

## LXXIV.

## POETRY AND VERSIFICATION.

Poetry may properly be defined the language of the imagination. Its usual form is in verse,\* and it is sometimes, and indeed most generally, adorned with rhyme. But true poetry consists in the idea, not in the harmonious arrangement of words in sentences, nor in the division of a composition into lines containing a certain succession of long and short syllables.

Poetry † deals largely in figurative language, especially in tropes, metaphors, personifications, similes, and comparisons. It is also exceedingly partial to compound epithets, and new combinations employed for the purposes of illustration and description.

Versification is the art of making verses. A verse is a line consisting of a certain succession of long and short syllables. A hemistich is a half of a verse. A distich, or couplet, consists of two verses.

Metre ‡ is the measure by which verses are composed.

\* The word *verse* is frequently incorrectly used for *stanza*. A verse consists of a single line only. A stanza, sometimes called a *stave*, consists of a number of lines regularly adjusted to each other. The word *verse* is derived from the Latin language, and signifies a *turning*. The propriety of the name will be seen in the fact, that when we have finished a line we turn to the other side of the page to commence another.

† There are few words in the English language, the true signification of which is more frequently mistaken than the word Poetry. It is generally thought to consist in the harmonious arrangement of words in sentences, and the division of a composition into lines containing a certain succession of long or short syllables. This is a mistaking of the dress for the substance which the dress should cover. True poetry consists in the idea that it may be presented even in the form of prose. It addresses itself to the imagination and to the feelings. Thus the scriptural adage, "Love your enemies," although in prose, becomes highly poetical, when presented with the beautiful illustration of Menon: "Like the sandal tree which sheds a perfume on the axe which fells it, we should love our enemies." This distinction between the idea and the dress which it assumes, must be carefully noticed by all who aspire to poetical fame.

Perhaps there is in no language a more beautiful exhibition of poetical beauties in the form of prose, than in the beautiful tale called "The Epicurean," by Thomas Moore, Esq.

‡ It may perhaps be useful, although not properly connected with the subject of English versification, to explain what is meant in psalmody by

This measure depends on the number of the syllables and the position of the accents.

The divisions made in a verse to regulate the proper succession of long and short syllables are called *feet*. They are called feet, because the voice, as it were, *steps* along through the verse in a measured pace. The divisions of a verse into *feet* depend entirely upon what is called the *quantity* of the syllables, that is, whether they are *long* or *short*, without reference to the words.

Sometimes a foot consists of a single word, but it also sometimes embraces two or three different words, and sometimes is composed of parts of different words.

There are eight kinds of feet, four of which are feet of two syllables, and four are feet of three syllables.

The feet consisting of two syllables are the Trochee, the Iambus, the Spondee, and the Pyrrhic.

The feet of three syllables are the Dactyle, the Amphibrach, the Anapæst, and the Tribach.

The Trochee consists of one long and one short syllable; as, hâtefûl.

The Iambus consists of a short syllable and a long one; as, bêtrây

The Spondee consists of two long syllables; as, Pâle môrn.

The Pyrrhic consists of two short syllables; as, òn thê tall tree.

The Dactyle consists of one long syllable and two short ones; as, hôlî nêss, thûndêring.

The Amphibrach consists of a short, a long, and a short syllable; as, dêlightful, rêmovâl, cœvâl.

The Anapæst consists of two short syllables and one long one; as, côntrâvêne.

The Tribach consists of three short syllables; as, -rîtûâl in the word *spiritual*.

Of these eight different kinds of feet, the Iambus, the Trochee, the Anapæst, and the Dactyle are most frequently used, and verses may be wholly or chiefly composed of them. The others may be termed secondary feet, because their use is to diversify the harmony of the verse.

English verses may be divided into three classes, from the feet of which they are principally composed; namely, the Iambic, the Trochaic, and the Anapæstic. To these some authors add the Dactylic as a fourth division; but an attentive consideration of what is called the Dactylic verse will

*Long, Common, Short, and Particular metre.* When each line of a stanza has eight syllables, it is called *Long Metre*. When the first and third lines have eight syllables, and the second and fourth have six syllables, it is called *Common Metre*. When the third line has eight, and the rest have six syllables, it is called *Short Metre*. Stanzas in *Particular Metre* are of various kinds, and are not subject to definite rule.

show that it is nothing more than the Anapæstic, with the omission of the first two unaccented syllables.

Every species of English verse *regularly* terminates with an accented syllable; but every species also *admits* at the end an additional unaccented syllable, producing (if the verse be in rhyme) a double rhyme, that is, a rhyme extending to two syllables, as *the rhyme must always commence on the accented syllable*. This additional syllable often changes the character of the verse from grave to gay, from serious to jocose; but it does not affect the measure or rhyme of the preceding part of the verse. A verse thus lengthened is called hypermeter, or *over measure*.

Pure Iambic verses contain no other foot than the Iambus, and are uniformly accented on the *even* syllables.  
Trochaic verses are accented on the *odd* syllables.

There are seven forms of Iambic verse, named from the number of feet which they contain. The following line of fourteen syllables contains all the seven forms of pure Iambic verse.

1. How blithe when first from far I came to woo and win the maid.\*
2. When first from far I came to woo and win the maid.
3. From far I came to woo and win the maid.
4. I came to woo and win the maid.
5. To woo and win the maid.
6. And win the maid.
7. The maid.

The additional syllable *en* at the end of each line, to convert *maid* into *maiden*, will furnish seven *hypermeters*, and the line will thereby be made to exemplify fourteen different forms of the Iambic verse.†

Trochaic verse is in reality only defective Iambic; that is to say, Iambic wanting the first syllable.‡

The following line is an example of Trochaic verse:

Vital | spark of | heavenly | flame.§

\* This measure is sometimes broken into two lines, thus:

How blithe when first I came from far  
To woo and win the maid.

† The fifth form of Iambic verse, consisting of five Iambuses, is called the Heroic measure. The following lines exemplify it:

How loved, | how val | ied once | avails | thee not,  
To whom related, or by whom begot, &c.

The sixth form of Iambic verse is called the Alexandrine measure:

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,  
Which like | a wound | ed snake | drags its | slow length | along.

‡ See Carey's English Prosody, London edition of 1816. pp. 25 and 27

§ This line, scanned as Iambic, has a broken foot at the beginning:

Vi | tal spark | of heaven | ly flame.

Scanned as Trochaic, it has the broken foot at the end.

Anapæstic verse properly consists of anapæsts alone; as,

At the close | of the day | when the ham | let is still.

The first foot, however, in all the different forms of Anapæstic metre, may be a foot of two syllables, provided that the latter syllable of the foot be accented. Such are the Iambus and the Spondee. But the Pyrrhic and the Trochee, which have not the second syllable accented, are on that account inadmissible.\*

Different kinds of feet frequently occur in all the different kinds of verse. But it is not always that they can be exactly discriminated. Concerning the Trochee, the Spondee, and the Pyrrhic, there can be little doubt; but with respect to the Dactyle, the Anapæst, and the Tribach, the case is different;

Vital | spark of | heavenly | flame.

In like manner, if we cut off the first syllable from any form of the Iambic, we shall find that it may be scanned both ways, with the deficiency of a semi foot at the beginning of the end, according as we scan it in Iambuses or Trochees.

Thus, the line given as an exemplification of the Iambic metre, on the preceding page, if deprived in each form of its first syllable, becomes Trochaic:

<i>how</i> )	Blithe	when		first	from		far	I		came	to		woo	and		win	the		maid.
	<i>when</i> )	First	from		far	I		came	to		woo	and		win	the		maid.		
		<i>from</i> )	Far	I		came	to		woo	and		win	the		maid.				
						<i>I</i> )	Came	to		woo	and		win	the		maid.			
							<i>to</i> )	Woo	and		win	the		maid.					
											<i>and</i> )	Win	the		maid.				

And thus we see, that what we call Trochaics *regularly* terminate in an accented syllable, as is the case in every other form of English metre; though, like every other form, they also admit an additional unaccented syllable at the end, producing a double rhyme; so that by changing *maid* for *maiden* in each of the preceding lines, (as directed under Iambic verse,) we shall have twelve forms of Trochaic verse. But it may be remarked, that of the six regular forms of Trochaic verse, and the six hypermeter related to them, the first three in each class are very seldom used.

\* The following stanza is given by some authorities as an instance of Dactylic verse:

Höly and | pure are the | pleasures of | piety,  
Drawn from the | fountain of | mercy and | love;  
Endless, ex | haustless, ex | empt from sa | tiety,  
Rising in | earthly and | soaring a | bove.

An attentive consideration of these lines will show that they are legitimate Anapæstic lines with the omission of the first two unaccented syllables in each line. When scanned as Dactylic measure, the two unaccented syllables are omitted at the end of the even lines. By supplying the two unaccented syllables at the beginning of each line, they may thus be shown to be Anapæstic:

Oh how hö | ly and pure | are the pleas | ures of pi | ety  
As they're drawn | from the foun | tain of mer | cy and love, &c.

And thus it appears, that when scanned as Anapæstic they want the accented syllable at the end of the odd lines.



*Five Iambuses, or the Heroic measure.*

Be wise to-day, 't is madness to defer  
 How loved, how valued once, avails thee not,  
 To whom related, or by whom begot:  
 A heap of dust alone remains of thee,  
 'T is all thou art, and all the proud shall be.

*Six Iambuses, or the Alexandrine measure.*

For thou art but of dust; be humble and be wise.

(The latter of the two following is an Alexandrine.)

A needless Alexandrine ends the song,  
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.

*Seven Iambuses.*

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,  
 Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere.  
 The robin and the wren have flown, and from the shrub the jay,  
 And from the wood top caws\* the crow, through all the gloomy day.

This measure is sometimes broken into two lines, thus:

When all thy mercies, O my God!  
 My rising soul surveys,  
 Transported with the view, I'm lost  
 In wonder, love, and praise.

*Trochaic verse of one Trochee and a long syllable.*

Tumult cease  
 Sink to peace.  
 See him stride,  
 Valleys wide,  
 Over woods,  
 Over floods.

*Two Trochees.*

Rich the treasure,  
 Sweet the pleasure.  
 Soft denials  
 Are but trials.

\* This alteration in a line of one of the sweetest pieces of poetry ever written in any language, was suggested by the lamented Mr. Bailey, of the High School for Girls, in this city. In compiling "The Young Ladies' Class Book," he expressed a wish to the author to take this liberty, but he deemed it unwarrantable. The reading is adopted here as a beautiful exemplification of what is stated under Onomatopœia; and, indeed, when we consider how easily the printer might mistake in manuscript a *w* for a double *l*, it would not be surprising if it should hereafter appear that our gifted countryman originally wrote it *caws*, and not *calls*, as it is generally written.

*Two Trochees, with an additional long syllable.*

In the days of old  
 Fables plainly told.

*Three Trochees.*

Go where glory waits thee.

*Three Trochees, with an additional syllable.*

Restless mortals toil for nought;  
 Bliss in vain from earth is sought.

*Four Trochees.*

Round us wars the tempest louder.

*With an additional syllable.*

Idle after dinner in his chair.

*Five Trochees.*

All that walk on foot or ride in chariots.

*Six Trochees.*

On a mountain, stretched beneath a hoary willow.

*Anapestic verse consisting of one Anapest*

But in vain  
 They complain.\*

*Two Anapæsts.*

But his courage 'gan fail,  
 For no arts could avail.

*With an additional syllable.*

But his courage 'gan fail him,  
 For no arts could avail him.

*Three Anapæsts.*

I am monarch of all I survey,  
 My right there is none to dispute,  
 From the centre all round to the sea,  
 I am lord of the fowl and the brute.

*Four Anapæsts.*

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

*Hypermeter of four Anapæsts.*

On the warm cheek of youth, smiles and roses are blending.

VERSES IN WHICH THE SECONDARY FEET ARE ADMITTED TO GIVE  
 VARIETY TO THE MELODY.

The student will observe, by the marks on the vowels, what the secondary feet are, which are introduced in the following lines; the first foot is a spondee.

*Thêre sôon* the sufferer sinks to rest.  
*Thêre tōo* was he, who nobly stemmed the tide.  
 Thát bréast the seat of sentiment refined.  
 Hâil, lông lost Peace! hâil, dôve-eyed mâid divine

\* This measure is ambiguous, for by accenting the first and third syllables we may make it *Trochaic*.

A *Pyrrhic* occurs in the following.

If aught be welcome to our sylvan shed,  
Be it the traveller who has lost his way.  
I sought the beauties of the painted vale,  
The flowers I often watered with my tears.  
And loaded with my sighs the passing gale

*Spondees and Pyrrhics with Iambuses.*

Go pious offspring and restrain those tears;  
I fly to regions of eternal bliss.  
Heaven in your favor hears my dying prayers;  
Take my last blessing in this clay cold kiss.

A *Dactyl* with *Iambuses*.

Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night.

*Amphibrachs mixed with Iambuses.*

O'er many a frozen, many a fiery alp.

A *Spondee* and a *Tribrach*, with *Iambuses*.

Innumerable before th' Almighty throne.

It will thus be perceived, that by the mixture of different kinds of feet, all that variety is produced, which renders poetry agreeable to the ear. To constitute verse, it is not sufficient that a number of jarring syllables should be ranged in uncouth lines, with rhyme at the end. Order, regularity, symmetry, and harmony are requisite, while the taste and judgment of the poet are displayed by the proper mixture of accented and unaccented syllables to form an harmonious line.\*

The student, having now been made acquainted with the different kinds of verse, may be required to compose verses himself in all the different kinds of measure. As a first exercise in versification, he may be permitted to write words in verses *without regard to their signification*, making what may be called *nonsense* verses, as in the following

*Example.*

*Five foot Iambus or Heroic Verse.*

Thus man attempts some nobler end to scan.  
Bestrides the flood in horror at the plan.

\* The harmony of a verse may sometimes be utterly destroyed by the displacing of a single monosyllable; thus,

"Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,  
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,  
Whose conscience is with injustice corrupted."

In this extract, the measure of the third line is utterly destroyed by the displacing of the word *is*. It should be,

"Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted."

*Trochaic.*

Boiling in the troubled sea.  
Full of mirthful hope to be.

*Anapaestic.*

From the brow of the hill see the hermit appear,  
And with joy in his face mark the waters so clear, &c.

*Exercises.*

Having previously attempted to form verses in all the different sorts of measure that have been described, with words without reference to sense, the student may arrange the following lines in regular order. The lines themselves contain all the words necessary both for the harmonious construction and the expression of the sense. The order of them is, however, disturbed, as will be seen by the following

*Example.*

Adieu to the woodlands, where, gay and sportive,  
The cattle play so frolicsome, light bounding.  
Adieu to the woodlands where I have roved oft,  
And, with the friend that I loved, conversed so sweetly

*Same words properly arranged.*

Adieu to the woodlands, where, sportive and gay,  
The cattle light bounding so frolicsome play.  
Adieu to the woodlands where oft I have roved,  
And sweetly conversed with the friend I have loved.

*Exercises.*

*Verses to be arranged by the Student in Anapaestic\* lines of four feet*

Content and joy are now fled from our dwellings,  
And, instead, disease and want are our inmates.

\* Dr. Carey, in his English Prosody, says, "If, like Tertæus of old, I had to awake dormant valor with the voice of song, I would in preference to every other form of English metre, choose the Anapaestic, of four feet in couplets, which, if well written, in real anapaests, unincumbered with an undue weight of heavy syllables, and judiciously aided by appropriate music, could hardly fail to martialize even shivering cowards, and warm them into heroes; the brisk, animating march of the verse having the same effect on the soul, as the body experiences from the quick, lively step, which, by accelerating the circulation of the blood, at once warms and dilates the heart, and renders the warrior more prompt to deeds of prowess." If any one would test the justness of Dr. Carey's opinion, as thus expressed, his doubts will be resolved by the perusal of Campbell's beautiful piece, entitled "Lochiel's Warning."

Now chivalry is dead, and Gallia ruined,  
And the glory of Europe is fled for ever.

'Tis woman, whose charms impart every rapture,  
And to the pulse of the heart add a soft spring.  
Her sway is so supreme, the miser himself  
Resigns her his key, and to love grows a convert.  
Sorrow lifts up his head at the sound of her voice  
And, from his shed, Poverty well pleased listens.  
Even age, hobbling along, in an ecstasy  
Beats time to the tune of her song with her crutch.

How sweet is the thought of to-morrow to the heart,  
When Hope's fairy pictures display bright colors,  
How sweet when we can borrow from futurity  
A balm for the griefs that to-day afflict us.

*To be made into Iambic verses with four feet.*

And while I feel thy gracious gifts  
My song shall reveal all thy praise.

The search shall teach thee to prize life,  
And make thee good, wise, and grateful.

With ease you wear a thousand shapes,  
And still you please in every shape.

Neither wealth I pursue, nor power,  
Nor hold in view forbidden joys.

The prudent nymph, whose cheeks disclose  
The blushing rose and the lily,  
Will screen her charms from public view,  
And rarely be seen in the crowd.

*Iambic verses of five feet, or the Heroic \* measure.*

As Orpheus tunes his song in Thracian wilds,  
The raptured beasts throng around him in crowds.

Seek not thou to find, with vain endeavor,  
Of Almighty mind the secret counsels;  
The great decree lies involved in darkness;  
Nor can the depths of fate by thee be pierced.

O could some poet rise, bold in wisdom,  
And unfold half thy beauties to the world,  
Roving on fancy's wing, impart thy fire,  
And feel thy genius beaming on his heart, —  
I'd wish humbly, though the wish would be vain,  
That on me some small portion might alight.

\* This is the principal metre of our language, and it is happily adapted to every kind of subject, from the most exalted to the most humble and familiar, and it may be used with or without rhyme.

*Trochaic verses.*

Where spreads the rising forest,  
For the lordly dome shelter,  
To their airy beds high built,  
See returning home the rooks.

Now battle glows with fury  
In torrents flows hostile blood.

Here you 'll find mental pleasures,  
Pleasures that the mind adorn.  
The joys of sense are transient,  
They dispense no solid bliss.

The shepherd dines by the brook  
Heat the fierce meridian from  
By the branching pines sheltered  
O'er his grassy seat pendent.

But from stream, dell, or mountain  
Springs not a fluttering zephyr,  
Lest the noontide beam, fearful  
His silken, his soft wings scorch.

RHYME.

Rhyme is a similarity, or agreement, in the sound of final syllables.

Verse without rhyme is called *blank verse*.\*

It is a general rule in poetry, with regard to rhymes, that they should begin on the accented syllable.

In the forming of verses with rhyme, it is a good rule to let the weaker line stand first.†

\* Rhyme is by no means to be considered as an essential constituent in English poetry. Much poetry has been written, and that, too, of the choicest description, in which rhyme has no part. The poetry of Milton, Shakspeare, Thomson, Young, and a host of others, whose writings have contributed so much to the literature of the language, seldom admits this "meretricious" ornament, as it has been called. But it has been said, that, although, in the five feet iambic measure, the measured dignity of the verse supplies the place of rhyme, in the other forms of English versification it is absolutely essential. Whoever will be at the pains to convince himself that this is an erroneous opinion, may easily do so by the perusal of the works of Dr. Southey, especially, his "Thalaba, or the Destroyer."

† The student, in his first attempts at versification, should be cautioned against the injudicious use of *expletives*. An expletive is a word introduced merely to fill out the line, while it not only contributes nothing to the sense, but absolutely weakens it. Pope, in his Essay on Criticism, exemplifies, while he condemns this fault.

"While expletives their feeble aid do join,  
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line."

