If an edition was published in 1608, it does not appear to have survived. The work probably passed, with Pavier's other copyrights, to Edward Brewster and Robert Bird in 1626. An edition was published in 1636, of which a few copies are in the British Museum, the Bodleian, and elsewhere. The book is described on the title-page as *The History of Titana and Theseus*, and the author's name is given as W. Bettie. It is a regular Elizabethan love-pamphlet, written in the style of Lyly and Greene. But it is disappointing to find that there is nothing about the Queen of the Fairies in it. Titana is the daughter of Meleager, King of Achaia, with whom Theseus falls in love, and whom he ultimately marries after much parental opposition, and various wanderings, in the course of which he is entertained by the Landgrave of Hesse, and is landed by a Venetian merchant on the coast of Bohemia. There is no sign in plot or language that the novel either inspired or was in any way inspired by *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*. But it is just possible that if, as is likely enough, W. Bettie translated from an earlier Italian original, Shakespeare may have been struck by the conjunction of names, and have borrowed that of Titana or Titania for his Fairy Queen. The likelihood that he got it from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, iii. 171, is certainly diminished by the fact that Golding does not there preserve it in his translation. (See Appendix A, § 15.)

ESSAY ON METRE.

§ 1. **Introduction.**—The play of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is written partly in prose and partly in verse, and the verse, again, is partly rhymed and partly unrhymed. The present essay is intended to explain the meaning of these distinctions and to point out the way in which Shakespeare used the various modes of expression at his command.[1]

§ 2. **Stress.** The possibility of verse depends mainly upon that quality of speech which is known as *stress* or *accent*. Speech is made up of a succession of *syllables*, that is, of sounds or groups of sounds, each consisting of a vowel, or of a vowel accompanied by one or more consonants, and pronounced by a single muscular effort. This succession is broken up by pauses, which range in length from the slight pause after each word to the important pause at the end of a sentence. Syllables differ amongst themselves in various manners, which depend upon variations in the complicated physical processes by which sounds are produced. We are here only concerned with two of these differences, namely *quantity* and *stress*. The *quantity* of a syllable is measured by the time which the effort of pronouncing it takes. Syllables are classified according to quantity as *long* or *short*. Nearly all Latin and Greek metres rest upon this distinction, but in English it is of secondary importance (see §§ 8. (ii), (iii), (viii); 12.

[1] The student who wishes to pursue the subject of Shakespeare's metre further may find the following books and essays, amongst many others, useful. Goswin König, *Der Vers in Shakspere's Dramen* (a mine of learning by a German who cannot scan English); J. B. Mayor, *Chapters on English Metre* (on the whole, the most suggestive introduction to the subject); E. A. Abbott, *Shakespearian Grammar* (§§ 452–515); Henry Sweet, *History of English Sounds*; Sidney Lanier, *The Science of English Verse*; J. A. Symonds, *Blank Verse*; J. Schipper, *Englische Metrik* (1881–1888), *Grundriss zu Englischen Metrik* (1895); A. J. Ellis, *Early English Pronunciation* (E.E.T.S.); Robert Bridges, *Milton's Prosody* (1894); C. H. Herford, *Outline of Shakespeare's Prosody* in *Richard II.* (Warwick Series); N. Delius, *Die Prosa in Shakespeare's Dramen* (in *Jahrbuch* der Deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, v. 227); J. Heuser, *Der Coupletreim* in *Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xxviii. 177; xxix.–xxx. 235); H. Sharpe, *Prose in Shakespeare's Plays* (*Transactions* of the New Shakespeare Society, 1880–1882, p. 523). The "verse tests" are dealt with in N. S. Soc. *Transactions* for 1874 (passim); F. G. Fleay, *Shakespeare Manual* (1875), *Metrical Tests applied to Shakespeare* (in Ingleby's *Shakespeare, the Man and the Book*, part ii., 1881, p. 50); F. J. Furnivall, *Introduction* to Gervinus' *Commentaries*; W. Hertzberg, *Metrisches, Grammatisches, Chronologisches zu Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xiii. 248); H. Conrad, *Metrische Untersuchungen zur Festellung des Abfassungzeit von Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Jahrbuch*, xxxi. 318), and G. König, *op. cit.* ch. vii.

(iii)). The *stress* of a syllable is the amount of force or impulse with which it is uttered. Every syllable of course requires some of this force or impulse to be audible at all; but it is customary to speak of syllables which have more of it as *stressed*, and of those which have less as *unstressed*. Thus in the word *Oberon*, the first syllable is stressed, the last two are unstressed. *Stress* is sometimes called *accent*, and is conveniently denoted by a (ˊ), thus, *Oˊberon*. Most words other than monosyllables have a normal stress on one or more syllables, and it is a tendency of English, as of all Teutonic languages, to throw this stress as near the beginning of the word as possible. (See, however, § 10.) Long monosyllables are also normally stressed. Short monosyllables, however, and some dissyllables have no normal stress, but are capable of receiving one, if the meaning they convey is of importance in the sentence. This deliberate imposition of a stress for the purpose of bringing out a meaning is called *emphasis*.

[N.B.—Some writers distinguish not merely between unstressed and stressed syllables, but between unstressed, lightly or weakly stressed, and strongly stressed syllables. As a matter of fact, the degrees of stress which a syllable is capable of receiving are more numerous than either of these classifications implies; and on this fact much of the beauty of verse depends. But, for the purposes of scansion, the important thing is not the absolute amount of stress, but the relative stress of the syllables in the same foot (cf. § 3). The introduction of light stress appears to me only to confuse matters, because if you use the threefold classification, no two readers will agree in the amount of stress to be put on particular syllables: it is hard enough to get them to do so with the twofold division. Moreover, in practice, the notion of light stress has led many metrists to disregard level rhythms, such as the pyrrhic or the spondee, altogether. Yet such assuredly exist. This is not the place to discuss the subject at length, but it is right to explain my departure from usage. But let me repeat, that the limits of variation both in stress and rhythm are much beyond what any system of scansion can comprehend.]

§ 3. **Rhythm.** Stress is a quality of speech, alike in prose and verse; and, moreover, alike in prose and verse, when stressed and unstressed syllables follow each other in such an order as to be pleasing to the ear, the result is *rhythm*. But the rhythm of verse is much more definite than that of prose. Verse consists of *feet* arranged in *lines*; that is to say, its rhythm depends upon a series of groups of syllables, in each of which groups the stress is placed according to a recognized law, while the series is broken at regularly recurring intervals by a pause. And the various kinds of rhythm, or *metres*, may be classified according to (*a*) the number of feet or syllables in the line, and (*b*) the position of the stress in the foot. The

principal kinds of feet are best known by names adapted from the classical quantitative metres. They are these:—

In ascending rhythm.			
Iamb.	Non-stress + Stress,	as,	apáce.
Anapaest.	Non-stress + non-stress + stress,	as,	i' the thróat.
In descending rhythm.			
Trochee.	Stress + non-stress,	as,	háppy.
Dactyl.	Stress + non-stress + non-stress,	as,	dówager.
In level rhythm.			
Spondee.	Stress + stress,	as,	stép-dáme.
Pyrrhic.	Non-stress + non-stress,	as,	in the.

Most kinds of English verse can be *scanned*, that is, metrically analysed, as combinations of one or more of these feet in lines of different length.

§ 4. **Rhyme.** Another quality, which may or may not be present in English verse is *rhyme*. This is produced when the last stressed syllables of two or more neighbouring lines have the same or nearly the same sound. The ordinary form of rhyme is that in which the same vowel and final consonantal sounds are accompanied by a different initial consonantal sound; as *ring*, *sing*. Where there is no such different initial consonant, the rhyme is called *identical* (cf. *e.g.* iii. 1. 151, 156, 159). Where all the consonantal sounds differ, and only the vowel sound is the same, as in *ring*, *kill*, then *assonance* and not rhyme is produced.

§ 5. **Blank Verse.**—The principal metre used by Shakespeare is the iambic decasyllable or *heroic* line. This consists, normally, of five iambic feet, with a pause after the second or third foot as well as at the end of the line; thus:

When wheat' | is green', | when haw' | thorn buds' | appear' (i. 1. 185).

Rhyme may or may not be present. On the rhymed varieties see § 17; but far more important for the study of Shakespeare is the unrhymed variety, generally known as *blank verse*. Blank verse was first used in English by the Earl of Surrey in his translation of the Aeneid. It became the fashion amongst the court writers of tragedy, who thought with Sidney that to eliminate rhyme was to be classical; and was introduced into the popular drama by Marlowe in his *Tamburlaine*. Nash satirized the "drumming decasyllabon", but the new metre proved so suitable for dramatic purposes, that it soon relegated rhyme to a quite secondary position. Elizabethan drama is practically a blank-verse drama.

§ 6. **The Type of Blank Verse and its Varieties.**—We have seen that a blank-verse line is normally composed of

five iambic feet, with a middle and a final pause. But to compose an entire poem of lines rigidly adhering to this structure would involve two difficulties. In the first place it would produce a terrible monotony of effect; and in the second place it would be an intolerable restraint upon expression. It would be impossible so to arrange words that they should fall into sections of exactly equal length and exactly similar stress, and should yet convey adequately the poet's meaning. Therefore all writers of blank verse have allowed themselves to deviate very considerably from the normal type, within the limits of this general principle, that the variations must never extend so far as to prevent that type from being easily recognizable as that of the verse as a whole. The interpretation of this principle depends, of course, upon the ear of the particular writer; each handles his blank verse in a different and individual fashion. In the case of Shakespeare we may go further and say, that his fashion of handling blank verse was constantly changing from the beginning to the end of his poetic career. Therefore it is necessary to examine each play separately, and to determine for each the limits within which Shakespeare's ear allowed him to vary his metre at the time when he wrote it. In doing this it is well to remember that the results can only be approximate and not scientifically precise; for this reason, that just as Shakespeare wrote by ear and not by *a priori* rules, so the ear of the reader—the educated ear of the cultivated reader—is the only ultimate criterion of how any individual line is to be scanned. And though in the main such readers will agree, there will always be certain lines which can be read in two ways, one of which will sound best to one ear, one to another. See *e.g.* §§ 8 (ii), (*c*), (*e*); 12 (iii).

§ 7. **Variations in the Materials of Verse.**—But before we proceed to inquire what varieties of blank verse Shakespeare permitted himself in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, we have to consider another question hardly less important. In all verse the problem before the writer is to accommodate to a given type of metre words of varying stress and a varying number of syllables. Where difficulties arise, two courses are open—either to modify the metre or to modify the words. For both are alike capable, within limits, of modification. The normal pronunciation of any word is that which an educated reader of careful enunciation would give to it in reading prose. But this normal pronunciation, especially as regards the number of syllables, is often modified: (*a*) dialectically, (*b*) colloquially. Thus we say *'em* for *them*, and even, I am afraid, *'cos* for *because*. And poetry has at all times claimed for itself, within certain customary bounds, a still larger license of modification. What has been said so far applies to modern as well as Elizabethan poetry. But it must be added that the bounds of this license were very much wider for an Elizabethan than they are for us. Elizabethan pronunciation, like Elizabethan grammar, was in a transition stage. Our comparative uniformity in the matter had been by no means arrived at. Even the normal pronunciation differed in many respects from ours. Thus Shakespeare regularly said *persever* (iii. 2. 237) where we say *persevere*, and, probably, *neeld* (iii. 2. 204) where we say *needle*. But in addition to this, there were many obsolete pronunciations which, though they had ceased to be normal, were still living enough not to be out of place in poetry. Without distinguishing between licenses which are and those which are not still possible to us in verse, we will consider what amount of variation we have to allow for in reading *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* from our own normal prose pronunciation. And this (*a*) as regards the number of syllables in a word; (*b*) as regards the position of stress. After which we can go on to the varieties of metre itself.

[*N.B.*—It is sometimes convenient to mark a suppressed or slurred letter by an apostrophe (*th'*), or by a dot underneath it (*e*); a separately-sounded syllable by a diæresis (¨) on the vowel, and two merged syllables by a circumflex (⁀).]

§ 8. **Syllabic Variation.**—(i) The unstressed *e* of the verb and noun inflexions was gradually disappearing in Shakespeare's time. He sounds it, on the whole, more frequently in the earlier than in the later plays, but his use varies for the different forms. In some the sounded *e* is the rule, in others the exception. Thus:

(*a*) *-es* (3 pers. sing.). The uncontracted form is only found in *knockës* (*1 Henry VI.*, i. 3. 5), *provokës* (*2 Henry VI.*, iv. 7. 8), both of which are possibly un-Shakespearian; and *peepës* (*Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 148).

(*b*) *-es* (gen. sing.). Here, too, the uncontracted form is practically obsolete; but our play has two instances—*moonës* (ii. 1. 7), and *nightës* (iv. 1. 93), and there are a few others in early plays.

(*c*) *-eth* (3 pers. sing.). Contraction is the rule. But we have *mistakëth* (ii. 1. 52), *slayëth* (ii. 1. 190), *constrainëth* (iii. 2. 428), *charmëth* (iv. 1. 80). There are similar exceptions in all the early plays.

(*d*) *-est* (2 pers. sing.). Always contracted in this play, although the uncontracted form is found in other early plays.

(*e*) *-est* (superl.). Here, on the contrary, the uncontracted form is normal. Contraction is found in some of the later plays; in ours, the only possible example is *shallowest* (iii. 2. 13), and that is probably to be read *shallowest* (cf. (ii) *j*).

(*f*) *-ed* (perf.). Contraction is the rule; but we have *ravishĕd* (ii. 1. 78).
(*g*) *-ed* (part.). Both contracted and uncontracted forms are freely used, though the former are the most numerous.
(*h*) *-en* (part.). Always contracted in *stolen* (i. 1. 32, &c.).
[*N.B.*—These rules do not apply to cases of sibilants before *-es*, *-est*, or of dentals before *-eth*, *-ed*, where the *e* is necessarily sounded.]

(ii) An unaccented short vowel coming between two consonants may be elided or slurred in almost any place. This is especially so when the vowel is followed by *l*, *n*, or *r*. These consonants, with *m*, are known as *liquids* or *vowel-likes*. When a vowel-like follows another consonant, it makes the very slightest difference in the pronunciation, whether a vowel sound is interposed or not. This may be tested by comparing the pronunciation of *able* (so written, but pronounced *abel*) and *ably*. Instances of such elision or slurring in our play are:

(*a*) Before *l*—*privilege* (ii. 1. 220), *devilish* (iii. 2. 129), *changeling* (iv. 1. 56). But the same word is pronounced *changēling* (ii. 1. 23). In the case of *perilous*, the contracted form was often spelt *parlous* (iii. 1. 12), and became almost a distinct word.
(*b*) Before *n*—*evening* (v. 1. 39), *pensioners* (*penshuners*) (ii. 1. 10); but *busĭness* (i. 1. 124). In iii. 2. 292 the same word is pronounced in both ways:

And with | her pers | onage, her | tall per | sŏnage.

The contraction is found in *fallen* (iii. 2. 417) and *stolen* (i. 1. 32, &c.); (on this see also § 8 (i) (*h*)); and in *heaven* (ii. 1. 243, &c.), *given* (i. 1. 28, &c.), *even* (iii. 2. 68, &c.), *seven* (i. 1. 159), though the last three words might be treated as *gi'en*, *e'en*, *se'en* (as in *sen-night*) under § 8 (v.).
(*c*) Before *r*—*withering* (i. 1. 6), *torturing* (v. 1. 37), *mulberry* (v. 1. 147), *distemperature* (ii. 1. 106), *preposterously* (iii. 2. 121), *promontory* (ii. 1. 149), *sovereignty* (i. 1. 82); but *funĕrals* (i. 1. 14), *forgĕries* (ii. 1. 81), and, of course, *austĕrity* (i. 1. 90), where the vowel is stressed. In ii. 1. 123 we have *votaress*, in ii. 1. 163 probably *votăress*. The word *spirit* presents difficulties. It occurs altogether ten times in the play. In eight of these it is not contracted, two instances (ii. 1. 211 and iii. 2. 4) falling under § 13. But in i. 1. 14, and probably in ii. 1. 1, contraction is necessary. This cannot take the form *spirit*, because the first syllable is stressed. Some metrists think that in such cases the alternative form *sprite* should be used. This form in any case occurs in ii. 1. 33 and v. 1. 367, 379, where it is needed for the rhyme, and where it is so spelt by the Qq. F 1, except that Q 2 F 1 spell *spirit* in ii. 1. 33. Others would treat the second *i* as elided before *t*, and read *spirit*.
(*d*) Before *m*—*ceremony* (v. 1. 55); but possibly the first syllable in this word was sometimes pronounced *ceer-*, as in *cere-cloth*, and *cerement*.
(*e*) Before *b* in words ending in *-ble*—*undistinguishable* (ii. 1. 100; iv. 1. 184), and perhaps *admirable* (v. 1. 27); but here we may also scan *admirāble* (ii. *d*), or by reading *howso'er* for *howsoever* (ix.), putting a trochee for an iamb (§ 12 (ii)), and altering the stress of *admirable* (§ 10 (i)), we may get—

But, how' | soe'er', | strange' and | admir' | āble.

Perhaps in all these cases we should treat the *e* of the *-ble* (*bel*) as elided (ii. *d*), though this is not the modern way of shortening the words.
(*f*) Before *c*—*innocence* (ii. 2. 45), *medicine* (iii. 2. 264), *tragical* (v. 1. 57, 58).
(*g*) Before *p*—*canopied* (ii. 1. 251); but see note *ad loc.* as to other possible ways of scanning the line.
(*h*) Before *s*—*courtesy* (ii. 2. 77), but *courtĕsy* (iii. 2. 147).
(*i*) Before *t*—*spirit* (see (*c*) above).
(*j*) Before *w*—*following* (ii. 1. 131; iii. 2. 82); *shallowest* (iii. 2. 13); but see (i), (*e*) above.

(iii) Similarly, a short, unstressed vowel sound is occasionally inserted before a vowel-like, so as to create an additional syllable. Thus we have:

(*a*) Before *l*—*jugg*[*e*]*ler* (iii. 2. 282).
(*b*) Before *r*—*wond*[*e*]*rous* (v. 1. 59). The forms *through*, *thorough*, now confined to different senses, are used indiscriminately by Shakespeare. Cf. ii. 1. 3; ii. 1. 106.

(iv) Some words suffer the elision of an unstressed prefix, especially when that consists of a vowel unaccompanied by consonants. In this play we have *'long* for *along* (iii. 2. 339), *'nointed* for *anointed* (iii. 2. 351), *'scape* for *escape* (iv. 2. 19), *'tide* for *betide* (v. 1. 202), and, possibly, *'bout* for *about* (iii. 1. 96). But in this last line we may either scan *you 'bout* or *y' about* (cf. (v) below). In the case of a few words such a prefix has been normally lost. See Glossary, svv. bate, bay.

(v) Many common words, pronouns, auxiliaries, prepositions, and articles suffer mutilation in various ways, and merge in colloquial combinations. Thus we have *is't*, *be't*, *for't*, *she's*, *we're*. In i. 1. 27 we should, I think, scan *This man hath* as *This man 'th*; *I had rather* in iii. 2. 64 should be *I'ld rather*; and in iii. 1. 96 *you about* may be contracted into *y' about*. Similarly *the* becomes *th'* before a vowel, and even sometimes before a consonant, as perhaps in:

I know | a bank | where th' wild | thyme blows (ii. 1. 249).

But see the note on this line, together with § 12 (iii). The prepositions *on*, *of*, *in* become *o'*, *i'*, as in *i'faith* (iii. 2. 284), but this shortening does not affect the number of syllables. These colloquial contractions are singularly few in our play; in the later plays they become very numerous.

(vi) Two adjacent unstressed vowels are often merged into a single syllable. Thus *recreant* (iii. 2. 409), *emptying* (i. 1. 216); but *confusĭon* (i. 1. 149), *amiăble* (iv. 1. 2). Often this merging is due to the consonantal affinities of certain vowels. Thus

i readily becomes *y*, as in *companion* (i. 1. 15), *obedience* (i. 1. 37), *warrior* (ii. 1. 71), *India* (ii. 1. 69), *spaniel* (ii. 1. 203), and so with *e* in *beauteous* (i. 1. 104). The combination *ti* produces a sound resembling *sh*, as in *patiently* (ii. 1. 140), *vexation* (i. 1. 22), *nuptial* (i. 1. 1), but we have also *nuptial* (v. 1. 75). With forms in *-tion*, *-sion*, the contraction appears to be normal, except before a marked pause.

(vii) Similarly an unstressed vowel is often absorbed into an adjacent stressed vowel or diphthong:

Thus *práyers* (i. 1. 197), *shówers* (i. 1. 245), *fíre* (fier), (ii. 1. 5), *squire* (ii. 1. 131), *tóward* (iii. 1. 69), *béing* (iii. 2. 69), *hour* (i. 1. 1), *our* (i. 1. 15); but *vóyage* (ii. 1. 134), *iron* (ïërn) (ii. 1. 196), *cówärd* (iii. 2. 421).

(viii) By a converse process, a long vowel or diphthong is sometimes split up into two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed. Thus *hoard* becomes *hoärd* (iv. 1. 33). The word *fairy* is generally treated as a dissyllable in the play; but in ii. 1. 58 it is a trisyllable, going back to what is really the older pronunciation, *fäëry* (see Glossary).

(ix) Certain consonants can be elided when they come between two vowels, and the vowels then coalesce into a single syllable. These consonants are *v* and *th*.

(*a*) *v*. In accordance with this principle *never* becomes *ne'er*, and *over* becomes *o'er*; possibly also we get *e'en* for *ëven*, *se'en* for *seven* (as in *sen-night*), and *gi'en* for *given*; but cf. (ii), (*b*).

(*b*) *th*. The most usual example is *whether*, which must be pronounced *whe'er* in i. 1. 69; iii. 1. 137; iii. 2. 81; but we also appear to have another in *either* (ii. 1. 32; ii. 2. 156).

[*N.B.*—(1) Contractions of all kinds are far more numerous in the later plays, when Shakespeare was trying to cram as much thought as he could into his lines. In the present play contracted forms generally occur in the middle of the line, open forms at the end of the line or before a pause. The license of the feminine rhythm (§ 13) accounts in part for this.

(2) I have not distinguished between *elision* and *slurring*. In the one case the sound is completely dropped; in the other it is passed over so rapidly as to be barely appreciable. But in both cases it is regarded as non-existent for metrical purposes. I should add that a large number of syllables which König and others treat as slurred, I regard as forming part of trisyllabic feet. Cf. § 12 (iii).

(3) The spelling of the Qq. Ff. gives very little help in determining the more difficult questions of contraction. They only mark a few elisions, and those not consistently. Nor are such excellent modern editions as the *Cambridge Shakespeare* quite faultless in this respect.]

§ 9. **Proper Names.**—These are generally the occasion of many irregularities, but they do not present any difficulty in our play. We have *Demétrius* and *Demétrius*, *Hérmia* and *Hérmia*, *Hélena*, *Helena* and *Hélen*; *Titánia* and *Titánia*, but always *O'beron* and not *O'beron*. *Philostrate* is a trisyllable, the *e* being mute. *Perigenia* (ii. 1. 78) should, I think, be pronounced *Périgénia*. The most anomalous words are *Theseus* and *Egeus*; according to Greek usage they should both be dissyllables, *Egeus*, *Théseus*, but Shakespeare always has *Egéus*, and *Théseus* at least twice (ii. 1. 76; v. 1. 38). Chaucer has *Théseüs* regularly in *The Knightes Tale*.

§ 10. **Stress Variation.**—The normal prose stress of certain words was, and to some extent still is, variable in verse.

(i) In words of Romance origin this is often due to the conflict between the pronunciation suggested by the analogy of Latin, and that suggested by the Teutonic tendency, already spoken of (§ 2), to throw the stress as near the beginning of the word as possible. Thus we have *revénue* (i. 1. 158) as well as *révenue* (i. 1. 6), and we have *edict* (i. 1. 151), *exile* (iii. 2. 386), *sojoúrned* (iii. 2. 171), with possibly *admírable* (v. 1. 27) and *luscious* (ii. 1. 251), instead of the normal *édict*, *éxile*, *sójourned*, *ádmirable*, *lúscious*. In *rheúmatic* (ii. 1. 105), on the other hand, the Teutonic pronunciation is the abnormal one. *Courtesy* (ii. 2. 77) is exceptional, and somewhat awkward.

(ii) In some compound words which are still felt as made up of two parts, the stress may fall on either part, according to the emphasis desired. Thus we have *lack-lóve* (ii. 2. 77), *mísprised* (iii. 2. 74), *místake* (v. 1. 90), instead of the more normal *láck-love*, *misprísed*, *mistáke*.

(iii) The pronunciation of *sinister* (v. 1. 162) to rhyme with *whisper*, and of *certain* (v. 1. 129) is burlesque.

[*N.B.*—(1) Owing to the conflict between the Romance and Teutonic pronunciation, even the normal Elizabethan stress does not always agree with ours. Shakespeare always has *persever* (iii. 2. 237), generally *ántic* (v. i. 3).

(2) In some cases where the Elizabethan stress was variable, we retain both forms in different senses, thus: *ántic*, *antique*, and *húman*, *humáne*.]

§ 11. **Varieties of Metre.**—So much, then, for the possible variations in the materials which have to be disposed into metre; we come now to those of metre itself. These may take the form of (*a*) variations upon the iambic character of the foot; (*b*) variations due to the insertion of supernumerary

extra-metrical syllables; (*c*) variations due to mutilation of a foot; (*d*) variations in the number of feet in the line; (*e*) variations in the number and position of the pauses.

§ 12. **Non-Iambic Feet.**

(i) *Spondee and Pyrrhic.* Lines containing the complete number of five iambic feet are comparatively rare. When several of these occur together, they produce an effect of regular rise and fall which is stiff and unnatural. Shakespeare reserves this rhythm for the burlesque.

You, la′ | dies, you′, | whose gen′ | tle hearts′ | do fear′
The small′ | est mon′ | strous mouse′ | that creeps′ | on floor′,
May now′ | perchance′ | both quake′ | and trem′ | ble here′,
When li′ | on rough′ | in wild′ | est rage′ | doth roar′
(v. i. 215–218).

In order, therefore, to produce a more natural rhythm, *level stress* is introduced into one or more feet. That is to say, the unstressed and stressed syllables of the iamb are replaced by two stressed syllables (*spondee*), or two unstressed syllables (*pyrrhic*): thus—

And the | quaint′ ma′ | zes in | the wan′ | ton green′ (ii. 1. 99).

Here the second foot is a spondee, the first and third are pyrrhics.

The principle which limits all variations in blank verse is that the general character of the rhythm must not be destroyed. Too many pyrrhics or spondees would make the verse altogether too light or too heavy. As a rule, therefore, we do not find more than six or less than three stressed syllables in a line, nor more than three unstressed syllables together. An excess of spondees occurs in solemn passages, as in Theseus' judicial address—

What′ say′ | you′, Her′ | mia? be | advised′, | fair′ maid′ (i. 1. 46);

or in Hermia's declaration,

So′ will | I′ grow′, | so′ live′, | so′ die′, | my lord′ (i. 1. 79).

When the third foot is a pyrrhic, the rest of the line is divided into two equal parts, and thus a markedly antithetic rhythm is readily produced, as in

Your bús- | kin'd mís- | tress and | your wár- | rior lóve (ii. 1. 71).
By pa′ | ved foun′ | tain or | by rush′ | y brook′ (ii. 1. 84).

A pyrrhic is very common in the last foot, where the pause to some extent supplies the place of a stress.

(ii) *Trochee.* Frequently the normal order of non-stress and stress is inverted, that is to say, a *trochee* replaces the iamb. This substitution is made most easily after a pause, and therefore it is by far the most common in the first foot, and next to that in the third and fourth, after the mid-line pause. It is rare in the second and fifth feet.

1st foot. Chant′ing | faint′ hymns′ | to the | cold′ fruit′ | less moon′ (i. 1. 73).
2nd foot. As wild′ | geese′ that | the creep′ | ing fowl′ | er eye′ (iii. 2. 20).
3rd foot. With feign′ | ing voice′ | ver′ses | of feign′ | ing love′ (i. 1. 31).
4th foot. Met′ we | on hill′ | or dale′, | for′est | or mead′ (ii. 1. 83).

Our play affords no instance of a trochee in the fifth foot.

Two trochees often occur in one line, but rarely in succession. More than two would tend to obscure the iambic character of the rhythm.

There′fore | the winds′, | pip′ing | to us′ | in vain′ (ii. 1. 88).

(iii) *Trisyllabic Feet.* In his later blank verse, Shakespeare frequently allows the stress to carry with it two unstressed syllables instead of one only; that is, he substitutes an *anapaest* for the iamb. In such cases the unstressed syllables are always kept as short in quantity as possible. Thus, in *Macbeth*—

Whăt ă haste′ | looks through′ | his eyes′. | So′ should | he′ look (i. 2. 46).
Thoughts spe′ | cŭlătive′ | their un′ | sure hopes′ | relate′ (v. 4. 19).

Possibly a *dactyl* or even a *tribrach* (three unstressed syllables) may occasionally be used in the same way.

It should be noted that in many cases it must be a matter of choice whether we scan a line by means of such a foot, or by elision. Thus in the second line given from *Macbeth*, we might scan, 'Thoughts spéc | ulative' (§ 8 (ii) (*a*)). But in the later plays there is a certain percentage of cases which no elision or slurring will satisfactorily account for, and once the principle of trisyllabic feet is admitted, it becomes a matter of opinion how far it should be extended. The present play does not appear to me to afford any *clear* instance of a trisyllabic foot. A *possible* instance is—

I know | a bank | whĕre thĕ wĭld | thyme blows (ii. 1. 249).

But see the note on this line, together with § 8 (v).

§ 13. **Feminine Rhythm.**—Sometimes an extra-metrical unstressed syllable is added after the stress, before a pause.

The result is known as *feminine* rhythm. It is most common at the end of the line, thus—

Sees He | len's beau | ty in | a brow | of E(gypt) (v. 1. 11).
The po | et's eye, | in a | fine fren | zy rol(ling) (v. 1. 12).

In the larger part of our play, feminine endings are markedly rare. In two passages, however, they occur with comparative frequency. These are iii. 2. 177–343, and v. 1. 1–105. Possibly this may be a sign that these passages were revised or rewritten at a later date than the rest of the play; but, in iii. 2. 177–343 at least, the irregularity may be accounted for by the excitement of the scene. When dissyllables which admit of contraction occur at the end of a line, and there is an alternative between contraction and a feminine rhythm, the latter appears in so early a play to be the preferable mode of reading.

Have with | our needles [*neelds*] | crea | ted both | one flow(ër) (iii. 2. 204).

Feminine rhythm in the middle of the line is very rare in the play. We have only two instances—

After 2nd foot. That is, | the mad(man): | the lo | ver, all | as fran(tic) (v. 1. 10).
After 3rd foot. Not for | thy fair | y king(dom). | Fairies, | away! (ii. 1. 144).

§ 14. **Monosyllabic Feet.**—Occasionally a line is mutilated by the omission of the unstressed syllable of one foot. The place of this syllable may generally be considered to be filled up by a gesture or dramatic pause. Like all other irregularities, this is rare in our play. It occurs in—

—Ho, | ho, ho! | Coward, | why comest | thou not? (iii. 2. 421),

where the laugh may be taken as a rough metrical equivalent for two whole feet; in—

For part | ing us, | —O, | is all | forgot? (iii. 2. 201),

where the third foot is filled out with a sob; and apparently in—

Mel | ted as | the snow, | seems to | me now (iv. 1. 163);

but probably this line is corrupt (cf. note *ad loc.*).

§ 15. **Long and Short Lines.**—Lines are sometimes found with more or less than the normal five feet.

Six-foot lines, sometimes called *Alexandrines*, occur twice in the play.

Therefore | be out | of hope, | of ques | tiön, | of doubt (iii. 2. 279).
Uncou | ple in | the wes | tern val | ley; let | them go (iv. 1. 104).

There are also a few shorter lines of various lengths. Here, too, a pause, or something of the kind, may often be regarded as filling up the gap.

Two feet. And kill | me too (iii. 2. 49).
Three feet. Takes it | in might, | not mer(it) (v. 1. 92).
Four feet. I know | a bank | where the wild | thyme blows (ii. 1. 249).

Short addresses, commands, and ejaculations can be treated in plays where they abound as extra-metrical altogether.

On the three four-foot lines ii. 1. 14, 42; iii. 2. 100, cf. § 16.

In iv. 1. 189, 190 we have—

Hel. Mine own, and not mine own.
Dem. Are you sure
That we 're awake. It seems to me.

Here the irregularities must be explained, if the text is correct, as due to the confusion of a man yet only half-awake.

§ 16. **Varieties of Pause.**—The typical heroic line has a well-marked pause at the end, and a less-well-marked one in the middle, after the second or sometimes the third foot. These are of course sense pauses, as well as metrical pauses. Shakespeare modifies this original type in two principal ways—

(i) He varies the mid-line pause at will, omitting it altogether, or making it as slight as possible, or doubling it, or putting it after the first or fourth foot, or in the middle of a foot.

[N.B.—Some writers call the mid-line pause a *caesura*. This is, of course, hopelessly incorrect. The classical *caesura* was a slight pause in the middle and not at the end of a foot.]

(ii) He reduces the importance of the end-line pause, which can never altogether disappear, by putting the two separated lines in close syntactical connection. Such a connection is called an *enjambement*, and the first of the two lines is said to be *run on*, as opposed to *end-stopped*. Consider, for instance, v. 1. 12–17—

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.

Here the last line and the first two are end-stopped, the third, fourth, and fifth run on. Of course it is largely a matter of degree; the enjambement is more or less marked, according

as it is affected by various conditions, the weight of the syntactical parts separated, the closeness of the syntactical connection, the presence of feminine rhythm, and the like. The effect of this redistribution of pauses is to destroy the independence of the single line by making it a member of an harmoniously-arranged group, a period or verse-paragraph. Through this a less monotonous rhythm becomes possible.

The variety of the pauses is much greater in the later than in the earlier plays. In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* there are comparatively few enjambements, and where there is a mid-line pause, it generally follows the second or third foot. In the later plays Shakespeare preferred to end a speech in the middle rather than at the end of a line. In our play, this is only done thirty-two times. In the matter of pauses, as in that of feminine rhythm, iii. 2. 177–343 and v. 1. 1–105 show signs of later work than the rest of the play.

In this and other early plays we get a special use of end-stopped lines, in which a rapid dialogue is carried on, by each speaker confining what he has to say within the limits of a single line. This is the *stichomuthia* of Greek tragedy, and, whether rhymed or unrhymed, has a lyrical antiphonic effect. See *e.g.* i. 1. 136–140, 194–201; ii. 2. 84–87.

§ 17. **Rhyme.**[1]—About a third of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is written in rhymed verse. This large proportion is no doubt due to the influence of the masque, a species of drama to which the play has many affinities (cf. Introduction, pp. 13, 18). More than one kind of rhymed verse is employed.

(i) The commonest is the *rhymed heroic*, composed, like blank verse, of decasyllable iambic lines, but with the last accented syllables rhyming. This is scattered about in single couplets and longer passages amongst the blank verse, and it is not always possible in this play, as it usually is with the far rarer rhymed verse of later plays, to assign a definite reason for its use in any given place. But it appears to be used—

(*a*) In single couplets to finish off a scene or speech, or section of a speech, of blank verse. Rhyme was used by Shakespeare for this purpose almost to the end of his career. Probably it pleased the actors, who liked an effective 'curtain', and it may even have served to call attention to the 'cues'.

[1] Cf. J. Heuser, *Der Coupletreim in Shakespeare's Dramen.* (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, vols. xxviii. p. 177; xxix.–xxx. p. 235.)

As examples, see v. 1. 104, 105; v. 1. 353, 354. Sometimes two or three successive couplets are so used.

(*b*) In markedly lyrical or emotional passages. Thus in act i. sc. 1, the entry of Helen, at l. 180, coincides with a change from blank verse to rhyme, and so with the more passionate love-scenes throughout.

(*c*) In epigrammatic or pointedly humorous passages, *e.g.* in Puck's witty description of Titania's plight (iii. 2. 6–40). In ii. 1. 268, Puck 'caps' a line of the interlude with a mocking rhyme. So Titania 'caps' herself in iii. 1. 181.

Heroic rhyme is generally arranged in couplets, but in this play we often get (1) triplets, (2) quatrains or alternate rhyme (*e.g.* iii. 1. 177–181; ii. 2. 35–40; iii. 2. 122–127), and (3) sextains or quatrains followed by clinching couplets (*e.g.* iii. 1. 82–87; iii. 2. 442–447). In iii. 1. 151–160 the same rhyme is repeated ten times.

Many of the variations described in §§ 7–16 occur also in heroic rhyme. Thus we have feminine rhymes; *e.g.*—

> Were the world mine, Demetrius being ba(ted),
> The rest I 'ld give to be to you transla(ted) (i. 1. 190, 191).

In three passages, all spoken by Puck, we get a couplet made up of a four-foot and a five-foot line; *e.g.*—

> I must | go seek | some dew | drops here
> And hang | a pearl | in ev | ery cows | lip's ear (ii. 1. 14, 15).

Cf. also ii. 1. 42, 43; iii. 2. 100, 101.

(ii) Much of the speech of the fairies, especially the enchantments, consists of short rhyming lines of various length, in a *trochaic* rhythm. Thus—

> O'ver | hill', | o'ver | dale',
> Thor'ough | bush', | thor'ough | brier',
> O'ver | park', | o'ver pale',
> Thor'ough | flood', | thor'ough | fire',
> I' do | wan'der | ev'ery | where',
> Swift'er | than' the | moon'ës | sphere';
> And' I | serve' the | fai'ry | queen',
> To dew' | her orbs' | upon' | the green'.
> The cows' | lips tall' | her pens' | ioners be':
> In' their | gold' coats | spots' you | see';
> Those' be | ru'bies | fai'ry | fa'vours,
> In' those | freck'les | live' their | sa'vours (ii. 1. 2–13).

This metre is specially used by Shakespeare (*e.g.* in *Macbeth*) for the speeches of supernatural beings. It should be noted that

(*a*) Iambic lines (*e.g.* ii. 1. 9, 10 above) are intermingled with the trochaic ones, for the sake of variety.

(*b*) The final trochee is often *catalectic*; that is, the unstressed syllable is wanting.

The trochaic metre is commonly a four-foot one. Puck's speech in iii. 2. 448–463 begins with one-foot, two-foot, and three-foot lines, and ends with a long doggerel line—

The man′ | shall have′ | his mare′ | again′, | and all′ | shall′ be | well′.

Such doggerel lines are common in the earliest comedies, but soon disappear.

(iii) When songs are introduced, as in ii. 2. 9–24; iii. 1. 114–122, they are of course in various rhymed lyric metres.

§ 18. **The Interlude.**—The metres of the interlude, introduced into act i. sc. 2, act iii. sc. 1, act v. sc. 1, require separate mention.

They are—

(i) Rhymed heroics, in couplets, quatrains, or sextains.

(ii) Two-foot and three-foot iambics (v. 1. 266–277, 285–296, 312–335).

(iii) Six-foot iambics (iii. 1. 82–85).

The latter two metres appear to be in parody of the cruder pre-Shakespearian tragedies. In the same spirit the heroic verse is made stiff and awkward. It is, of course, dramatically desirable to differentiate the style of the interlude from that of the rest of the play.

§ 19. **Prose.**[1]—Shakespeare uses prose in his earlier plays chiefly for comedy and for the dialogue of vulgar characters. Where prose and verse are mingled, it is generally to point a contrast between the persons speaking. Thus in iii. 1. 110–185, and in iv. 1. 43, Bottom speaks in prose, Titania in verse. The clowns speak throughout in prose, firstly because they are clowns, and secondly to provide a background for the interlude. For the sake of a similar background, even Theseus and the wedding company speak in prose in v. 1. 108–346, returning to the statelier blank verse when the Bergomask dance is over.

§ 20. **Metre as an Evidence of Date.**—Shakespeare's manner of writing was undergoing constant modification throughout his life, and therefore the evidence of style, and especially of metre, helps in some degree to determine the respective

[1] Cf. Delius, *Die Prose in Shakespeare's Dramen* (*Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, vol. v. p. 227).

dates of the plays. As has been pointed out from time to time in this essay, the metre of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* is that of an early play. As compared with the later ones, it has few contractions (§ 8), feminine rhythms (§ 13), or enjambements (§ 16). Lines of irregular length are rare (§§ 14, 15), and trisyllable feet are practically absent (§ 12 (iii)). The free use of rhyme (§ 17), which is generally a mark of early work, does not prove much here, because Shakespeare would probably at any time in his life have used rhyme in writing what is practically a masque. On the other hand, the comic doggerel, which marks the very earliest comedies, is absent.

Many attempts have been made to fix the dates of the plays more precisely on metrical grounds, by estimating the prevalence of particular metrical characteristics in each, in numerical terms. The figures thus obtained, and the tests based upon them, seem to me so very misleading, that I have not thought it worth while to give any of them here.[1]

[1] The student who wishes to pursue the matter may be referred to Kŏnig, *Der Vers in Shakspere's Dramen*, ch. vii., to H. Conrad's paper in the German Shakespeare Society's *Jahrbuch*, vol. xxxi., and to an essay by the Rev. F. G. Fleay in Ingleby's *Shakespeare, the Man and the Book*, part ii. (1881), which contains Mr. Fleay's latest speculations on the subject.