

Cf. Milton:—

“Whispering new joys to the mild oc-e-an.”—*Nativ. Hymn.*

Then, too, the old inflexional endings still asserted themselves here and there; e.g., the noun *ach-es*:
Temp. I. 2:—

“Fill all thy bones with achës, make thee roar.”

Accent.—In reading Shakspeare, we often have to throw the accent of a word either forward or back of its modern place. Lists of such words, and lines where they occur, are given by Ellis (verses are simply referred to, not quoted) *E. E. P.* p. 930, and by Abbott, *Gram.* §§ 490 ff. Many cases show undoubted difference from modern usage: thus *Aliena* (proper name), *revénue*, *arch'bishop*, *con'fessor*, *perséver*, etc.

“Ay dó perséver, couinterféit sàd loòks.”—*M. N. D.* III. 2.

This is quite natural if we consider what a shifting thing “pronunciation” is when it deals with words derived from foreign sources, and if we recall the fact that the foreign accent at once enters into strife with the Germanic impulse to accent the root-syllable, or when that is not evident, the first syllable. But we find Shakspeare, as we found Chaucer, accenting a word now one way, now another, as the metre demands (cf. p. 192); and we conclude that in many cases use may be made of the *hovering accent* previously mentioned. Thus in *W. T.* IV. 4,—

“Mark our *contract*; mark your divorce, young sir,”

we need not throw the entire weight of accent on *-tract*. The stress may be divided; though in this case, the

second syllable has a slight preponderance. Take other verses:—

“That thóu, deàd còrse, again in *còmplète stéel*.”

—*Haml.* I. 4.

“His means of death, his *òbscùre* funeral.”—*Haml.* IV. 5.

“Now for the honour of the *fòrlòrn* French.”

—*1 Hen.* VI. I. 2.

“*I myself* fight not once in forty years.”—*1 Hen.* VI. I. 3.

In these we have undoubted hovering accent. While the difference is stronger in (*Haml.*, I. 4)

“Why thy *canónized* bones, hearsèd in death”;

nevertheless, in cases like

“O Harry's wife, *triumph* not in my woes” (*R.* III. IV. 4),

“That comes in *triumph* over Cæsar's blood” (*J. C.* I. 1),

we have practically the same word-accent, though the metre makes a slight counter-claim in the first example;—in other words, it is not necessary to shift the entire stress from the first to the second syllable.

We have already noted the license given to English blank verse by the *pause*,—whether it be the end of the verse or the so-called “*cæsura*.” Thus two stress-syllables may come together, provided the *pause* intervenes; as in

“Bè in their flówing cúps | *fréshly* remémber'd”

(*H. V.* IV. 3);

and with a slight rhythmic pause in

“Seé how my swórd | *wéeps* for the pòdr kìng's death.”

—*3 H.* VI. v. 6.

Again, an *extrà syllable* is frequent before a pause. An excellent example, giving this license both within

the line and at the end ("feminine" or double ending) is —

"Obéy and bé attentíve : cànst thòu remémber?"

— *Temp.* 1. 2.

Shakspeare does not allow this extra syllable at the end to be a monosyllable: Fletcher, however, is fond of such endings, and we find many in his part of *Hen. VIII.*, e.g.: —

"Féll by our sérvants, bý those mén we lóv'd most."

Occasionally Shakspeare slips into an *Alexandrine*; and while many of these can be explained away by contraction or slurring, there still remain a few undoubted cases, — small wonder, considering the popularity of the measure in the Sixteenth Century, and the freedom with which Shakspeare handles his dramatic material.

It is the mutual relations of the metrical scheme and the word-groups which give character to rhythm. We have already noticed this strife between type and individual, between unity and variety, and the beauty which results when a true poet is in the question. Now we can see a decided growth in Shakspeare's art of verse-making, a steady progress from the fetters of slavish obedience to his metrical scheme, towards the strong and chainless music of his later verse. From *Love's Labour's Lost* with "unstopt" to "end-stopt" in the proportion of 1 : 18.14, to *The Winter's Tale* with 1 : 2.12, is a long stride; it means that our highest dramatic art found its best instrument in a metre which allowed all possible variety of word-groups. Mr. Spedding (*Trans. New Shaks. Soc.* 1874, 1. p. 30) gives the

same subject ("the face of a beautiful woman just dead") as treated by Shakspeare at different periods; thus *Rom. & Jul.* (say 1597): —

"Her blood is settled and her joints are stiff.
Life and those lips have long been separated.
Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the fairest flower of all the field."

Cf. Antony & Cleop. (say 1607): —

"If they had swallowed poison, 'twould appear
By external swelling: but she looks like sleep,
As she would catch another Antony
In her strong toil of grace."

Aside from the gain in vigor of style shown by the second extract, note the freedom of movement and the strength and variety imparted by the shifting pause. Note, too, the trisyllabic opening of the second verse of the same extract.

Another feature of Shakspeare's later work is his use of *light* and *weak* endings: *light* being such words as *am, are, be, can, could, — do, does, has, had* (as auxiliaries), — *I, they, thou*; *weak* are words like *and, for, from, if, in, of, or* (Dowden).¹ "In *Macbeth* light endings appear for the first time in considerable numbers; weak endings in considerable numbers for the first time in *Antony and Cleopatra*." The same progress is seen in the poet's increasing use of *double endings*.

So much for a very meagre outline of Shakspeare's versification. We have assumed throughout (1) that the regular metrical scheme of five accented syllables, alternating regularly with five unaccented syllables, is valid only so far as it makes the foundation and ground-

¹ See also *Trans. N. Shaks. Soc.* 1874, II. p. 448.

plan of the rhythm, and is so modified by word-accent, rhetorical accent, quantity, and tone, that it can rarely, if ever, be applied with literal exactness to the concrete verse; but that (2) it is certainly present as the skeleton of the verse, can always be detected by the ear, and is our one test of correct rhythm.

—
Milton's Verse.

The sonorous roll of Miltonic rhythm is unique in our poetry, although it has enticed countless bardlings to a superficial imitation whose inversion and verbosity resemble Milton's work as tinsel resembles silver. But in Milton's hands epic blank verse becomes worthy of such praise as this from Mr. Arnold:¹ "To this metre, as used in the *Paradise Lost*, our country owes the glory of having produced one of the only two poetical works in the grand style which are to be found in the modern languages; the *Divine Comedy* of Dante is the other." The verse thus highly praised can present no difficulties to a sympathetic ear which allows the freedom of *slurring*, the variety of the pause, and the use of hovering accent. Occasionally there is transposed accent, but mostly in its usual place after the pause. The "inversions" are matters of style.

Often Milton's hovering accent is very subtle, and Mr. Arnold has somewhere made it a test of one's ear for metre whether or not one finds good rhythm in the last verse of the passage:—

"Those other two equal'd with me in fate,
So were I equal'd with them in renown,

¹ *On Translating Homer*, III.

Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old."

In this last verse, which the ear of Bentley rejected as bad metre, the rhythm accents Tí-resiás (slurring of *i*), the word accents Tiré-sias; but the first syllable is a diphthong and is helped by its quantity, so that with hovering accent the verse "scans" admirably. Cf. Shelley's verse:—

"The blue *Mediterranean*, where he lay." — *West Wind*.

A case of accent changed after a pause is

"Flóats as they páss, fánn'd with unnúber'd plúmes."

— *Par. Lost*, 7.

Slurring is frequently used:—

"How quíck they whéel'd, and flýing behind them shót."

— *Par. Reg.*

"Your military obedience, to dissolve."

"Thy condescension and shall be honor'd ever."

"A pillar of state: deep on his front engraven."

As *Romeo and Juliet*, with its soft cadences, is to the vigorous stride of Shakspeare's last plays, so is the *Comus* of Milton to his *Paradise Lost*. In *Comus* the versification is exquisite, full of such movement as—

"What need a vermeil-tinctur'd lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?"

or

"O welcome, pure-ey'd Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings!"

This verse is full of the beauty of Elizabethan rhythm; but there is a splendor, a majesty, in the later epic, for which we have no adjective but "Miltonic." Cf. with the above extracts this from *Paradise Lost* (Book VI.):—

- (1) "Sérvant of Gód, wèll dònè, wèll hast thou fòught
- (2) The bétter fight, who síngle hást maintáin'd
- (3) Agáinst revólted múltitúdes the cáuse
- (4) Of trúth, in wórd míghtier than théy in árms;
- (5) Ànd fór the téstimóny of trúth hast bórne
- (6) Únivérsal reproách, far wórse to béar
- (7) Than víolence."

Note the distribution of the pauses; the "run-on" lines, which, according to Dr. Johnson, "change the measures of a poet to the periods of a declaimer," but, for our éars, give vigor as well as variety to the verse; the shifting of accents, — as in (4) where the real rhythmical pause is after *word*, and so allows transposed accent in the next foot; the hovering accent (1) *wèll dònè*; the slurring of (4) (5) *-ier* and *-ny of*; and the light accent in (5) on *And for*, which allows extra emphasis for the following phrase. Other examples of a very weak initial accent are (Guest, p. 239): —

"Bý the wàtèrs of lífe, wheré'er they sát."
 "Tó the gàrdèn of blíss thy séat prépar'd."

Here, with hovering accent for *waters* or *garden*, thus dwelling on the chief word, we can help the metre, which to Guest's ear was "far from pleasing." The most famous license, however, is (6): —

"*Universal* reproach, far worse to bear."

Read with proper emphasis, this verse is not at all unpleasing; indeed, the metre helps the sense (= "reproach on all sides, — absolute"). The very pronounced pause after *reproach* throws the emphatic words into prominence; and altogether we may call this admirable

metrical workmanship. "Trochaic," entirely, is a well-known line in Keats' *Hyperion*: —

"Thea, Thea, Thea, where is Saturn?"

Again, Guest objects to the verse, —

"Beyond the polar circle: to them, day,"

because it lays too much stress on a weak word *to*; but by applying the principle of hovering accent, the verse is harmonious enough: —

"Beyónd the pólar círcle: tò them dáy," etc.

Finally, there can be lines when it is almost impossible to talk of light or heavy syllables: —

"Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death."

With this, we leave English Blank Verse; but no account of it can afford to forget the splendid promise and melody of Keats' fragment, *Hyperion*: alas, —

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
 And burned is Apollo's laurel bough."

(f) VERSE OF SIX STRESSES.

The *Alexandrine* has already been noticed. Popular at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, it was gradually thrust aside by heroic verse; though Drayton's *Polyolbion* (1612) employs it consistently. When we read a little of this poem, we understand why the metre lost ground in spite of the efforts of so able a poet.

"Of Albion's glorious isle the wonders whilst I write,
 The sundry varying soils, the pleasures infinite,

Where heat kills not the cold, nor cold expels the heat,
The calms too mildly small, nor winds too roughly great,
Nor night doth hinder day, nor day the night doth wrong;
The summer not too short, the winter not too long."

But combined with heroic verse at the end of a stanza, as in Spenser, or incidental to the regular couplet, as in Dryden, the Alexandrine has a pleasant effect:—

"So pale grows Reason in Religion's sight,
So dies and so dissolves in supernatural light."

The Alexandrine is iambic; a trochaic movement in six-stress verse gives a stately or mournful effect,—as in Swinburne's lines:—

"Dárk the shríne and dúmb the fount of sǒng thence wélling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:
Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the watersprings that spake are quenched and dead."

Irregular six-stress verse is met in couplet and stanza:

"Óút of the gólden remòte wíld wést where the séa without shóre is,
Fúll of the súnset, and sád, if at áll, with the fúllness of jóy,
As a wínd sèts ìn with the autómn that blóws from the région of stóries,
Blóws with a perfúme of sǒngs and of mémories belóved from a bóy."

Cf. the metre of the opening stanzas of Tennyson's *Maud*, and the strong verse of Morris' *Sigurd the Volsung*.

Here, finally, belongs the so-called *Hexameter*. It is, of course, quite clear that the actual classic hexameter cannot be imitated in English verse; that is plain to any one who can distinguish quantity from accent. Nor can we reproduce the full effect of the classic hexameter by the simple substitution of accented for long syllables, and unaccented for short. But there is no

reason why we cannot, by such a substitution, imitate the general *movement* of the old metre. The English verse thus obtained becomes a measure which may please some and displease others, and is to be judged precisely as we judge the Alexandrine or any given verse-system. For surely, if we, with our English sounds and English accents and dull ear for exact proportions of quantity, can read aloud with pleasure (the test of an agreeable metre) the verse of Homer or Vergil, it follows that a verse of similar effect in movement can be obtained in our own language; the difference between the two metres will be the difference between the structure of English and the structure of Greek or of Latin, together with the loss of delicate quantity-relations, which, indeed, are with classical scholars rather thought than felt. This is a loss; but it is absurd to maintain that we cannot transfer to English verse the general movement (*i.e.*, the distribution of verse-accents) of classic hexameter. The trouble lies in the lack of any good English substitute for the classic *spondee* (— —); whereas the purely dactylic hexameter, without relief through spondaic effects, is, in the long run, monotonous. Perhaps this is what made Platen, the German poet, declare the hexameter "fit only for short poems." Mr. Arnold, however, says "*Solvitur ambulando*"; and wants us to practise hexameters till we can make perfect ones. Certainly, if we look at early attempts in this metre, we can gather comfort for our own condition and hope for the future. Nash said of certain hexameter verse of his day: "that drunken, staggering kind of verse, which is all up hill and down hill . . . and goes like a horse plunging

through the mire in the deep of winter, now soused up to the saddle, and straight aloft on his tip-toes." Cam-
pion more gravely says that such verse is not successful
because "the concurse of monosyllables make (*sic*) our
verses unapt to slide." Now Nash, when he made his
comparison, was thinking of one Richard Stanyhurst's
translation (Leyden, 1582: now reprinted by Arber) of
four books of the *Æneid* into what he called hexa-
meters, — of which Nash further remarked that it was
"a foule, lumbring, boystrous, wallowing measure."
Take the opening of Book II., which will make the
reader quite agree with Nash:—

"Wyth tentiue lystning eeche wight was settled in harrckning,
Thus father Æneas chronicled from lofty bed hautye.
You me bid, O Princesse, too scarrify a festered old soare."

But there were far better specimens even at that time;
thus Greene:—

"Oft have I heard my liëf Còridón repòrt on a lóve-day
Whèn bònny máids do méet with the swáins in the válley by
Témpe."

Klopstock (to come to more modern times) chose the
hexameter for the metre of his German *Paradise Lost*,
the *Messias*; Goethe often used it, — *e.g.*, in *Her-
mann und Dorothea*; and, for English, Longfellow's
Evangeline, Clough's *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*, and
(perhaps best of all) Kingsley's *Andromeda*, at least
should make us recognize this measure as a belligerent,
though some writers speak of the English hexameter as
a proved failure. To these practical examples, add Mr.
Arnold's critical remarks in his *Essay on Translating
Homer*. We have no space to enter into the discussion.

But we may point out that besides the lack of spondaic
effect, there is often a *false accent* in hexameter verse
which ought to be carefully avoided: thus

"In that delightful lánd which is wáshed by the Délaware's wátters,"
if read metrically, has an almost ludicrous effect. Bet-
ter is

"Bént like a láboring oár which toils in the súrf of the ócean."

Then, too, the *pause* should be varied; occasionally
two pauses in a verse have a pleasant effect:—

"Níght after níght, when the wórld was asleép, as the wátchman
repéated."

(g) VERSE OF SEVEN STRESSES.

This has already been noticed in the ballad measure
(*cf.* Chapman's translation), both in its original form,
and in the popular arrangement of four-and-three,
whether with or without rimed pause-accents.

A verse of more than *eight* stresses can in nearly all
cases be separated into two verses of four stresses each.
Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*, however, is best printed as
eight-stress verse: thus

"Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest"
is better than

"Full of sad experience, moving
Toward the stillness of his rest."

Cf. also Poe's *Raven*, which has interior rime.

(h) MISCELLANEOUS.

Imitations of classic metres are not confined to hexameter verse. The "elegiac" verse, in which "pentameter" alternated with "hexameter," has been occasionally tried by English poets, but not so much as in Germany; Coleridge's translation from Schiller is well known:—

"In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column,
In the pentameter aye falling in melody back."

Tennyson has some "Alcaics" to Milton:—

"O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of time or eternity,
God-gifted organ voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages!"

Milton himself has very gracefully Englished one of Horace's Odes (I. 5):—

"What slender youth bedew'd with liquid odours
Courts thee on roses in some pleasant cave,
Pyrrha? For whom bind'st thou
In wreaths thy golden hair?"

Compare with this the exquisite *Ode to Evening* of Collins.

The difficult "Hendecasyllabic" verse, as used by the Roman Catullus, has been imitated by Coleridge, Tennyson, and Swinburne. The latter poet has even essayed the "Choriambic" verse:—

"Love, what | ailed thee to leave | life that was made | lovely, we
thought | with love?
What sweet | visions of sleep | lured thee away | down from the
light | above?"

Bulwer wrote a collection of stories, *The Lost Tales of Miletus*, all in classical metres; nor must we forget the rimeless rhythm of Southey, as in *Thalaba*, or of Matthew Arnold, as in *The Strayed Reveller*, and the highly successful choruses (with sporadic rime) of the *Samson Agonistes*.

But it may be said, notwithstanding these cases, that with the possible exception of the hexameter, the movement of classical metres does not harmonize with the fundamental conditions of Germanic rhythm.