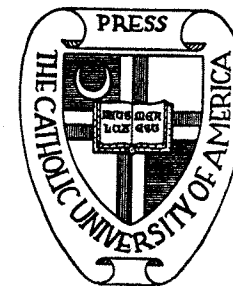
A DISSERTATION

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BY

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NOTE.

THIS Essay was first printed, almost as it now stands,^N in the year 1856.^N I have seen with pleasure that, since then, its main principles have been quietly adopted^N by most writers on the subject in periodicals and elsewhere.

1886.

THIS Essay . . . 1886.] om *NBR*, *Am*, *PI*

ESSAY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW.

THE adoption, by Surrey and his immediate successors, of certain foreign metres^N into our poetry, and the unprecedented attempt of that accomplished writer to establish 'blank verse' as a narrative vehicle, first aroused conscious and scientific interest in the subject of the mechanism of English verse. From that time to this, the nature of modern verse has been a favourite problem of enthusiasts who love to dive in deep waters for diving's sake. A vast mass of nondescript matter has been brought up from the recesses visited, but no one has succeeded in rendering any sufficient account of this secret of the intellectual deep. I have made

Title ESSAY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW. *English Metrical Critics NBR*; PREFATORY STUDY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW. (*with footnote*.) This Essay appeared, almost as it now stands, in vol. xxvii. of the *North British Review*. *Am*; PREFATORY STUDY ON ENGLISH METRICAL LAW. *PI*
NBR has heading and introductory paragraph: ART. VI—1. *The Art of Elocution*. By GEORGE VANDENHOFF. London: 1855. 8vo.
2. *A History of English Rhythms*. By E. GUEST. London: 1838. 8vo.
3. *The Ancient Rhythmical Art Recovered*. By WILLIAM O'BRIEN. Dublin: 1843. 8vo.

Verses, good or bad, at one time or another have exercised the power of delighting and impressing all persons. It seems, therefore, somewhat singular that all theories and criticisms of the nature of verse, and canons for its composition, should hitherto have been found the most dreary of reading: prosaic *par excellence*, "prosody," in short—a word scarcely proper to be spoken within hearing of the ladies, a necessary evil of academic days, a subject which pedantry itself seldom dreams of obtruding upon ears polite. The reason seems to be, that in this department of learning investigators have failed to reach, often even to seek, those fundamental truths, which, if discovered, must confer connection and unity, and consequently intellectual interest, on all the less general facts.

- 1 THE] The *indented*, *NBR*
- 6 a favourite] the pet *NBR*
- 7 of enthusiasts] of a large part of that peculiar class of enthusiasts *NBR*
- 8 A vast] An infinite *NBR*
- 9 no one has succeeded in] none of the divers has succeeded, to the complete satisfaction of any but himself, in *NBR*
- 9 any sufficient account] an account *NBR*
- 10 I] we *NBR*

it my business to ascertain whether any of the musical grammarians,^N whose science is, in great part, a mere abstraction of the laws of metre, have supplied the deficiencies of the prosodians. The sum total of my inquiries in both fields of criticism, musical and poetical, amounts to this, that upon few other subjects has so much been written with so little tangible result. Without for a moment questioning the value of certain portions of the writings of Puttenham, Gascoigne, Campion, Webbe, Daniel, Crowe, Foster, Mitford, Guest,^N and others, it must be confessed that no one of these writers renders anything like a full and philosophical account of the subject; and that, with the exception of Daniel, the admirable author of the 'Civil Wars,' and Mitford, none has treated the question, even on the superficial ground in most cases assumed, with the combined ability and competence of information from which alone any important fruit can be looked for in such investigations. George Puttenham's 'Art of English Poesy' is by very much the most bulky and laborious of the early metrical essays; but at least nine-tenths of this book consist of as unprofitable writing as ever spoilt paper. His chapter on the arrangement of rhymes to form staves^N is worthy of the poetical student's attention; and there is in the outset of his work an explicit acknowledgment^N of the fact, so often lost sight of by his successors, that English verse is not properly measurable by the rules of Latin and Greek verse.^N Indeed, the early poetical critics commonly manifest a much clearer discernment of the main importance of rhyme^N and accentual stress, in English verse, than is to be found among later writers. Their views are, for the most part, far from being expressed with that positiveness and appearance of system characterising the school of critics^N which received its data from Pope and his compeers; but they are, upon the whole, considerably more in accordance with the true spirit^N of English verse, as it appears

1 my] our *NBR*
 3 supplied the deficiencies] sounded the depths *NBR*
 3 the prosodians.] this department of their art. *NBR*
 4 my] our *NBR*
 5 few other subjects] no other subject with which we are acquainted *NBR*
 8 Daniel, Crowe,] Daniel Crowe, *Am*
 20 there is] we find *NBR*
 28 characterising] characterizing *NBR*

in its highest excellence in the writings of the poets of Elizabeth and James. The dissertations of the second class of critics, of whom Foster was the best example, are rendered comparatively useless by the adoption of false or confused opinions as the groundwork of their theories; such, for instance, as Foster's assumption that the time of syllables in English^N keeps the proportion usually attributed to long and short quantities in Greek and Latin, and that the metrical ictus or stress in English is identical with elevation of tone;^N—mistakes which seem also to have been made by Dr. Johnson in the prosody prefixed to his Dictionary,^N and by various other writers of his time. Joshua Steele^N has the praise of having propounded more fully than had hitherto been done, the true view of metre, as being primarily based upon isochronous division by ictuses or accents;^N and he, for the first time, clearly declared the necessity of measuring pauses^N in minutely scanning English verse. He remarked the strong pause^N which is required for the proper delivery of adjacent accented syllables, and without which the most beautiful verses must often be read into harsh prose. But the just and important views of this writer were mingled with so much that was erroneous and impracticable, that they made little or no general impression. Mitford's careful work on the Harmony of Language is perhaps the most significant book which has appeared upon the subject. This work, though far from containing the whole, or the unmixed truth, has not yet been superseded by any of the several elaborate essays on the same theme which have since appeared. Mr. Guest's work on English Rhythms is a laborious and, in some respects, valuable performance; but many of his observations indicate an ear defective to a degree which seriously impairs their value, when they concern the more subtle kinds of metrical effect. The value of his work is further diminished by a singular unskilfulness in the mode of arranging his materials, and communicating his views. He has fallen into the great error of endeavouring to simplify and abbreviate

3 best] most notable *NBR*
 8 English] English, *NBR, Am, P1*
 10 Dr.] Dr *NBR*
 11 his] that *NBR*
 26 Mr.] Mr *NBR*
 33 great] grave *NBR*

his statements by adopting, for the indication of different species of verse, a notation^N which few persons can fairly be called upon to take the pains to comprehend and follow.

The radical faults of nearly all the writers I have mentioned, and of those who have followed in their steps, are, first, the mistake of working in ignorance of the truth declared by Quintilian, 'that mere literature, without a knowledge of sounds, will not enable a man to treat properly of metre and rhythm;'^N and, secondly, that of having formed too light an estimate of their subject, whereby they have been prevented from sounding deep enough for the discovery of the philosophical grounds and primary laws of metrical expression. No one, with any just sense of the exalted but unobtrusive functions of art,^N will expect to derive much artistic instruction from the writings of men who set about their work, perhaps their life's work, with such sentiments as Dr. Burney was not ashamed to avow at the commencement of that laborious treatise which is still deservedly a text-book of musical history: 'I would rather be pronounced trivial than tiresome; for music being, at best, but an amusement, its history merits not, in reading, the labour of intense application.'^N And again: 'What is music? An innocent luxury, unnecessary indeed to existence, but a great improvement and gratification to our sense of hearing.'^N

3 follow.] *NBR continues paragraph*: He throws, however, much new and interesting light upon the history of versification, and no student of the subject will omit to give his volumes a respectful reading. Mr Dallas brings metrical criticism up to the present day. His "Poetics" is a clever and amusing volume, made up of much fun, much metaphysics, and a good many observations to the purpose. Indeed the balance between the metaphysics and the fun is hard to strike. When we feel ourselves disposed to object to the style of such criticisms as "the centrifugal force wherewith the mind rushes forth into the objective, acting on the centripetal force of self-consciousness, generates the circling numbers of the revolving harmonies of poetry—in one word, a roundelay,"—we ought, perhaps, to satisfy ourselves as Charles Lamb, in a stutter, is said to have consoled a free-thinking friend who had just been irritated by one of Coleridge's "properer-for-a-sermon" philosophical monologues, and to conclude that all such criticisms are only Mr Dallas's ph-ph-ph-*fun!*

4 I] we *NBR*

8 and, secondly,] secondly, *NBR*

12 exalted] *ex at line end, altd on next line, om hyphen, NBR*

15 Dr.] Dr *NBR*

The nature of the relation between the poet's peculiar mode of expression and the matter expressed^N has engaged the curiosity of many philosophic minds. Hegel,^N whose chapters on music and metre contain by far the most satisfactory piece of writing I know of on the subject, admirably observes, that versification affords a necessary counterpoise^N to the great spiritualisation of language in poetry. 'It is false,' he adds, 'that versification offers any obstacle to the free outpouring of poetic thought. True genius disposes with ease of sensible materials, and moves therein as in a native element, which, instead of depressing or hindering, exalts and supports its flight.'^N Art, indeed, must have a body as well as a soul;^N and the higher and purer the spiritual, the more powerful and unmistakable should be the corporeal element;—in other words, the more vigorous and various the life, the more stringent and elaborate must be the law^N by obedience to which life expresses itself.

The co-ordination of life and law, in the matter and form of poetry, determines the different degrees and kinds^N of metre, from the half-prosaic dramatic verse to the extremest elaboration of high lyric metres. The quality of all emotion which is not ignoble is to boast of its allegiance to law. The limits and decencies of ordinary speech will by no means declare high and strong feelings with efficiency. These must have free use of all sorts of figures

4 metre contain] metre, in the third volume of his *Æsthetics*, contain *NBR*

4 I] we *NBR*

8 outpouring] out-pouring *NBR*

13 unmistakable] unmitakeable *NBR*

15 law] law, *NBR*

16 itself.] *NBR continues paragraph*: The defective balance of these powers, the failure being on the material side, produces the effect of license in Shelley, and slovenliness in Wordsworth, and of much waste of the great spiritual powers of both; the opposite kind of failure, namely, the preponderance of form, has few examples among the writings of first-class English poets, but very many among those of Germany, whose prevailing error is that of causing form to weigh down and conceal, instead of expressing and supporting spirit. In this we do not allude only to metre, which is often over-elaborated by the best German poets, but to that which may be justly regarded as the continuation and development of the metrical element, namely, a highly and obviously artificial arrangement and unfolding of the subject.

19 half-prosaic] half prosaic *NBR*

20 ignoble] ignoble, *NBR*

and latitudes of speech; such latitudes as would at once be perceived by a delicately constituted mind to be lax and vicious, without the shackles of artistic form.^N What in prose would be shrieks and vulgar hyperbole, is transmuted by metre into graceful and impressive song. This effect of metre has often been alluded to, with more or less exactness of thought and expression. 'Bacon,' says Mr. Dallas, 'regards metre as a curb or shackle, where everything else is riot and lawless revelling; Wordsworth regards it as a mark of order, and so an assurance of reality needed in such an unusual state of mind as he takes poetry to be; and Coleridge would trace it to the balance struck between our passions and spontaneous efforts to hold them in check.'^N From the truth which is implied alike in these several propositions, an important and neglected corollary follows: metre ought not only to exist as the becoming garment^N of poetic passion, but, furthermore, it should continually make its existence recognized. Some writers, by a peculiar facility of language, have attained to write perfect metre with almost as little metrical effect^N as if it were prose. Now this is no merit, but very much the reverse. The language should always seem to *feel*, though not to *suffer from* the bonds of verse. The very deformities produced, really or apparently, in the phraseology of a great poet, by the confinement of metre, are beautiful, exactly for the same reasons that in architecture justify the bossy Gothic foliage,^N so unlike Nature, and yet, indeed, in its place and purpose as art, so much more beautiful than Nature.^N Metre never attains its noblest effects when it is altogether unproductive of those beautiful exorbitancies on the side of law. Milton and Shakspeare are full of them; and we may declare the excellence of these effects without danger to the poorer proprieties

2 delicately] finely *NBR*

4 vulgar] vular *NBR*

4 graceful and impressive song.] graceful song. *NBR*

7 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

13 propositions, an] propositions, it seems to us that an *NBR*

23 beautiful,] beautiful and noble, *NBR*

23 same reasons] same artistic reasons *NBR*

24 Gothic] gothic *NBR*

24 Nature] nature *NBR*

25 Nature.] nature herself. *NBR*

28 Shakspeare] Shakespeare *NBR*

of the lower walks of art, since no small poet can originate them, or even copy them, without making himself absurd. Wordsworth's erroneous critical views^N of the necessity of approximating the language of poetry, as much as possible, to that of prose, especially by the avoidance of grammatical inversions, arose from his having overlooked the necessity of manifesting, as well as moving in, the bonds of verse. In the finest specimens of versification, there seems to be a perpetual conflict^N between the law of the verse and the freedom of the language, and each is incessantly, though insignificantly, violated for the purpose of giving effect to the other. The best poet is not he whose verses are the most easily scanned, and whose phraseology is the commonest in its materials, and the most direct in its arrangement; but rather he whose language combines the greatest imaginative accuracy^N with the most elaborate and sensible^N metrical organization, and who, in his verse, preserves everywhere the living sense of metre, not so much by unvarying obedience to, as by innumerable small departures from, its *modulus*.^N The over-smooth^N and 'accurate' metre of much of the eighteenth century poetry, to an ear able to appreciate the music of Milton and the best parts of Coleridge, is almost as great a defect as the entire dissolution of metre^N displayed by some of the writers of our own century.

The reader will already have discovered that I am writing under a conviction that the musical and metrical^N expression of emotion is an instinct, and not an artifice. Were the vulgar^N and infantine delight in rhythm insufficient to justify that conviction, history itself would prove it. The earliest writings of all nations possessing regularly constituted languages have been rhythmical in that high degree which takes the form of verse.^N 'Verse,' as Ellis well observes, 'is anterior to prose, because our passions are anterior to reason and judgment; because vocal sounds are the natural expression of emotion, not of reflection.'^N On examination, however, it will be found that the most ordinary speaking involves the mu-

2 himself absurd.] himself obviously absurd. *NBR*

11 scanned,] scannible, *NBR*

15 organisation,] organization, *NBR*

21 some of the writers] most of the versifiers *NBR*

22 century.] time. *NBR*

23 I am] we are *NBR*

33 found that] found out that *NBR*

sical and metrical element^N in an easily appreciable degree, and as an integral part of language, and that this element commonly assumes conspicuousness and importance in proportion to the amount of emotion intended to be expressed. Metre, in the primary^N degree of a simple series of isochronous intervals,^N marked by accents, is as natural to spoken language as an even pace is natural to walking. Prose delivery, without this amount of metre, is like a drunkard's walk, the irregularity of which is so far from being natural to a person in his senses, that it is not even to be imitated without effort. Now, as dancing is no more than an increase of the element of measure which already exists in walking,^N so verse is but an additional degree of that metre^N which is inherent in prose speaking. Again, as there is this difference between prose and verse generically, so the same difference gives rise to specific kinds of prose and of verse; and the prose of a common law report differs from that of an impassioned piece of oratory, just in the same way that the semi-prosaic dramatic verse differs from an elaborate lyric. This is no new doctrine; it is as old as criticism. Cicero writes, 'Mira est enim natura vocis: cujus quidem è tribus omnino sonis, inflexo, acuto, gravi, tanta sit et tam suavis varietas perfecta in cantibus: est autem in dicendo etiam quidem cantus obscurior.'^N And, again, Quintilian, 'Nihil est prosa scriptum quod non redigi possit in quædam versiculorum genera.'^N

The metrical and musical law in prose has been disregarded and forgotten, because its nature is so simple that its observance may be safely trusted to instinct, and requires no aid from typographical divisions. Probably many of my readers will feel as much surprised at learning that they have been speaking in metre all their lives, as the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*^N felt on being told that he was, without instruction, in the habit of talking prose. I certainly cannot expect them to believe so startling a proposition upon my mere assertion: I must allege a few proofs, premising, however, that the

22 And,] And *NBR*

27 my] our *NBR*

28 speaking] talking *NBR*

29 *Gentilhomme*] *gentilhomme* *NBR*

30 in the habit of talking prose.] an adept in the art of prose. *NBR*

30 I] We *NBR*

31 my] our *NBR*

32 I] we *NBR*

melody, or element of *tone* in language, is so inseparably connected with its *metre* or *time*,^N that the two things will scarcely consent to be considered separately. By the metre and melody of prose, I of course mean the metre and melody which exists in the common and intelligible delivery of it. Verse itself is only verse on the condition of right reading:^N we may, if we choose, read the most perfect verse so that all the effect of verse shall be lost. The same thing may be done with prose. We may clearly articulate all the syllables and preserve their due connection in the phrases they constitute; and yet, by neglecting to give them their relative tones, and to group them according to time, convert them from prose into something nameless, absurd, and unintelligible. So far is it from being true that the time and tone of prose reading and speaking are without law, that their laws are more strict than those of grammar itself. There are never two equally good ways of reading a sentence, though there may be half a dozen of writing it. If one and the same sentence is readable in more than one way, it is because it has more than one possible meaning. 'Shall you walk out to-day?'^N is a question which may be asked with as many variations of stress and tone^N as there are words in it; but every variation involves a variation of meaning.

The isochronous division of common spoken language, though quite as natural, necessary, and spontaneously observed as the laws of inflection, is more difficult to prove, by reason of the difficulty which most persons must experience when they for the first time attempt at once to speak naturally, and to take note of the time in which they speak. To those who believe that verse is itself founded on measure, it will be sufficient to point out the fact, that there is no necessary distinction between the right reading of prose and that of verse, as there would be were the primary degree of measure, whereby a verse is divisible into a certain number of 'feet' or 'bars,'^N artificial. Thus, on meeting in prose with such a passage as 'Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace,'^N which is an exquisitely cadenced^N 'iambic

1 element] elements *NBR*

4 I] we *NBR*

9 phrases] words *NBR*

31 measure,] measure *NBR*

32 'bars,'] "bars" *NBR*

tetrameter brachycatalectic,^N we give the entire metrical effect in the ordinary reading. An argument of wider power of influence is, however, to be discovered from the consideration of a passage like the following, which, while it refuses to be read into verse, differs greatly from the ordinary character of English prose:—

5 'These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. Clouds they are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit; twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, unto whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.'^N Probably there is not one unpractised reader in ten but would feel slightly embarrassed by having to read this passage of St. Jude aloud for the first time. The meaning is nevertheless plain; the places of all but one or two of the accents^N are unmistakable; so that, if stress and tone without measured time were the only points requiring to be given in prose reading, everybody would read it off properly at once. The peculiarity of the passage, however, consists in its singular departure from the metrical constitution of ordinary English phrases, which exhibit a great preponderance of emphatic and unemphatic syllables in consecutive couples,^N whereas here the accents fall, for the most part, either upon adjacent syllables, or upon every third syllable,—an arrangement requiring an exceedingly bold and emphatic style of delivery, *in order to sever accent from accent by equal measures of time*. Adjacent accents occur so seldom, that bad readers are apt to sink one of them when they do occur, or at least to abbreviate the decided intervening pause, which the ear, even of the reader who neglects to give it, must instinctively crave.

The dependence of metre upon this primary and natural division of language by accents may be adopted as a fact which has been recognized with more or less distinctness by all critics who have written on the subject to any purpose. Yet, strange to say, the nature of accent itself has puzzled the brains even of those

1 brachycatalectic,] brachy- at line end, catalectic," on next line, Am, P1
 13 passage of St. Jude aloud] passage aloud NBR
 15 unmistakable;] unmitakeable; NBR
 31 fact] fact, NBR

who have spoken most clearly concerning its metrical functions.

The word 'accent' is notorious for the variety of meanings^N which have been attached to it. We are of course chiefly interested in its meaning as it is concerned in English and most modern European verse, and it is only in this regard that it is afflicted with apparently incurable ambiguity^N of significance. It is commonly allowed now that the Greek accent was a matter of tone^N exclusively. With us, the places of the *metrical* accent or 'ictus'^N—of the accent in the sense of change of tone,—and of long quantity, coincide;^N with the Greeks, the separation of these elements of verse was not only permissible, but sought after; and the ictus, accent, quantity, and verbal cæsura advanced, as it were, in parallel order. Hegel rightly says, that 'to feel the beauty of the rhythm on all these sides at once, is, for our ear, a great difficulty.'^N It is indeed a difficulty which seems never truly to have been overcome by any modern reader of Greek verse, and it is probably one which could not be overcome by less than the life's habituation which every Greek had. Most people find it hard to believe what they cannot easily represent to their senses; and the fact of the above diversity is sometimes even now shirked, or confusedly admitted, by metrical critics. Mitford, however, very justly remarks, that the difficulty in question, though next to insurmountable, is not greater than that which a Frenchman ordinarily finds in regard to English versification.^N It is also worth observing, that although such separation is absolutely opposed to the rule of our speech, this rule is nevertheless broken by exceptions which serve at least to render the practice of shifting the metrical ictus from one place in a word to another, and of severing 'accent,' in the sense of tone, from long quantity, quite intelligible. Thus, our poets claim the privilege of setting the stress on either syllable of the word 'sometimes,'^N according to the requirements of the verse; and the vulgar practice of dwelling long on the first syllables of '*prodigious*,^N *miraculous*,' etc., may convince the most

1 concerning] of NBR
 9 tone,—] tone, NBR, Am, P1
 12 it NBR, Am, P1; in P2-P9
 18 habituation] habituation, NBR
 25 such separation is] the separation in point is NBR
 33 etc.,] &c., Am, P1

sceptical that elevation of tone and ictus have no *necessary* association with long quantity: for such pronunciation in no way diminishes the decision of the ictus and the elevation of the tone upon the succeeding syllables.

Here let me call attention to a mistake which seems always to have been made concerning 'accent,' even under the acceptance of *tone*. The 'acute'^N accent' is always spoken of as if it had a permanent position in polysyllables; the fact being, that the accent is necessarily 'acute,' or *high*, only so long as the word stands without context or relative signification, in which case the acute accent is always used as being, in English, generally indicative of that which is most positive and characteristic in the constitution of the word. But there is no 'acute' which is not liable to be converted into a 'grave' by grammatical position. In this question and answer,—'Shall Mary go?' 'No, not Mary,'—the first syllable of the word 'Mary' is in one case acute, and in the other grave; but in each case alike, the syllable is fully accented.^N This significative property of change of tone is evidently not the accident of any language, or group of languages: it lies at the foundation of the idea of music of all kinds, and a permanent tone dwelling on certain words would render poetry and song impossible. It cannot therefore be doubted, that, in every language, ancient and modern, as in our own, grammatical isolation is the condition of the permanent acute,^N and that, consequently, the compound change of tone, called the 'circumflex' accent, is, in composition, as liable to commence with a fall as with a rise.^N

Let me now ask, What do we mean by 'accent,' as the word is commonly used in speaking of its function in English verse?—for I may dismiss the Greek meaning as being well defined in its independence of ours, which, whatever it is, is certainly not *pure tone*. Some writers have identified our metrical accent with long quantity;^N others have placed it in relative loudness; others have

2 quantity:] quantity; *NBR, Am, Pt*

5 me] us *NBR*

10 case] case, *NBR*

11 in English, generally indicative] in English generally, indicative *NBR*

27 me] us *NBR*

28 verse?—] verse? *NBR*

29 I] we *NBR*

fancied it to consist, like the Greek, in pure tone; others have regarded it as a compound of loudness and elevation of tone; and others, as a compound of height and duration of tone; others, again, have regarded it as the general prominence acquired by one syllable over another, by any or all of these elements in combination. Now, it seems to me that the only tenable view of that accent upon which it is allowed, with more or less distinctness, by all, that English metre depends, in contradistinction to the syllabic^N metre of the ancients, is the view which attributes to it the function of marking, *by whatever means*, certain isochronous intervals. Metre implies something measured; an assertion which sounds like a truism; but to a person much read in our metrical critics, it will probably seem a startling novelty. It is one, however, which can afford to stand without any further recommendation than its obvious merits, for the present. The thing measured is the time occupied in the delivery of a series of words. But time measured implies something that measures, *and is therefore itself unmeasured*;^N an argument before which those who hold that English accent and long quantity are identical^N must bow. These are two indispensable conditions of metre,—first, that the sequence of vocal utterance, represented by written verse, shall be divided into equal or proportionate spaces;^N secondly, *that the fact of that division shall be made manifest* by an 'ictus' or 'beat,'^N actual or mental, which, like a post in a chain railing, shall mark the end of one space, and the commencement of another. This 'ictus' is an acknowledged condition of all possible metre;^N and its function is, of course, much more conspicuous in languages so chaotic in their syllabic quantities as to render it the *only* source of metre. Yet, all-important as this time-beater is, I think it demonstrable that, for the most part, *it has no material and external existence^N at all*, but has its place in the mind, which craves measure in everything, and, wherever the idea of measure is uncontradicted, delights in marking it with an imaginary 'beat.' The Greeks, it appears, could tolerate, and even delight, in that which, to our ear, would confuse and contradict measure. Our habits require that everything which

6 me] us *NBR*

7 distinctness,] distinctness *NBR*

29 I] we *NBR*

35 habits require] grosser sense requires *NBR*

gives preponderance to a syllable shall, as a rule, be concentrated upon one, in order to render it duly capable of the mental 'ictus.' Those qualities which, singly, or in various combination, have hitherto been declared to *be* accent, are indeed only the *conditions of accent*; a view which derives an invincible amount of corroboration from its answering exactly to the character and conditions of accent in vocal and instrumental music, of which the laws cannot be too strictly attended to, if we would arrive at really satisfactory conclusions concerning modern European metre. People are too apt to fancy they are employing a figure of speech when they talk of the music of poetry. The word 'music' is in reality a much more accurate expression for that which delights us in good verse, apart from the meaning, than the word 'rhythm,' which is commonly employed by those who think to express themselves with greater propriety. Rhythm, when the term is not meant to be synonymous with a combination of varied tone and measured time, must signify an abstraction of the merely metrical character extremely difficult to realise, on account of the curious, though little noticed, tendency of the mind to connect the idea of tone with that of time or measure. There is no charm in the rhythm of monotonous, unless the notion of monotone can be overcome; and, when that is the case, it is not rhythm, but rhythmical melody, whereby we are pleased. If Grétry, when a child, danced to the pulsations of a waterfall,^N it was because his fancy abolished their monotony. The ticking of a clock^N is truly monotonous; but when we listen to it, we hear, or rather seem to hear, two, or even four, distinct tones, upon the imaginary distinction of which, and the equally imaginary emphasis of one or two, depends what we call its rhythm. In the case of the beat of a drum, this ideal apprehension of tone is still more remarkable: in imitating its tattoo, the voice expresses what the mind imagines, and, in doing so, employs several varieties of tone. In all such cases, however, the original sounds, though monotonous, are far from being pure monotonous; they are metrical recurrences of the same *noise*, rather than the same tone;^N and

5 corroboration] corroboration, *NBR*

8 to,] to *NBR*

18 realise,] realize, *NBR*

26 two, or even four, distinct] two distinct *NBR*

28 one or two, depends] one, depends *NBR*

it is very interesting to observe, that we cannot evoke what we thus erroneously term 'rhythm' from the measured repetition of a perfectly pure tone. The tattoo of a knuckle upon the table will lose most, if not all, of its rhythm, if transferred to a bell. The drum gives 'rhythm;' but the clear note of the 'triangle' is nothing without another instrument, *because it does not admit of an imagined variation*.

The relation of music to language^N ought to be recognised as something more than that of similarity, if we would rightly appreciate either. 'The musical art,' says G. Weber, 'consists in the expression of feelings by means of tones.'^N Now, all feelings have relation to thought or facts which may be stated, or at least suggested, in words; and the union of descriptive words with an expressive variation and measurement of tones, constitutes, according to the amount and kind of feeling, and the truth^N of its vocal expression, song, poetry,^N and even the most ordinary spoken language. *Perfect poetry and song are, in fact, nothing more than perfect speech^N upon high and moving subjects*; a truth upon which Grétry, one of the soundest, as well as by very much the most amusing of modern musical critics, inferentially insists, when he says, 'Il est une musique qui ayant pour base la declamation des paroles, est vraie comme les passions,'^N which is as much as to say, that there is no right melody which is not so founded. And again, 'La parole est un bruit ou le chant est renfermé';^N a statement which is the converse of the other, and amounts to a charge of imperfection against our ordinary modes of speaking, in so far as, when concerned with the expression of the feelings, they do not amount to pure song. Who has not heard entire sentences, and even series of sentences, so spoken by women, who are usually incomparably better speakers^N than men, as to constitute a strain of melody which might at once be written down in notes,^N and played, but with no increase of musical effect, on the

4 all,] all *NBR*

10 either,] either, *Am, PI*

17 *Perfect poetry and song are,*] *Perfect song is,* *NBR*

20 inferentially] emphatically *NBR*

24 ou] [*sic*]: see commentary note 17.24, p. 72, below

29 women, who are usually incomparably better speakers than men,] women (who are incomparably better speakers than men), *NBR*

piano? Where was the 'bruit' in Rachel's delivery^N of an impassioned passage of Racine? Her rendering of such passages was not commonly recognised as pure song because, in modern times (it was not so with the Greeks), song, by having been long regarded as an 'artificial' mode of expression, has fallen into extravagance and falsehood, and is now very rarely 'vrai comme les passions.' Modern singing and modern declamation, as a rule, are equally far removed from that just^N medium at which they coalesce and become one. In song, we have gradually fallen into the adoption of an extent of scale, and a diversity of time, which is simply *nonsensical*;^N for such variations of tone and time correspond to no depths or transitions of feeling of which the human breast is cognisant. The *permanent* popular instinct, which is ever the best test of truth in art, recognises the falsehood of these extremes; and Grétry well asks, 'N'avons nous pas remarqué que les airs les plus connus sont ceux qui embrassent le moins d'espace, le moins de notes, le plus court diapason? Voyez, presque tous les airs que le temps a respectés, il sont dans ce cas.'^N The musical shortcomings of ordinary recitation are not nearly so inexcusable as the extravagancies of most modern song. *Perfect* readers of high poetry are as rare as fine singers and good composers,^N for the sufficient reason, that they *are* fine singers and good composers, though they may not suspect it in an age of unnatural divorce of sound and sense. What is commonly accounted good reading—what indeed is such when compared with the inanimate style of most readers—falls immeasurably short of the musical sense of really fine verse. The interval between the veriest mouther and an ordinarily accomplished elocutionist,^N is scarcely greater than that which separates the latter from the *ideal* actor,

1 was] is *NBR*

2 was] is *NBR*

13 cognisant.] cognizant. *NBR*

15 'N'avons nous] "'N' avons nous *NBR*; "'N' at line end, avons on next line, *Am. PI*; om hyphen, all editions

16 connus] [*sic*]: see commentary note 18.19, p. 72, below

18 il sont] [*sic*]: see commentary note 18.19, p. 72, below

28 mouther and an ordinarily accomplished elocutionist, is] mouther who ever enraptured a Surrey audience, and an accomplished elocutionist, like Miss Cushman or Mr Macready, is *NBR*

29 the latter from] these and *NBR*

who should be able to effect for the poetry of Shakspeare what Rachel did for, here and there, a line of Racine. Hence, few lovers of good poetry care to hear it read or acted; for, although themselves, in all likelihood, quite unable to give such poetry a true and full vocal interpretation, their unexpressed imagination of its music is much higher than their own or any ordinary reading of it would be. Poets themselves have sometimes been very bad readers^N of their own verses; and it seems not unlikely that their acute sense of what such reading ought to be, discomposes and discourages them when they attempt to give their musical idea a material realisation. In this matter of the relationship of music and poetry, the voice of theory is corroborated by that of history. 'These two arts,' writes Dr. Burney, 'were at first so intimately connected, and so dependent on each other, that rules for poetry were in general rules for music; and the properties and effects of both were so much confounded together that it is extremely difficult to disentangle them.'^N

Mitford, and other writers, who have treated of Latin and Greek verse as being 'metrical' and 'temporal,' and of our own as 'rhythmical' and 'accentual,'^N have fallen into the strange error of not perceiving that these four epithets must apply to all possible kinds of metre, as far as they really are metre; and that, although the non-coincidence of the grammatical with the metrical ictus, and other peculiarities of Greek and Latin verse, give rise to differences in *kind* between these and the English and other modern European modes of *verse*, the difference of *metre* can be only one of degree.^N It is not to be doubted that 'quantity,' in the ancient composition and delivery of Greek and Latin verse, did involve a stricter measurement of the time of single syllables than subsists in our verse, or in our reading of classical verse, and that a real change did occur in the transition from the 'metrum' of the ancients to the 'rhythmus'^N of the moderns,—a change represented in Greek verse itself by the famous *versus politici* of

1 Shakspeare] Shakespeare, *NBR*

2 did] does *NBR*

7 very] notoriously *NBR*

11 realisation.] realization. *NBR*

13 Dr.] Dr *NBR*

16 together] together, *NBR*

Tzetzes;^N but the only change, as far as regards pure *metre*, which is reconcilable with facts and the nature of the case, is that which consists in rendering 'accentual' division of time the *sole*, instead of merely the *main*, source of metre. In modern verse, those collocations of accented and unaccented syllables which we call 'feet,' are not true measures,^N as they were, though probably only approximately, in ancient verse. Our verse, for example, delights in the unclassical practice of setting a trochee before an iambus in what we call iambic verse, as—

'For one restraint, Lords of the world beside.'^N

In the proper delivery of this line, the same time, or very nearly, is allowed to elapse between the first and second, second and third, and third and fourth accents; but between the first and second there is *one* unaccented syllable; between the second and third, *none*; and between the third and fourth there are *two*; consequently, the trochee, '*Lords of,*' and the iambus '*the world,*' are both temporarily^N deficient when considered as feet,^N the two unemphatic syllables, *of the,* being pronounced in the time of one of any of the other three unemphatic syllables in the line. Again—

'Come, see rural felicity,'^N

is a verse having the full time of four dactyls, the first two being each represented by a single syllable. Our liability to error, through an indiscriminating use of the same names for different things, may be illustrated by the fact, that *the 'feet' which Quintilian says^N produced the even or common rhythmus,^N namely, the dactyl and anapæst, with us produce the uneven, or triple, and, on the contrary, the iambus and trochee give our even rhythmus.* The word *foot*, however, may be usefully retained^N in the criticism of modern verse, inasmuch as it indicates a reality, though not exactly that which is indicated by it with regard to classical metre. The true meaning of the word for us is to be obtained from at—

9 as—] as *NBR*

15 consequently,] consequently *NBR*

19 Again—] Again, *NBR*

24 the 'feet' . . . *rhythmus.*] same words, om *italics*, *NBR*

tending to its employment by Prinz, Calcott, and other^N musical writers, who speak of iambic, trochaic, and dactylic *rhythms*. Thus, a strain in 'common time' beginning with the unaccented note, is called iambic; a strain in 'triple time' beginning with two unaccented notes, anapæstic, and so forth. Each rhythm, in verse as in music, has a very distinct character; and it is obviously convenient that we should have a distinguishing term for it, since this is by no means supplied by the general terms, 'common' and 'triple cadence.'^N

The chief source of confusion in modern writings on metre is the nature of the metrical value of the separate syllables^N of which feet and cadence are composed. The common notion of an exact proportion inherent in syllables themselves seems to be quite untenable. The time occupied in the actual articulation of a syllable is not necessarily its metrical value.^N *The time of a syllable in combination, is that which elapses from its commencement to the commencement of the succeeding syllable;* so that the monosyllables, a, as, ask, asks, ask'st,^N though requiring five degrees of time for their articulation, may have precisely the same temporal value in verse, just as, in music played *staccato*^N on the pianoforte, the actual duration of sound in a crotchet or a quaver^N note may be the same, the metrical value depending altogether on the difference of the time which elapses before the commencement of the succeeding note. This may reconcile the fact, noticed by Dionysius and others, that 'one short syllable differs from another short, and one long from another long,'^N with the apparently contradictory rule, '*Syllaba brevis unius est temporis, longa vero duorum.*'^N It is furthermore very necessary to be observed, that the equality or proportion of metrical intervals between accent and accent is no more than general and approximate,^N and that expression in reading, as in singing or playing, admits, and even requires, frequent modifications, too insignificant or too subtle for notation, of the nominal equality of those spaces. In the present day, it is the fashion, not only in music and in poetry, but in all the arts, to seek expression at too great an expense of law, and the most approved style of reading is that which ignores the

10 metre] metre, *NBR*

13 seems to be] seems to us to be *NBR*

metre as far as is consistent with the possibility of recognising the verse as verse. It is certain that such reading as this would ill bear me out in my assertion of the metrical isochronism in English and other accentual verse,^N but the constant presence of a general intention of, and tendency towards^N the realisation of this character, will assuredly be always manifest in good verse, well read. Not only may metrical intervals differ thus from their nominal equality without destroying measure, but the marking of the measure by the recurrent ictus may be occasionally remitted, the position of the ictus altered, or its place supplied by a pause,^N without the least offence to a cultivated ear, which rather delights in, than objects to, such remission, inversion, or omission, when there is an emotional motive, as indicating an additional degree of that artistic consciousness, to the expression of which, Hegel traces the very life of metre.^N

A complete and truly satisfactory metrical analysis of any passage even of classical verse, would include a much fuller consideration of the element of pause than has commonly been given to that subject, even by analysts of modern metre. In the works of the most authoritative prosodians—in the work of Hermann^N himself—the various kinds of *catalexis*, and measurable cæsural pause,^N appear rather as *interruptions* than *subjects* of metrical law. Campion, Joshua Steele, and O'Brien ('Ancient Rhythmical Art Recovered'),^N have indeed noted middle and final pause as being the subject of measure; but the two former have done so only incidentally, and the latter has failed to obtain the consideration which, with all the deficiencies of his little work, the boldness and partial truth of his views deserve. Unless we are to go directly against the analogy of music, and to regard every verse affected with catalexis (or a deficiency in the number of syllables requisite

3 me] us *NBR*

3 my] our *NBR*

5 realisation] realization *NBR*

15 metre.] metre.¹ (*with footnote:*) Hermann derives the metrical ictus from an expression of causative force. His opening chapters, in which he professes to give the philosophic grounds of metre, are needlessly obscure, and, to our thinking, far from satisfactory. *NBR*

19 analysts] analyzers *NBR*

23 Rhythmical] Rythmical *NBR*

to make it a full dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, etc.) as constituting an entire metrical system^N in itself, which is obviously absurd,¹ we must reckon the missing syllables as substituted by an equivalent pause; and, indeed, in reading catalectic verse, this is what a good reader does by instinct. The idea of metrical sequence between verses is equally contradicted by the notion of 'hypercatalectic verse.' The nine-syllable trochaics, in Lord Tennyson's 'Vision of Sin,'^N would probably be regarded by prosodians as 'hypercatalectic dimeters;' but the extraordinary pause which is required at the end of every line indicates clearly enough that such verses are really 'trimeters,' the time of *three* syllables being filled with a pause. This pause, when properly rendered, affects the ear as excessive; and therefore the verse, though used three centuries ago by Spenser,^N has never found a place among our recognised metres.

The cæsural, or middle pause, in some kinds of verse, is of such duration that the verse cannot be rightly scanned without allowing for it. Cæsura plays a less refined part in modern than in ancient versification, but still its office with us is far from unimportant. Much over-refinement and many strange mistakes have been fallen into by theorists and theorising poets in connection with this matter. The most common and injurious of such errors is that of identifying metrical pauses with grammatical stops.^N Some of

¹ That Hermann falls practically into this absurdity, may be seen from his mode of treating *anacrusis*, or those 'times' which precede the (first) 'arsis:' these 'times' he really excludes from the metre.^N

1 etc.]) &c.) *Am, P1*

2 absurd,¹) absurd,² *NBR*, with similar numbering of footnotes themselves

7 verse.' The] verse." Mitford was so ignorant of the true analysis of English "heroic verse," that he says, "in setting it to music, the first syllable of the following line would belong to the same bar (meaning by *bar* the space between accent and accent) with the last syllable of the former line." The truth is, if the composer really followed the cadence of heroic verse, he would allow a "rest" at the end of the line equal to the whole time of two syllables. So, alone, would the constitution of such verse be fairly represented. The *NBR*

7 in Lord Tennyson's] in Tennyson's *NBR*; in Mr. Tennyson's *Am, P1*

10 end] pause *NBR*

26 connection] connexion *Am, P1*

27 errors] errors, *NBR, Am, P1*

the early English poets were at great pains to try the experiment of making these two very different things coincide. Now, one of the most fertile sources of the 'ravishing division'^N in fine versification is the opposition of these elements—that is to say, the breaking up of a grammatical clause by cæsural pause, whether at the end or in the middle of a verse.

The great magnitude of metrical, as compared with grammatical pauses, seems not to have had so much notice as its curiosity deserves. In beating time to the voice of a good reader of verse, it will be found that the metrical pauses are usually much longer than the longest pauses of punctuation, and that they are almost entirely independent of them. For example, a final pause equal to an entire foot may occur between the nominative and the governed genitive,^N and, in the same sequence of verses, a grammatical period may occur in the middle of an accentual interval without lengthening its time or diminishing the number of the included syllables. In fact, the 'stops,' or conclusions of grammatical clauses, are rather marked by *tone* than *time*.^N Even in the reading of prose, the metrical pauses—for so the pauses between adjacent accents may rightly be called—are of much greater duration than is given to most of the 'stops.'

It is very questionable, indeed, whether English verse has gained by the entire disuse of the cæsural dot, which was always employed, until the middle of the fifteenth century, to indicate the position of the cæsura in those kinds of verse of which a marked cæsura was an essential quality. Of this metrical sign Mr. Guest says, 'No edition of Chaucer and his contemporaries can be complete without it.'^N The value of the cæsural dot will be at once manifest to every reader on perusing such lines as the following, which have been attributed to Surrey, and of the like of which plenty are to be found in the writings of him and his predecessors and immediate successors:—

'And some I see again sit still, and say but small,
That can do ten times more than they that say they can do all.'^N

3 fine] beautiful *NBR*

4 elements—] elements,—*NBR*

7 The great] *no new paragraph in NBR*

16 time] time, *NBR, Am, PI*

26 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

31 predecessors] predecessors, *NBR*

The reader is almost sure to destroy the metre of these lines in his first perusal, for want of an indication of the strong cæsura, equal to a pause of an entire foot, in the first line, on the sixth syllable.^N In a language like ours, abounding in monosyllables to such a degree, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or even fifty of them, may follow in uninterrupted sequence, as in a passage in the third Act of King John,^N quoted by Mitford, this assistance is absolutely required in verses exceeding the length of the common 'heroic;' and the consequence of its disuse has naturally been the disuse of those of the ancient English metres, some very fine ones, which required it. Mr. Lettsom's excellent version of the Nibelungen Lied,^N though singularly faultless in its rhythm for a translation of such magnitude, is continually liable to be misread for want of the cæsural sign.

Hitherto I have had occasion to speak only of that primary metrical division which is common to verse and prose. I have now to speak of that which constitutes the distinctive quality^N of verse. Nothing but the unaccountable disregard, by prosodians, of final

2 cæsura, equal to a pause of an entire foot, in] cæsura, in *NBR*

3 on the sixth syllable.] on the sixth, and in the second, on the eighth syllable. *NBR*

7 assistance is] assistance to the accentuation is *NBR*

10 those] such *NBR*

11 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

11 Nibelungen Lied.] Nibelunglied in the original metre, *NBR*

15 I] we *NBR*

16 I] We *NBR*

17 verse. Nothing] verse. All verse, like all music, is either in triple or common cadence; or, in classical phraseology, comes under either the dactylic or trochaic category. Now, the *triple* cadence is so far removed from the ordinary rhythm of our spoken language, that it is of itself sufficient to constitute verse, without any addition of metrical law. Not so with the *common* cadence, which is that of ordinary prose and ordinary speech, the general rule of the English language being the alternation of a single accented with a single unaccented syllable. Nothing *NBR*

18 prosodians,] prosodians,¹ (*with footnote:*) It is difficult to discover how far this general law of English verse has been felt by prosodians. Certainly it never has been fairly expressed by them, though Foster gives the English heroic line the name of its Greek counterpart, whereby he assumes such division. *NBR*

18 of final pauses could] of the final pauses in English verse, could *NBR*

pauses^N could have prevented the observation of the great general law,^N which I believe that I am now, for the first time, stating, that the *elementary measure, or integer, of English verse is double the measure of ordinary prose*,—that is to say, it is the space which is bounded by *alternate accents; that every verse proper* 5 *contains two, three, or four of these 'metres,'* or, as with a little allowance they may be called, '*dipodes,*'^N and that there is properly *no such thing as hypercatalexis.*^N All English verses in common cadence are therefore dimeters, trimeters, or tetrameters,^N and consist, when they are *full, i.e.,* without *catalexis,* of eight, twelve, 10 or sixteen syllables. Verses in triple cadence obey the same law, only their length never—except in the Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre, of the peculiar laws of which I shall have to speak—exceeds that of the trimeter, on account of the great number of syllables or places of syllables (twenty-four) which would be involved in a tetrameter in such cadence. Monometers cannot stand in series as verses, though, as terminations of stanzas and interruptions of measure for peculiar purposes involving extended pauses, the effect of their introduction is often admirable. A few simple considerations will place this sectional admeasurement^N of English 20 verse beyond question. It has been rightly felt by Mitford and others, that 'verses' of less than six syllables are essentially absurd and burlesque^N in their character. The reason is, no doubt, the absurd comparative length of the final pause, required to render lines of five syllables in common cadence into consecutive verse; 25

2 I] we *NBR*

2 I am] we are *NBR*

3 of *English verse*] of *verse* *NBR*

5 *that every verse . . . hypercatalexis.* All] and that every verse proper contains two of these "bars," or "metres," or, as with a little allowance they may be called, "dipodes." This law, it is to be observed, is strictly according to the analogy of all music in "common time," of which the "strain" is measured by "sections" formed of *pairs* of "bars." All *NBR*

8 All English verses] All verses *NBR*

9 tetrameters, and consist . . . cadence.] tetrameters. *om* and consist . . . cadence. *NBR*

10 *full,*] *full—* *Am, P1, P2*

16 in series as] as consecutive *NBR*

21 verse beyond] verse in common cadence beyond *NBR*

25 lines] a line *NBR*

25 into consecutive verse;] into verse; *NBR*

or the equally absurd alternative of the omission of the pause: such lines—and there are plenty of them in Skelton,^N and the burlesque lyrists—are at once felt to be a *mockery of verse*. It happens, however, that in metre, there is but half a foot between the ridiculous and the sublime. The six-syllable 'iambic' is the 5 most solemn of all our English measures.^N It is scarcely fit for anything but a dirge; the reason being, that the final pause in this measure is greater, when compared with the length of the line, than in any other verse. Here is an example, which I select on account of the peculiar illustration of its nature as a 'dimeter 10 brachycatalectic,' which is supplied by the *filling up* of the measure in the seventh line:—

'How strange it is to wake
And watch, while others sleep,
Till sight and hearing ache
For objects that may keep
The awful inner sense
Unroused, lest it should mark
The life that haunts the emptiness
And horror of the dark.'^N 15
20

We have only to *fill up* the measure in every line as well as in the seventh, in order to change this verse from the slowest and most mournful,^N to the most rapid and high-spirited of all English metres, the common eight-syllable quatrain; a measure particularly recommended by the early critics, and continually chosen by 25 poets in all times, for erotic poetry, on account of its joyous air.^N The reason of this unusual rapidity of movement is the unusual character of the eight-syllable verse as *acatalectic*, almost all other kinds of verse being catalectic on at least one syllable, implying a final pause of corresponding duration. 30

The iambic ode,^N erroneously called 'irregular,'^N of which there exist few legitimate examples^N in our language, is, if I mistake

9 I] we *NBR*

11 brachycatalectic;] brachy-catalectic," *NBR*; brachy- at line end, catalectic on next line, *Am, P1*

26 times,] times *NBR*

30 duration.] *NBR* continues paragraph: We could multiply such proofs as these *ad infinitum*, but must remember our limits.

31 The iambic ode . . .] *om* entire paragraph, *NBR*

not, a tetrameter, with almost unlimited liberty of catalexis, to suit the variations of the high and stately lyrical feeling^N which can alone justify the use of this measure. The existence of an amount of catalectic pause varying from the time of two to fourteen syllables^N—for the line, in this kind of metre, may change at once to that extent—is justified by the analogy of the pauses, or stops, in a similar style of music;^N and the fact of this amount of catalexis being of the essence of this metre, seems to have been unconsciously felt and acknowledged by almost all who have written or attempted to write in it; for almost all have tried to represent the varying pauses, and to prepare the ear for them, by printing the lines affected with catalexis with shorter or longer blank spaces at the beginning;^N a precaution which seems to me to be unnecessary; for, if the feeling justifies the metre, the ear will take naturally to its variations; but if there is not sufficient motive power of passionate thought, no typographical aids will make anything of this sort of verse but *metrical nonsense*—which it nearly always is, even in Cowley,^N whose brilliant wit and ingenuity are strangely out of harmony with most of his measures.

It is necessary, in connection with this part of the subject, to remark, that although every complete verse, in common cadence, must have the time of two or more metres or *sections* (as it may be more expedient to call these primary accentual divisions of verse), it by no means follows that the verse must begin or end with the commencement or termination of a section.^N In the quotation given above, the first accentual section begins with the second syllable of the first verse, and the second section commences with the last syllable of that verse; and, taking in the pause equivalent to two syllables, ends with the first syllable of the next, and so on, exactly as is the case with the sections in musical composition, which seldom begin with the first note of the strain or end with the last. When every line in a passage of poetry begins with the beginning of an accentual section, the effect is an increase of emphasis, but a great diminution of the impression of con-

20 connection] connexion *Am, P1*

22 more metres or *sections*] more *sections* *NBR*

22 (as it may be more expedient to call] (as we may call *NBR*

26 accentual] accentual *NBR*

34 emphasis,] emphasis *NBR*

tinuity, and, in general, of rhythmical beauty. Unmixed 'trochaics' or 'dactyls' have seldom been written by poets of fine musical feeling.^N

It will generally be found that in verses which strike the ear as extraordinarily musical, the peculiarity is mainly owing to an unusually distinct and emphatic accentuation of the first syllable in the metrical section, as in the following lines from the 'Merchant of Venice':—

'The cro'w doth sing as swe'etly as the la'rk
When ne'ither is atte'nded; and I thi'nk
The ni'ghtingale, if she' should sing by da'y,
When every goose is ca'ckling, would be thought
No be'tter a musi'cian than the wre'n.'^N

In these blank trimeters, properly read, there is a major and a minor accent^N in every section but one. Shakspeare, the most musical of writers, affords more examples of lines of this constitution than any other English poet. Dryden and Pope would have called these verses weak. Their 'full resounding line'^N studiously avoided these melodious remissions of the alternate accents. Curiously enough, Mitford quotes^N the above lines as an example of *departure* from the modulus of heroic verse, although his own principle of referring the metre of verse and that of music to a common law, should have taught him that they exemplify the most exact fulfilment of that modulus. The lovely song in 'Measure for Measure,' beginning—

'Take, oh take those lips away,'^N

Gray's ode—

'Ruin seize thee, ruthless king,'^N

and probably most other pieces which have become famous for their music, will be found, on examination, to depend for much of

12 every] e'very *NBR*

14 In these] *no new paragraph in NBR*

15 section but one.] section. *NBR*

15 Shakspeare] Shakespeare *NBR*

27 ode—] Ode— *NBR, Am, P1*

their mysterious charm upon the marking of the section by extra emphasis on the first accent. Indeed, this indication of the section would seem to be a necessity deducible from the fact of verse being measurable by sections, which would have no meaning unless their existence were made apparent by at least an occasional marking of them. 5

English poetry^N (including Anglo-Saxon) divides itself into three great classes:^N alliterative, rhyming, and rhymeless. The

4 meaning] meaning, *NBR, Am, P1*

6 them.] *NBR continues with new paragraph*: If we are right in the foregoing statement of the fundamental principle of English verse, much modern writing, professing to be verse, is, in fact, no such thing. A great deal of Southey's "irregular verse" is nothing but prose, with the accentual and grammatical pauses typographically indicated. On opening the verse books published in the present day, we are almost sure to be struck by the profound aspect of the metres. The left side of the page, where the lines begin, is often more variously indented than the right side, where they leave off. Gulfs and creeks of clean paper alternate with promontories of print, without any visible symmetry; and the mind of the hopeful reader is of course prepared by the view for some mystery of music, some subtle strain of rhythm,

"With many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out;"

but, if he be a modest and inexperienced reader, he is sadly put out of countenance by finding that the rhythmical motives which he takes it for granted the poet had, in thus leaping from long lines to short ones, and back again, are quite beyond his powers of perception. So far are such pages from seeming to him uncommonly musical, as pages of aspect so pretentious are bound to be, that to his ear they are uncommonly prosaic, and he concludes probably that his metrical comprehension is only of a nursery-rhyme calibre. Now the truth is that, in the great majority of cases, these abstruse-looking variations have no musical motive at all; and the only intelligible way of accounting for their existence is to suppose, that the incapable and ignorant writer, finding a true metre, however simple, too hard for him, altogether abandoned the primary law of sectional symmetry (obeyed *instinctively* by every good poet), and pursued his slipshod and slovenly course, unfettered by any thing but rhyme, and sometimes not even by that. Occasionally the "poet" assumes a method in his metrical madness, and in succeeding passages, repeats, for the sake of similarity (not symmetry), the forms, which in the commencing "stanza" were the result of ignorance and meaningless chance.¹ (*with footnote*:) Poets of very high character have made the mistake of adopting an over-elaborate rhythmical form as a recurrent stanza, merely because its movement was inspired by, and suited to, the opening thought; Donne's Epithalamium, on the Count Palatine and the Lady Elizabeth being married on St Valentine's day is an example.

8 The distinctions] We believe that the distinctions *NBR*

distinctions between these kinds are more real and vital than is commonly imagined; and I shall now state, as briefly as may be, the main characteristics of each.

There could scarcely have been devised a worse illustration of alliteration than Pope's often-quoted example, 'apt alliteration's artful aid.'^N A young writer who, had he lived a few years longer, would probably have been famous without the monument of the most beautiful elegiac poem of modern times, in one of the thoughtful essays privately printed in his remarkable 'Remains,' observes justly that 'Southern languages abound in vowels, and rhyme is the resonance of vowels, while the Northern overflow with consonants, and naturally fall into alliteration.'^N Now, alliteration is so essentially consonantal, that, in Anglo-Saxon and Icelandic poetry,^N in which this assonance has been cultivated as an art, there is properly no such thing as alliteration of vowels;^N although, when the requisite number of alliterating consonants in each verse or distich^N cannot conveniently be produced, three words beginning with vowels are permitted to take the place of alliterating consonants, provided *that all these vowels are different*.^N Like rhyme, alliteration is no mere 'ornament'^N of versification: it is a real and powerful metrical adjunct, when properly employed. If rhyme, as I shall soon show, is the great means, in modern languages, of marking essential metrical pauses, alliteration is a very effective mode of conferring emphasis on the accent, which is the primary foundation of metre. Could any rule be fixed for the place, in modern verse, of that which may be said partly to owe its effect to surprise,^N as rhyme has been said to appeal to memory and hope,^N we should allot its position to principal accents only; that is, to the major accents at the beginning of sections; to those on either side of the strong cæsura in 'asynartete' verses, that is, verses having a fixed place for the cæsura; and so

2 I] we *NBR*

5 Pope's] the *NBR*

5 example.] example *NBR*

10 that] that, *NBR, Am, P1*

22 I] we *NBR*

29 only;] only, *NBR*

29 sections;] sections, *NBR*

31 cæsura;] cæsura, *NBR*

forth. To certain kinds of metre of the class just named, alliteration might be applied systematically with considerable profit, not in every line, perhaps, as in the ancient alliterative metres, but in such lines only, as, on account of the irregular suppression or multiplication of unaccented syllables, leave the place of the indispensable pause so doubtful as sometimes to require a second reading to determine it. Although superfluous alliteration, like all kinds of superfluous emphasis, is vulgar and disgusting, the verse of the most classical of our poets is often much more indebted for its music to alliteration than is commonly supposed. By a poet, who is a master of his art, and knows how to conceal such assonances by alliterating initial letters with others in the middle of words, or by employing similar consonantal sounds represented by different letters,^N and so on, the most delicate, as well as the most forcible effects, of emphasis may be given, as if by magic, and the impression of metre everywhere enhanced as if by an invisible agent. Furthermore, as rhyme gracefully used has a certain charm proper to itself, and apart from its metrical value, so alliteration is sometimes a real ornament when it is little else, as in this epitaph 'On a Virgin,' by Herrick:—

'Hush'd be all things; no noise here,
But the toning of a tear;
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering.'^N

But alliteration has served, and, in Icelandic verse, still serves, a far more important and systematic purpose. One of the most scientifically perfect metres^N ever invented, if, indeed, it be not perfect beyond all others, when considered with reference to the language for which it was destined, is the great Gothic alliterating metre,^N the only metre of which we can affirm that it has been the main vehicle of the whole poetry of any one language, much less of a group of languages.^N The general law of this metre is, that it shall consist of a series of verses, each of which is divided, by a powerful cæsura, into two sections, or hemistichs. Each hemistich contains two accented syllables, and an indefinite number of un-

1 named, alliteration] named, we can imagine, indeed, that alliteration *NBR* and,] and *NBR*

accented ones; the accents being occasionally, though rarely, adjacent, and sometimes, though not less rarely, preceded, separated, or followed by as many as three syllables without accent, that being as large a number as can be articulated without destroying the approximate equality of time between accent and accent, which, I cannot too often repeat, is the primary condition of metre in all languages. In the first hemistich, the two accented syllables alliterate, and this alliteration is continued on to one, and that one most usually, though not, as Rask^N would have it, regularly, the first of the accented syllables in the second. This law, which seems to have been regarded by Mitford, Percy, Rask, Guest, Hegel, and others,^N as an arbitrary one, is *most admirably adapted to fulfil the conditions of a truly accentual metre*, that is to say, of a metre which, totally abandoning the element of natural syllabic quantity, takes the isochronous *bar* for the metrical integer, and uses the same kind of liberty as is claimed by the musical composer, in filling up that space. Of this metre, which in England outlived the Anglo-Saxon language^N several centuries, the following lines from 'Pierce Plowman's Visions,' may serve as an illustration; it being understood that the two distichs^N are usually written as one line in Anglo-Saxon verse.

'I looked on my left halfe
As the lady me taught,
And was ware of a woman
Worthlyith clothed,
Purfiled with pelure,
The finest upon erthe;
Crowned with a crowne,
The king hath no better.'^N

This rule must appear extremely simple even to those to whom it may be presented for the first time. The artistical effect which results from its observance cannot be expected to strike so immediately, but we venture to say that no good ear, when once accustomed to it, can fail to perceive in this law a fountain of pure

6 which, I] which we *NBR*

12 is *most*] is, if we mistake not, *most NBR*

and beautiful metrical character,¹ or at least to absolve it from the charge of any essential quaintness or oddity, though an appearance of such character inevitably attaches itself at first to what is so far from our daily notions. The meaning of this law, the cause of its just effect, seems, as I have hinted, to have been overlooked by critics. If I do not err, the following is the right account of this interesting matter. It is to be observed, first, that, according to the rule of this measure, the hemistich or versicle of two accents may contain from three to seven, or even more syllables; secondly, that this metre, like all others, depends for its existence on having the metrical accents in easily recognisable positions, a doubtful place for the accent being ruinous to any metre; thirdly, that, in a language consisting, as the Anglo-Saxon does, chiefly of monosyllables, the place of the accent in a series of several syllables must often be doubtful, unless it occurs pretty regularly on every second or every third syllable, as in iambic and anapæstic verse, or unless the immediate recognition of its place be assisted by some artifice. *Now, this artifice is supplied by the alliteration, which marks, as a rule, at least two out of the four emphatic syllables in each pair of versicles, and these two are precisely those which, in asynartete verse, like the Anglo-Saxon, it is most essential that there should be no doubt about, namely, the emphatic syllable which precedes, and that which follows the strongly marked cæsure by which the versicles are separated.* The metrical dot^N which, in ancient MSS. commonly marks the main cæsure in Anglo-Saxon and other Old English^N asynartete verse, is unessential in this place, if the alliteration be properly adhered to. The dot was most likely used at first only to distinguish verses,² and its further

¹ Since these lines were written, Mr. William Morris has used, with sometimes excellent effect, a metre very similar to this in his poem called 'Love is Enough.' His verses, however, would frequently have been the better for adhering more closely than they do to the alliterative law of the original metre.^N

² 'Anglo-Saxon poetry,' says Mr. Guest, 'was written continuously like prose. In some MSS. the point separated the sections,' *i.e.*, versicles or hemistichs; 'in

1 character,¹ character, *om footnote number and footnote, NBR*

5 I] we *NBR*

6 I] we *NBR*

11 recognisable] recognizable *NBR*

n2 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

n2 *i.e.*, versicles] *i.e.* versicles *NBR*

employment to mark the cæsure seems likely to have arisen from the lax observance, by some poets, of the alliterative law, which, in Anglo-Saxon verse, is sometimes neglected to a degree for which we can only account by the supposition that this unartistic use of the cæsural dot reacted upon the practice of the poets, and increased the laxity which it was employed to counteract. This, however, it could only do in very small part; it quite fails to supply the needful assistance to the accentuation in such a metre, although it marks the place of a pause. In fact, *the law of alliteration is the only conceivable intrinsic mode of immediately indicating the right metrical accentuation where the language consists mainly of monosyllables and the verse admits of a varying number of unemphatic syllables, before, between, and after the accented ones.*

The weak point of Rask's approximate statement of the laws of Anglo-Saxon versification has been pointed out by Mr. Guest, but the writer's view of *why* it is the weak point seems to me to be erroneous. Rask says that all the syllables preceding the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich are unaccented, and form a 'complement'^N which must be carefully separated from the verse, of which this 'complement' forms no part. Mr. Guest rightly thinks that, when, as sometimes happens, the alliterating syllable is preceded by four, five, or more syllables, it is impossible to read them all without accentuation,^N but the more forcible^N answer is, that the very notion of a 'complement,' as stated by Rask, is contrary to the nature of metre. The 'anacrusis,' or unaccented portion of a foot or bar,^N which generally commences a verse or a strain of melody, is the nearest approximation to Rask's idea of a 'com-

others it separated the couplets' (*i.e.*, verses); 'in others the point was used merely to close a period, and the versification had nothing but the rhythm to indicate it.'^N

2 observance,] observance *NBR*

4 account by] account, on *NBR*

12 monosyllables] monosyllables, *NBR*

15 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

16 me] us *NBR*

20 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

n couplets'] couplets," *NBR, Am, P1*

n (*i.e.*, verses);] (*i.e.* verses); *NBR*

plement' which the nature of metre will admit; but 'anacrusis' is always less than the isochronous metrical or musical spaces which succeed it, whereas Rask's 'complement,' as we understand, and as Mr. Guest understands it, may be of indefinite length, to the utter destruction of all metrical continuity.^N The true account of all those cases in which more than two, or at most three, syllables precede the alliterating syllable in the second hemistich is, that, when they are not erroneous transcriptions, they are metrical laxities, from which we have no reason to suppose that Anglo-Saxon poets were singularly exempt.

The view which I have taken of the metrical motive of alliteration in Anglo-Saxon verse, as a means of emphasising to the hearer, and of immediately certifying to the reader, the places of the principal accents, is further confirmed by the fact, that, whereas, when the Anglo-Saxon poets used rhyme, they lavished it with an abundance which showed that it had no metrical value in their eyes, and was introduced for the mere pleasure of the jingle, and to such an extent, that every word in a famous poem quoted by Conybeare^N rhymes with some other, it was just the reverse with the alliteration, which is almost invariably limited to three syllables. Now, had it not been for the existence of the metrical motive which I have indicated, the liking for jingle which led to the composition of such rhymes would have also led to a similar profusion of alliteration; but this limitation of the alliteration to the places of the most important accents was strictly observed, and immoderate alliteration only manifested itself in English verse, when the alliterative *metre* had given place to metres regulated by *rhyme*,^N after which change, rhyme assumed metrical strictness and moderation, and alliteration, when used at all, was confined by no rule, but was sometimes carried through

4 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

5 The true] We feel no doubt but that the true *NBR*

7 hemistich] hemistich, *NBR*

11 I] we *NBR*

12 emphasising] emphasizing *NBR*

22 I] we *NBR*

29 moderation,] moderation; *NBR*

every word in a verse, without any regard to the accentual quality of the syllables.¹

It seems to have afforded matter of surprise to some, that the Anglo-Saxon poets, though fully understanding the metrical use of final rhyme, should have employed it *metrically* only when writing in *Latin*.^N A little consideration, however, will suffice to show that final rhyme is not only not necessary, but that it is contrary to the nature of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, of which the greatest commendation is the vast variety allowed for the position of the accents—a variety not possible where the accents are not artificially indicated. It is obvious that this variety would be very much diminished by the use of final rhyme, which, as in the only regularly rhyming Anglo-Saxon poem known, namely, that which Conybeare gives in his 'Introduction,' both supersedes the object of alliteration, and compels a like arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables in the latter part of each versicle. The accentual variations possible in an Anglo-Saxon verse—(Rask would call it a couplet)—of four accents, are computed by Mr. Guest as being 324 in number.^N Final rhyming of the versicles or hemistichs would greatly reduce this number.^N

Before taking leave of this part of my subject, something must be said concerning the question of the cadence of Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse. This question, at first sight, appears to be one of more difficulty than it really is. The actual metrical delivery of any long passage of Anglo-Saxon verse might puzzle the best

¹ Welsh poetry, from the earliest times, has made an abundant use of alliteration, the rules for its employment having even been fixed at congresses of the bards; but, as far as I can judge from examination of the verse without a knowledge of the language, the alliteration in Welsh poetry is not *metrical*, but '*ornamental*.'^N

8 of which the greatest] its greatest *NBR*

9 is] being *NBR*

10 accents—] accents, *NBR*

11 obvious] obvious, *NBR, Am, P1*

18 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

20 would greatly reduce] would reduce *NBR*

20 number.] variety to probably less than one-tenth. *NBR*

21 my] our *NBR*

25 verse] verse, *NBR*

n I] we *NBR*

n '*ornamental*.'] '*ornamental*.' *NBR*

Anglo-Saxon scholar, owing to the impossibility of settling, in every case, the right pronunciation of words, and to the fact that the laws of alliteration, as stated by Rask, though they must have afforded most sufficing assistance to those for whom Anglo-Saxon was a living language, are by no means so invariably observed as to afford *infallible* guidance to us. The cadence, however, may be settled theoretically, by a consideration of the constant nature of metre. Indeed, I hold, against the opinion of Mr. Guest, that Mitford has settled the question, and has proved that the cadence is triple. Mr. Guest maintains that, in our ancient poetry, the common and triple cadences were inextricably mixed, and that 'it is not till a period comparatively modern, that the common and triple measures disentangle themselves from the heap, and form, as it were, the two limits of our English rhythm.'^N Now, in support of Mitford's view:—First: There is a strong natural probability that the verse of a language like the Anglo-Saxon, which, when spoken, would fall into 'common' or 'iambic' time, on account of the great preponderance of monosyllables, and the consequently usual alternation of one accented and one unaccented syllable, would assume the 'triple' or 'anapæstic' cadence, as the simplest and most obvious distinction from prose and ordinary speaking.^N Secondly: The triple and common cadences cannot be mixed,^N as Mr. Guest supposes them to have been, without destroying cadence altogether. The example which Mr. Guest gives of this imaginary mixture, tells strikingly the other way, and proves the defective ear, which seems to have led the writer into this and other mistakes. Mr. Guest quotes the following lines by Sir Walter Scott:—

'Merrily swim we: the moon shines bright:
Downward we drift through shadow and light:
Upon yon rock the eddies sleep
Calm and silent, dark and deep.'^N

8 I] we *NBR*

8 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

10 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

14 Now, in support] Our space permits us to do no more than adduce the following considerations in support *NBR*

15 First:] First, *NBR*

22 Secondly:] Secondly, *NBR*

23 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

24 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

27 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

The last line, Mr. Guest says, is in common cadence.^N Now, its excellent effect, on the contrary, depends entirely upon the obligation to read it into triple cadence, by dwelling very long on the accented syllables, an obligation which results from its forming an integral part of a passage in that cadence. Forget the three preceding lines, and read the last as if it formed one of a series of seven-syllable trochaics, and its movement and character are totally changed. *Thus we see that an entire line may be in common or triple cadence, according to the cadence of the context.* In 'Paradise Lost'^N there are several lines, which, if they stood alone, or in juxtaposition with others like them, would naturally read into triple cadence. Thirdly and lastly: Much, if not all, the supposed difficulty in the way of regarding Anglo-Saxon verse as altogether in triple time, disappears when we remember that it was originally meant to be sung to the harp,^N and that its rhythmical movement might very well be obscure, confused, and apparently 'mixed,' until developed by highly emphatic delivery, and musical accompaniment.

The metrical function of rhyme, like that of alliteration,^N has never yet been fully recognised. The battle of rhyme was fought with much ability between Campion and Daniel, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Campion, in his 'Observations on the Art of English Poesy,' violently attacked 'the vulgar and unartificiall custome of riming,'^N and supported his destructive with a constructive attempt, giving specimens of several modes of rhymeless English metre,^N his example of heroic verse^N being remarkable for its studied, and almost Miltonic science,^N as compared with the like attempts of Surrey and Grimoald.^N Daniel meets Campion's vituperation of rhyme, as a superfluous and barbarous^N excrescence, with solid, and sometimes profound, arguments. He justly says, 'Our rhyme is an excellencie added to this worke of measure,'^N and though himself a scholar, in a time of strong scholastic prejudices, declares it to be 'a harmonie farre happier

1 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

6 seven-syllable] seven syllable *NBR*

11 juxtaposition] juxta-position *NBR*; juxta- at line end, position on next line, *Am, P1*

12 lastly: Much,] lastly, much, *NBR*

22 on] in *NBR*

than any proportion antiquitie could ever shew us,^N adding, concerning the classic numbers advocated by his adversary, the following remarks, which are worth the consideration of those who, in our own day, would revive Campion's heresy:—^N

5 'If ever they become anything, it must be by the approbation of ages, that must give them their strength for any operation, or before the world will feel where the pulse, life, and energy lies, which now we're sure where to find in our rymes, whose knoune frame hath those due staves for the mind, those incouners of touch as make the motion certaine, though the varietie be infinite. Nor will the generall sort, for whom we write (the wise being above bookes), taste these laboured measures but as an orderlie
10 prose when we have done all. For the kinde acquaintance and continuall familiarity ever had betwixt our ear and this cadence, is growne to so intimate a friendship as it will now hardly ever be brought to misse it. For bee the verse never so good, never so full, it seems not to satisfie nor
15 breede that delight as when it is met and combined with like sounding accents which seemes as the jointure without which it hangs loose and cannot subsist, but runs wildly on, like a tedious fancie without a close.'^N

This writer was the first to do justice to rhyme as a means of indefinitely extending the limits,^N and multiplying the symmetry
20 of measure by the formation of stanzas.

'These limited proportions and rests of stanzas are of that happiness, both for the disposition of the matter, and the apt planting of the sentence, where it may best stand to hit the certaine close of delight, with the full body of a just period well carried, as neither the Greeks nor the Latins
25 ever attained unto.'^N

The transcendent genius of Milton succeeded in establishing one kind of rhymeless narrative metre, in the face of the obstacles
30 justly alleged by Daniel;^N and the ever-increasing familiarity of that metre to English ears, has given rise, in our days, to renewed doubts of the legitimacy of rhyme, and to renewed occasion for insisting on its claim. Rhyme is so far from being extra-metrical and merely 'ornamental,' as most persons imagine it to be, that

4 heresy:—] heresy: *NBR*

7 energy] energie *NBR*

12 the] this *NBR, Am, Pr*

14 friendship] freindship *NBR, Am, Pr*

17 accents] accent; *NBR*; accent followed by extra space, at line end, *Am, Pr*

it is the quality to which nearly all our metres owe their very existence.^N The octo-syllabic couplet and quatrain, two of the most important measures we have, are measures only by virtue of the indication, supplied by rhyme, of the limits of the verse; for they have no catalectic pause, without which 'blank verse'^N
5 in English is impossible. All staves, as Daniel remarks, are created by rhyme.^N It is almost impossible, by even the most skilful arrangement of unrhymed verses, to produce a recurrent metre of several lines long. Campion, in his beautiful lines, beginning 'Rose-cheek'd Laura, come,' Collins, in his 'Ode to Evening,' Lord
10 Tennyson, in his famous song, 'Tears, Idle Tears,' and a few other poets, in one or two short poems^N each, have succeeded in forming the stave without rhyme; but the rareness of these attempts proves the difficulty of succeeding in them, and, after all, the success seems scarcely worth the pains. Sir Philip Sydney
15 and George Puttenham agree with Daniel^N in regarding rhyme as the highest metrical power we have. Mr. Guest, in modern days, does rhyme the justice to say, that 'it marks and defines the accent, and thereby strengthens and supports the rhythm. Its advantages have been felt so strongly, that no people have ever
20 adopted an accentual rhythm without also adopting rhyme.'^N Mitford and others have also recognised the function of rhyme as a time-beater,^N though their imperfect apprehension of the accentual constitution of our verse has necessarily prevented a clear understanding of that function. Hegel, whose observation on the necessity
25 of the material counterpoise afforded by metre to the high spirituality of poetic thought has been already quoted,^N remarks, in comparing ancient with modern versification,^N that, whereas in the first, that counterpoise is mainly supplied by the natural length or brevity of syllables, which spiritual expression is not permitted
30 to alter or destroy, in the latter, the verbal accent, conferred by the signification, gives length wherever it chances to fall. *Du liebst*^N is a spondee, an iambus, or a trochee, according to the signification borne by the words. The material or external element

10 Lord] Mr *NBR*; Mr. *Am, Pr*

17 Mr.] Mr *NBR*

23 apprehension] apprehensions *NBR*

27 thought] thought, *NBR*

31 destroy,] destroy; *NBR*

of syllabic quantity, is thus dissolved and lost in the spirituality^N which produces quantity instead of obeying it; and this loss, he maintains, is not compensated by the law of accentual division which remains. A new power, working *ab extra*, is required; and this is found in rhyme,^N of which the very grossness, as compared with syllabic quantity, is a great advantage, inasmuch as the greater spirituality of modern thought and feeling demand a more forcible material contrast.

The influence of rhyme upon measure is most remarkably shown in its simplest operation; for, in stanzas of elaborate construction, its powers, though always metrical and decisive, are too intricately involved, and too much connected, in their working, with other metrical principles, to be traced and described in this brief summary. Every one feels that, in a rhymed couplet, there is an accentual emphasis upon the second line, which tends to a corresponding concentration of meaning. But this very power of concentration implies a power of distribution. Perhaps the stateliest and most truly 'heroic' measure in any language, dead or living, is the 'rhythm royal,' a stanza of seven ten-syllable lines, with three sets of rhymes so distributed that the emphasis derived from rhyme, in one part, is exactly neutralised by a similar concentration upon another. This, according to Puttenham, 'is the chief of our ancient proportions used by any rimer writing anything of historical or grave import.'^N This was the heroic measure of Chaucer and his successors for nearly three centuries, during which period 'the heroic couplet' was regarded as fit only for humorous^N subjects.

A rhymed stave has its criterion for length^N in the length of the period. That which is too long for a period is too long for a stave, which, as a rule, requires that there shall be no full stop

7 feeling] feeling, *NBR*, *Am*, *P1*

9 The influence] *no new paragraph in NBR*

12 connected,] connected *NBR*

14 brief] hasty *NBR*

15 tends to] requires *NBR*

17 Perhaps the] Perhaps he *extra space before he P2*

20 distributed] distributed, *NBR*

21 rhyme,] rhyme *NBR*

21 neutralised] neutralized *NBR*

28 A rhymed] *no new paragraph in NBR*

except at the end. But the average length of the period will vary with the stateliness of the style. As the 'Pope couplet' takes the narrowest, 'Rhythm royal' assumes the widest limit practicable for a long poem. The former measure, after enjoying more than a century of unequalled favour, has now relapsed into its old disrepute; and most persons will now agree with Daniel, when he writes: 'I must confesse that, to mine own eare, those continuall cadences of couplets, used in long and continued poems, are very tiresome and displeasing.'^N The fault of this couplet is not only its essentially epigrammatic character, which is but a relative defect; it is, furthermore, absolutely faulty, inasmuch as the combination of immediately recurrent rhyme, with the long final pause, gives an emphasis contrasting too strongly with the very weak accentual construction of the line, which, *as it is ordinarily treated*, has no sectional—*i.e.*, 'dipodal'—division.^N This measure, having thus no place for the major accents *unmistakably* fixed, as is the case with all true dimeters and tetrameters, most poets have, throughout their writings, neglected those accents, or misplaced them. The poverty of this metre, no less than its epigrammatic character, fits it, however, for the purposes of satire,^N which, in most of its kinds, has any property rather than that of 'voluntary moving harmonious numbers.'^N

The class of metres, which, of all others, is proved, by theory as well as experience, to be the best adapted to the popular mind in all ages, could not exist in modern languages, without rhyme. This is the tetrameter of the trochaic or 'common' cadence. Many metres come under this head, and all of them have been really *popular*, which cannot be said of any form of trimeter in the same cadence. The ancient 'Saturnian,' though described by Hermann^N as a catalectic dimeter iambic, followed, with the division of a powerful *cæsura*, by three trochees, is, when scanned with allow-

11 defect;] defect: *NBR*

11 it is,] it is *NBR*

14 *as it is ordinarily treated,*] *same words, om italics, NBR*

15 sectional—*i.e.*, 'dipodal'—division] sectional, *i.e.* "dipodal" division *NBR*

15 having thus no] having no *NBR*

16 *unmistakably*] *unmistakeably NBR*

17 all true dimeters] all dimeters *NBR*

23 metres,] metres *NBR*

30 followed,] followed *NBR*

ance for the cæsural and final pause, obviously a tetrameter, as any one may satisfy himself from this illustration,

'The Queen was in her parlour, eating bread and honey,'

which Macaulay, in a note to the 'Lays of Ancient Rome,' gives as an example of 'a perfect Saturnian line.'^N The 'Cid' and 'Nibelungen Lied' are both in this metre, though the authors have adopted the great latitude, falsely called license,^N in the use or omission of middle pauses and catalexis, which Hermann remarks in the employment of this metre by Livius Andronicus and Nævius.^N To this head also belongs the once popular 'Alexandrine,' as it appears in the Polyolbion.^N I suppose that most critics would call this a trimeter, but I defy any one to read it into anything but a tetrameter,^N having a middle and a final pause each equal to a foot. *The so-called 'Alexandrine,' at the end of the Spenserian stanza, is quite a different verse,^N though including the same number of syllables; it is the mere filling up of the trimeter;* and that Spenser intended it so is proved by the innumerable instances in which he has made middle pause impossible. Between the true Alexandrine, then, which is loaded with pause and catalexis to the utmost the tetrameter will bear, and the acatalectic tetrameter, as represented by the sixteen syllables constituting the half of the eight syllable quatrain, there are as many metres, which are real tetrameters, as there are possible variations of the middle and final pause. Of these, none has taken so strong a hold upon the English ear as the ballad metre^N of fourteen syllables, with the stress on the eighth, or, what is the

1 cæsural and final pause,] cæsural pause, *NBR*

2 illustration,] illustration:—*NBR*

3 honey,'] honey." *NBR*

4 which] Which *NBR*

5 'a perfect Saturnian line.'] 'a perfect Saturnian line." *NBR*

5 'Nibelungen Lied'] "Nibelunglied" *NBR*

11 I] We *NBR*

12 I] we *NBR*

14 *The . . . trimeter;*] *same words, om italics, NBR*

15 Spenserian] Spenserian *NBR*

17 Spenser] Spencer *NBR*

23 metres, which are real tetrameters, as] metres as *NBR*

same thing, the stave of 'eight and six.' Here, it may be remarked by the way, that Dr. Johnson's assertion that the ballad stanza of seven accents 'taught the way to the Alexandrines of the French poetry,' instead of being, as Mitford says, 'a proof of his ignorance of French poetry,'^N appears to indicate his just appreciation of their heroic verse, as belonging to the tetrameter stock and not the trimeter. This ancient narrative metre, which, though almost excluded from the 'polite literature' of the eighteenth century, never lost its charm for the people, has lately recovered something of its ancient credit. Its true force, however, can only be shown in more sustained flights than have been attempted in it by modern poets. Properly managed, there is no other metre so well able to represent the combined dignity and impetuosity of the heroic hexameter. This was felt by the old writers, and, accordingly, we have Chapman's Homer, Phaer's Virgil, Golding's Ovid, and other^N notable translations in that grand measure. Of these, Chapman was the best poet, but Phaer the best metrist; and as this measure is again coming into fashion, I may be allowed to point out one interesting peculiarity in the versification of the latter. It is the use of what is commonly, but erroneously regarded as elision, as a deliberately adopted mode of relieving the cadence and approximating it to the rhythm of the hexameter. Here are four average lines:—

'Thus, rolling in her burning breast, she strait to Acolia hied,
Into the countrie of cloudy skies, where blustering windes abide.
King Æolus the wrastling windes in caves he looks full low;
In prison strong the storms he keeps, forbidden abroad to blow.'^N

In these four lines, we have no fewer than six real anapæsts,

1 it may be remarked] we may remark, *NBR*

2 Dr.] Dr *NBR*

4 'a proof of his ignorance of French poetry,'] *same words, om quotes, NBR, AM, Pr*

5 appears to indicate] appears to us to indicate *NBR*

17 and] and, *AM, Pr*

18 I] we *NBR*

24 Acolia] [*sic*]: *see commentary note 45.27, p. 96, below*

counting 'wrestling'^N as one. When we say *real anapæsts*, we mean to exclude those which are commonly called anapæsts, as—

'And we order our subjects of every degree,
To believe all his verses were written by me.'^N

In this, our vulgar triple cadence, the feet, by temporal measurement 5
of the syllables, are nearer to tribrachs or molossi than anapæsts;
whereas, in cases of so called elision like the above, two syllables
really are read into about the time of one, and *such cases constitute*
the only element of true temporal metre, in the classical sense, of
which our language is capable. Many poets have introduced a 10
superfluous syllable for peculiar effects, but Phaer is the only
writer I know of who has turned it into a *metrical* element in this
way. The poet who may be courageous enough to repeat, in our
day,^N Phaer's experiment (the success of which, in his time, is
proved by its never having been remarked), must fortify himself 15
against the charge of being 'rough,' 'unmusical,' and so forth,
with the assurance, that, wherever there is true adherence to law
and proportion there is also beauty, though want of custom may
often make his law seem license to his readers. A considerable
step has been taken towards the recognition of this element, as 20
a regular part of English metre, in the omission, from the pages
of our poets, of the comma indicative of an elision which does not
really exist.^N This little digression may be considered with Foster's
remark, made at a time when the mark of elision was always
used, that 'the anapæst is common in every place (of English
iambic verse), and it would appear much oftener, with propriety
and grace, if abbreviations were more avoided.'^N 25

'This tynkerly verse, which we call rhyme,'^{1N} includes then, all
the forms of the tetrameter, *the major accents of which could not*
be expressed to an English ear by any other means, except allitera- 30

¹ Webbe.

3 every] ev'ry *NBR*

5 vulgar] common *NBR*

8 *such . . . capable.*] *same words, om italics, NBR*

12 I] we *NBR*

18 proportion] proportion, *NBR, Am, Pr*

30 except alliteration] except, perhaps, alliteration *NBR*

tion, which is a sort of rhyme. I need not inquire into any of the
minor and better recognised functions of rhyme in order to secure
the student's respect for it.

Campion has given examples of eight kinds^N of 'blank verse,'
and with the dogmatism for which his interesting essay is re- 5
markable, he asserts that these are the only kinds of which the
language is capable; but it would not be difficult to double that
number, reckoning blank staves or strophes as he does. That
which limits the number of such measures is the necessity that
the lines should be always catalectic, since, in the absence of 10
rhyme, a measurable final pause is the only means of marking
the separate existence of the verses, and, furthermore, that the
strophes or staves should consist of lines of unequal length,^N in
order to render symmetry possible. The common eight-syllable
iambic, for example, ceases to be metre on the removal of the 15
rhyme, although the six-syllable iambic, which is catalectic on,
or has a final pause equal to, two syllables, makes very good
blank verse; and a stave of equal lines, like that of Gray's *Elegy*,
on the omission of the rhyme, though it may continue to be verse,
has lost the means of symmetrical opposition of line to line, 20
whereby it became an independent whole. But, notwithstanding
the practicability of various kinds of unrhymed verse, there is
only one which has established itself with us as a standard meas-
ure; and that is, of all recognised English metres, the most
difficult^N to write well in, because it, of all others, affords the 25
greatest facilities to mediocrity. Cowper, whose translation of
Homer^N contains a great deal of the second-best blank verse in
the language, says, in his Preface, that the writer in this kind of
metre, 'in order that he may be musical, must exhibit all the
variations, as he proceeds, of which ten syllables are susceptible. 30
Between the first and the last, there is no place at which he must
not occasionally pause, and the place of the pause must be con-

1 I] We *NBR*

2 recognised] recognized *NBR*

14 eight-syllable] eight syllable *NBR*

15 on] in *NBR*

16 six-syllable] six syllable *NBR*

22 practicability] practibility *Am, Pr*

26 to mediocrity.] to that mediocrity which neither gods, men, nor columns,
can tolerate. *NBR*

tinually shifted.^{2N} This is what is commonly supposed to constitute the main requirement of blank verse; but this is very far from a sufficient statement of the 'variety' required by the metre in question. In the first place, pause is but one, and, perhaps, not the most important means of 'variety.' Milton,^N who first taught us
 5 what this kind of verse ought to be, is careful to vary the movement by an occasional inversion of the iambic accentuation in each of the five places: the variation of the vowel sounds is also
 10 most laboriously attended to by him; and rightly, for the absence of the emphasis which is conferred by rhyme, when it exists, upon one vowel sound, renders every repetition of vowel sound, within the space of two or three lines, unpleasant, unless it appears to have had a distinct musical motive. But the great difficulty, as well as delight, of this measure is not in variety of pause, tone,
 15 and stress, for its own sake. Such variety must be incessantly inspired by, and expressive of, ever-varying emotion. Every alteration of the position of the grammatical pause, every deviation from the strict and dull iambic rhythm, must be either sense or non-sense. *Such change is as real a mode of expressing emotion as words themselves are of expressing thought*; and when the means
 20 exist without reference to their proper ends, the effect of the 'variety' thereby obtained, is more offensive to a right judgment, than the dullness which is supposed to be avoided. Hence it is the nature of blank verse to be dull, or worse,^N without that which only the highest poetical inspiration can confer upon it. I am
 25 afraid to say how very small is the amount of good narrative, or 'heroic' blank verse, of which our literature can boast, if I have truly stated its essential quality. No poet, unless he feels himself to be above discipline, and therefore above the greatest poets of whose modes of composition we have any record, ought to think
 30 of beginning his career with blank verse. It will sound very paradoxical to some, when I assert that the most inflexibly rigid, and as they are commonly thought, difficult metres, are the easiest for a novice to write decently in. The greater the frequency of

2 but this] but, it seems to us, that this *NBR*

25 I am] We are *NBR*

27 I] we *NBR*

32 to some,] to some of our slovenly versifiers, *NBR*

32 I] we *NBR*

the rhyme, and the more fixed the place of the grammatical pause, and the less liberty of changing the fundamental foot, the less will be the poet's obligation to originate his own rhythms. Most rhymed metres have a rhythm peculiar to themselves, and only
 5 require that the matter for which they are employed shall not be foreign to their key;^N but blank verse—when treated as it hitherto

6 key; but blank verse—when treated . . . as he writes.] *NBR* has concluding paragraphs: key; that a funeral dirge shall not be set to jaunty choriambics, nor a [sic] epithalamium to the grave-yard tune of the six syllable quatrain; but blank verse has little or no rhythm of its own, and therefore the poet has to create the rhythm as he writes.

At a time like this, when it is as much the fashion to exaggerate the so-called "inspiration" and "unconsciousness" of artistical production, as it used to be to over-estimate the critical and scientific elements, the utility of laws which it is certain will be obeyed, more or less unconsciously, by those who are capable of obeying them at all to any profitable result, is likely to have seemed questionable to some of our readers. The true poet's song is never trammelled by a present consciousness of all the laws which it obeys; but it is science, and not ignorance, which supplies the condition of such unconsciousness. The lives and the works of all great artists, poets or otherwise, show that the free spirit of art has been obtained, not by neglect, but by perfection of discipline. Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe, perhaps the highest poetical names of the Christian era, prove clearly enough to any one truly acquainted with their spirit, that the laws of art, as far as those were known at their respective periods, had been studied by them as matters of science, and that it was by working on the platform of such knowledge that they achieved strains of poetry which exceeded the laws and limits of all previous art. The poet is unconscious of the laws by which he writes, just as Thalberg and Benedict are unconscious of the rules by which they exercise their surprising craft upon the pianoforte. This craft has been, in each case alike, the product of years of intensely "conscious" discipline. The poet's discipline is only less obviously legal and laborious than that of other artists, because he alone works with purely intellectual instruments; and we do not fear to assert, that no man ever has, or ever can, become a great poet—that is, one who shall originate laws of his own, which future workers in the same line will have, in their turn, to study—unless he himself has learned to comprehend those which are the legacy of his predecessors. Such learning, indeed, will be more likely to make a pedant than a poet of the man who endeavours to ply this singular vocation without express constitutional aptness for it. Ten lines of the simplest lyrical outpourings of the Ploughman of Scotland are worth more than all the odes and epics that were ever laboured by merely learned metrists; but the faculty which, without laborious culture, is capable of the composition of a good love song or ballad, must have the addition of hard discipline, before it can become the inspiration of a truly great poem.

always has been, except occasionally by Shakspeare,^N that is, without any predominating reference to the normal places of the major and minor accents—has little or no rhythm of its own, and therefore the poet has to create the rhythm as he writes.

THE END.

But poets are the persons, after all, who are the least likely to be directly affected by written criticisms. A good poet can scarcely be other than a good judge of that which concerns his art, though he may not be able, or disposed, to put his knowledge into writing. It is the large class of little critics who are the chief gainers by the enunciation of sound artistic doctrine; and whatever instructs these, confers at least a temporary benefit upon the man whose fame, and, perhaps, worldly prosperity, for the first years of his career, may, in part, depend upon their ability to appreciate his works. It is especially in the matter of good metre that a good poet is likely to be erroneously judged in these days. Most readers of poetry, and we fear we must add, modern writers upon it, know nothing, and feel nothing, of the laws of metre as they have been practised by all great poets. "Smoothness" is regarded as the highest praise of versification, whereas it is about the lowest and most easily attainable of all its qualities. The consummate perfection of the versification of all Milton and Shakespeare, and much of Chaucer, Spenser, Fletcher, and Cowley, would not now be tolerated in a new writer; we should find it held up to ridicule and contempt; facetious critics, stringing together separate lines or short passages, each a brilliant, but, separately, unintelligible, morsel of some mosaic of harmony, would ask, "Is this music? is this verse?" perfectly safe as to the reply, for it is certain that, in the greatest work of the greatest metrist who ever lived, Milton, there is no long and elaborate strain of verse without one or more lines which, though probably the most effective in the passage, will seem to be scarcely verse at all when taken out of it. "Smoothness" might just as reasonably be called the chief merit of natural scenery as of poetry. A capacity for writing smooth verse is certainly essential in a poet, and, as we have indicated, the artistic versifier will occasionally make his thoughts flow along the dead level of the modulus of his metre—that is to say, he will make it perfectly "smooth," just as a landscape painter will generally manage to get in a glimpse of quiet water or level plain, to serve as the gauge [sic] and foil to all the surrounding varieties of hill and dale, rock and forest; but to speak of "smoothness" as anything more than the negative, merely mechanical and meanest merit of verse, is to indicate a great insensibility to the nature of music in language. Such insensibility is, however, the almost inevitable result upon most minds of the unlesurely habits of reading into which we moderns are falling. We have not time to feel with a good poet thoroughly enough to catch his music, and the consequence is, that good poets have lately been writing down to our incapacity.

5 THE END.] *om*, *NBR*, *Am*, *Pr*

COMMENTARY

Bold-faced numbers in the commentary refer to the corresponding items in the bibliography (pp. 98-110); page references follow in light-faced type: 158, 535. Page and line references to the "Essay on English Metrical Law" in the present edition (pp. 1-50) are indicated in the commentary by two numbers separated by a period; e.g., 18.2 = page 18, line 2. In the commentary below, the notation "CN" followed by page and line numbers indicates a cross-reference to another note in the commentary; e.g., CN 18.2 = see the note in the commentary explaining page 18, line 2 of the "Essay." *NBR* refers to the original version of the "Essay" in the *North British Review*, XXVII (1857), 127-161.

2.1 *almost as it now stands*. Patmore followed neither Hopkins' suggestions that he add "marginal headings" and correct many aspects of the "Essay" (106, 176), nor Colvin's recommendation that he expand the "Essay" with "examples" and further analyses (31, II, 386).

2.2 1856. This date is incorrect. "English Metrical Critics" first appeared in the fifty-third issue of the *North British Review*, August 1857. Edmund Gosse, in a biography of Patmore, propagated the error that the "Essay" "was printed in 1856" (70, 68).

2.3 *main principles . . . adopted*. Patmore expressed in the "Essay" many ideas derived from his predecessors and contemporaries, e.g., from Joshua Steele, the application of musical analysis to verse; from Hegel, the philosophical foundation for an "organic" theory of prosody; from the three books under review in the original version of the "Essay," notions concerning Anglo-Saxon verse rhythms (Guest), isochronism (O'Brien), and the importance of elocution (Vandenhoff). But he augmented these ideas with his own notions and proposed the concepts of the nominal equality of isochronous intervals, of the dipodic nature of English verse, of the metrical functions of rhyme, and of the mental character of metrical accent. Critics differ in their estimation of the force of these ideas, borrowed or adapted. T. S. Omond ranked the "Essay" "among the few papers of abiding value which the subject has elicited" (158, 176; see also Reid, 217, 224, Elton, 55, 103, Gosse, 73, 864, for other favorable comments about the "Essay"), but he said that the "adoption" of ideas which Patmore mentions in the prefatory Note "was often merely coincidence of thought" (158, 170) (thus accounting, perhaps, for the resemblances in the works of, e.g., Sidney Lanier, J. J. Sylvester, and, by his own astonished admission, D. S.