

THOMAS JEFFERSON

WRITINGS

Autobiography

A Summary View of the Rights of British America

Notes on the State of Virginia

Public Papers

Addresses, Messages, and Replies

Miscellany

Letters

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son were present to make the proposition they had meditated; from which people, who do not give themselves the trouble to reflect or enquire, might conclude hastily that their absence was the cause why the proposition was not made; & of course that there were not in the assembly persons of virtue & firmness enough to propose the clause for emancipation. This supposition would not be true. There were persons there who wanted neither the virtue to propose, nor talents to enforce the proposition had they seen that the disposition of the legislature was ripe for it. These worthy characters would feel themselves wounded, degraded, & discouraged by this idea. Mr. Jefferson would therefore be obliged to M. de Meusnier to mention it in some such manner as this. "Of the two commissioners who had concerted the amendatory clause for the gradual emancipation of slaves Mr. Wythe could not be present as being a member of the judiciary department, and Mr. Jefferson was absent on the legation to France. But there wanted not in that assembly men of virtue enough to propose, & talents to vindicate this clause. But they saw that the moment of doing it with success was not yet arrived, and that an unsuccessful effort, as too often happens, would only rivet still closer the chains of bondage, and retard the moment of delivery to this oppressed description of men. What a stupendous, what an incomprehensible machine is man! who can endure toil, famine, stripes, imprisonment & death itself in vindication of his own liberty, and the next moment be deaf to all those motives whose power supported him thro' his trial, and inflict on his fellow men a bondage, one hour of which is fraught with more misery than ages of that which he rose in rebellion to oppose. But we must await with patience the workings of an overruling providence, & hope that that is preparing the deliverance of these, our suffering brethren. When the measure of their tears shall be full, when their groans shall have involved heaven itself in darkness, doubtless a god of justice will awaken to their distress, and by diffusing light & liberality among their oppressors, or at length by his exterminating thunder, manifest his attention to the things of this world, and that they are not left to the guidance of a blind fatality."

Thoughts on English Prosody

TO CHASTELLUX

October 1786

Among the topics of conversation which stole off like so many minutes the few hours I had the happiness of possessing you at Monticello, the measures of English verse was one. I thought it depended like Greek and Latin verse, on long and short syllables arranged into regular feet. You were of a different opinion. I did not pursue this subject after your departure, because it always presented itself with the painful recollection of a pleasure which in all human probability I was never to enjoy again. This probability like other human calculations has been set aside by events; and we have again discussed on this side the Atlantic a subject which had occupied us during some pleasing moments on the other. A daily habit of walking in the Bois de Boulogne gave me an opportunity of turning this subject in my mind and I determined to present you my thoughts on it in the form of a letter. I for some time parried the difficulties which assailed me, but at length I found they were not to be opposed, and their triumph was complete. Error is the stuff of which the web of life is woven and he who lives longest and wisest is only able to weave out the more of it. I began with the design of converting you to my opinion that the arrangement of long and short syllables into regular feet constituted the harmony of English verse. I ended by discovering that you were right in denying that proposition. The next object was to find out the real circumstance which gives harmony to English poetry and laws to those who make it. I present you with the result. It is a tribute due to your friendship. It is due you also as having recalled me from an error in my native tongue and that, too, in a point the most difficult of all others to a foreigner, the law of its poetical numbers.

Thoughts on English Prosody (1786)

Every one knows the difference between verse and prose in his native language; nor does he need the aid of prosody to enable him to read or to repeat verse according to its just rhythm. It is the business of the poet so to arrange his words as that, repeated in their accustomed measures they shall strike the ear with that regular rhythm which constitutes verse.

It is for foreigners principally that Prosody is necessary; not knowing the accustomed measures of words, they require the aid of rules to teach them those measures and to enable them to read verse so as to make themselves or others sensible of its music. I suppose that the system of rules or exceptions which constitutes Greek and Latin prosody, as shown with us, was unknown to those nations, and that it has been invented by the moderns to whom those languages were foreign. I do not mean to affirm this, however, because you have not searched into the history of this art, nor am I at present in a situation which admits of that search. By industrious examination of the Greek and Latin verse it has been found that pronouncing certain combinations of vowels and consonants long, and certain others short, the actual arrangement of those long and short syllables, as found in their verse, constitutes a rhythm which is regular and pleasing to the ear, and that pronouncing them with any other measures, the run is displeasing, and ceases to produce the effect of the verse. Hence it is concluded and rationally enough that the Greeks and Romans pronounced those syllables long or short in reading their verse; and as we observe in modern languages that the syllables of words have the same measures both in verse and prose, we ought to conclude that they had the same also in those ancient languages, and that we must lengthen or shorten in their prose the same syllables which we lengthen or shorten in their verse. Thus, if I meet with the word *præteritos* in Latin prose and want to know how the Romans pronounced it, I search for it in some poet and find it in the line of Virgil, "*O mihi præteritos referat si Jupiter annos!*" where it is evident that *præ* is long and *te* short in direct opposition to the pronunciation which we often hear. The length al-

lowed to a syllable is called its quantity, and hence we say that the Greek and Latin languages are to be pronounced according to quantity.

Those who have undertaken to frame a prosody for the English language have taken quantity for their basis and have mounted the English poetry on Greek and Latin feet. If this foundation admits of no question, the prosody of Doctor Johnson, built upon it, is perhaps the best. He comprehends under three different feet every combination of long and short syllables which he supposes can be found in English verse, to wit: 1. a long and a short, which is the trochee of the Greeks and Romans; 2. a short and a long, which is their iambus; and 3. two short and a long, which is their anapest. And he thinks that all English verse may be resolved into these feet.

It is true that in the English language some one syllable of a word is always sensibly distinguished from the others by an emphasis of pronunciation or by an accent as we call it. But I am not satisfied whether this accented syllable be pronounced longer, louder, or harder, and the others shorter, lower, or softer. I have found the nicest ears divided on the question. Thus in the word *calenture*, nobody will deny that the first syllable is pronounced more emphatically than the others; but many will deny that it is longer in pronunciation. In the second of the following verses of Pope, I think there are but two short syllables.

Oh! be thou bless'd with all that Heav'n can send
Long health, long youth, long pleasure, and a friend.

Innumerable instances like this might be produced. It seems, therefore, too much to take for the basis of a system a postulatium which one-half of mankind will deny. But the superstructure of Doctor Johnson's prosody may still be supported by substituting for its basis accent instead of quantity; and nobody will deny us the existence of accent.

In every word of more than one syllable there is some one syllable strongly distinguishable in pronunciation by its emphasis or accent.

If a word has more than two syllables it generally admits of a subordinate emphasis or accent on the alternate syllables

counting backwards and forwards from the principal one, as in this verse of Milton:

Well if thrown out as supernumerary,

where the principal accent is on *nu*, but there is a lighter one on *su* and *ra* also. There are some few instances indeed wherein the subordinate accent is differently arranged, as *pari-syllabic*, *Constantinople*. It is difficult, therefore, to introduce words of this kind into verse.

That the accent shall never be displaced from the syllable whereon usage hath established it is the fundamental law of English verse.

There are but three arrangements into which these accents can be thrown in the English language which entitled the composition to be distinguished by the name of verse. That is, 1. Where the accent falls on all the odd syllables; 2. Where it falls on all the even syllables; 3. When it falls on every third syllable. If the reason of this be asked, no other can be assigned but that it results from the nature of the sounds which compose the English language and from the construction of the human ear. So, in the infinite gradations of sounds from the lowest to the highest in the musical scale, those only give pleasure to the ear which are at the intervals we call whole tones and semitones. The reason is that it has pleased God to make us so. The English poet then must so arrange his words that their established accents shall fall regularly in one of these three orders. To aid him in this he has at his command the whole army of monosyllables which in the English language is a very numerous one. These he may accent or not, as he pleases. Thus is this verse:

'Tis just resentment and becomes the brave.

—POPE

the monosyllable *and* standing between two unaccented syllables catches the accent and supports the measure. The same monosyllable serves to fill the interval between two accents in the following instance:

From úse obsúre and súbtle, bút to knów.

—MILTON

The monosyllables *with* and *in* receive the accent in one of the following instances and suffer it to pass over them in the other.

The témp^ted *with* dishónor fówl, suppósed.

—MILTON

Attémp^t *with* cónfidénce, the wórk is dóne.

—HOPKINS

Which múst be mútual *in* propórtion dúe.

—MILTON

Too múch of órnamént *in* óútward shéw.

—MILTON

The following lines afford other proofs of this license.

Yet, yét, I lóve—from Abelard it came.

—POPE

Flow, flow, my stream this devious way.

—SHENSTONE

The Greeks and Romans in like manner had a number of syllables which might in any situation be pronounced long or short without offending the ear. They had others which they could make long or short by changing their position. These were of great avail to the poets. The following is an example:

Πολλάκις ὦ πολυφάμε, τὰ | μη καλὰ | καλὰ πε | φανλαί.

—THEOCRITUS

Ἄγες, Ἄγες βροτολοιγέ, μαι φόνε τει χεσιπλητα.

—HOM. IL.

Μετσα δε τεμ' χε θεοισι, το | υδ μετρον | εστιν ἀγίσον.

—PHOCYL.

where the word Ages, being used twice, the first syllable is

long in the first and short in the second instance, and the second is short in the first and long in the second instance.

But though the poets have great authority over the monosyllables, yet it is not altogether absolute. The following is a proof of this:

Through the dárk póstern óf time lóng cláps'd.
—YOUNG

It is impossible to read this without throwing the accent on the monosyllable *of* and yet the ear is shocked and revolts at this.

That species of our verse wherein the accent falls on all the odd syllables, I shall call, from that circumstance, odd or imparisyllabic verse. It is what has been heretofore called trochaic verse. To the foot which composes it, it will still be convenient and most intelligible to retain the ancient name of Trochee, only remembering that by that term we do not mean a long and a short syllable, but an accented and unaccented one.

That verse wherein the accent is on the even syllables may be called even or parisyllabic verse, and corresponds with what has been called iambic verse; retaining the term iambus for the name of the foot we shall thereby mean an unaccented and an accented syllable.

That verse wherein the accent falls on every third syllable, may be called trisyllabic verse; it is equivalent to what has been called anapestic; and we will still use the term anapest to express two unaccented and one accented syllable.

Accent then is, I think, the basis of English verse; and it leads us to the same threefold distribution of it to which the hypothesis of *quantity* had led Dr. Johnson. While it preserves to us the simplicity of his classification it relieves us from the doubtfulness, if not the error, on which it was founded.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE THREE MEASURES.

Wherever a verse should regularly begin or end with an accented syllable, that unaccented syllable may be suppressed.

Bréd on plaíns, or bórn in válleys,
Whó would bíd those scénes adiéu?
Stránger tó the arts of málice,
Whó would éver courts pursúe?

—SHENSTONE

Rúin séize thée, rúthléss kíng!
Confúsióin on thy bánners wáit;
Though, fánned by Cónquest's crímson wíng,
They móck the aír with idlé státe.
Hélm, nor haúlberk's twísted máil,
Nor év'n thy vírtues, Týrant, sháll aváil
To sáve thy sécret sóul from níghtly féars.
From Cámbría's cúrse, from Cámbría's téars!

—GRAY

Ÿe Shép | herds! give éár | to my láy,
And take no more heéd of my shéep;
They have nóthing to dó but to stráy;
I have nóthing to dó but to wéep.

—SHENSTONE

In the first example the unaccented syllable with which the imparisyllabic (odd) verse should end is omitted in the second and fourth lines. In the second example the unaccented syllable with which the parisyllabic (even) verse should begin is omitted in the first and fifth lines. In the third instance one of the unaccented syllables with which the trisyllabic (triple) verse should begin, is omitted in the first and second lines and in the first of the following line both are omitted:

Uínder this márble, or uínder this síll
Or uínder this túrf, or é'en what you wíll
Lies one who ne'er car'd, and still cares not a pin
What they said, or may say, of the mortal within;
But who, living or dying, serene still and free,
Trusts in God that as well as he was he shall be.

—POPE

An accented syllable may be prefixed to a verse which should regularly begin with an accent and added to one which should end with an accent, thus:

1. Dauntless ón his nátive sánds
The drágon-soñ of Moña stánds;
In glittering aríms and glóry drést,
 High he réars his rúby crést.
 Thére the thúndering strókes begín,
 Thére the préss, and thére the díñ;
 Talymalfra's rocky shore

—GRAY

Again:

Thére Confúsió, Térror's child,
 Cónflict fíerce, and Rúin wíld,
 Ágoný, that pánts for bréath,
 Despaír, and hónoráble death.

—GRAY

2. What is this world? thy schóol Oh! míserý!
 Our ónly léssoñ is to léarn to súffer;
 And hé who knows not thát, was bórn for nóthing.
 My cómfort is each móment tákes away
 A gráin at léast fróm the dead lóad thát's ón me
 And gíves a néarer próspect óf the gráve.

—YOUNG

3. Says Ríchard to Thómas (and seém'd half affráid),
 "I'm thínking to márry thy místress's máid;
 Now, because Mrs. Lucý to thee is well known,
 I will dó't if thou bídst me, or lét it alóne."
 Said Thomás to Ríchard, "To speák my opíníon,
 There is nó such a bítch in King Géorge's domínion;
 And I fírmlý belíeve, if thou knéw'st her as I do,
 Thou wóuldst choóse out a whípping-post fírst to be
 tíed to.
 She's peevísh, she's thíevísh, she's úgly, she's old,
 And a líar, and a foól, and a slút, and a scóld."

Next dáy Ríchard hásten'd to chúrch and was wéd,
 And ere níght had ínform'd her what Thómas had sáid.

—SHENSTONE

An accented syllable can never be either omitted or added without changing the character of the verse. In fact it is the number of accented syllables which determines the length of the verse. That is to say, the number of feet of which it consists.

Imparisyllabic verse being made up of Trochees should regularly end with an unaccented syllable; and in that case if it be in rhyme both syllables of the foot must be rhymed. But most frequently the unaccented syllable is omitted according to the license before mentioned and then it suffices to rhyme the accented one. The following is given as a specimen of this kind of verse.

Shépherd, wóuldst thou hére obtáin
 Pléasure unálloy'd with páin?
 Jóy thát súits the rúral sphére?
 Géntle shépherd, lénd an éar.

Léarn to rélish cálm delíght
 Vérdant váles and fóuntains bríght;
 Treés thát nóð o'er slóping hílls,
 Cavés thát écho tínkling rílls.

Íf thou cánst no chárm dísclose
 Ín the símplest búd thát blóws;
 Gó, forsake thy pláin and fóld;
 Joín the crówd, and toil for góld.

Tránquil pleásures néver clóy;
 Bánish éach tumúltuous jóy;
 All but lóve—for lóve ínspíres
 Fónder wíshes, wármér fíres

Sée, to sweeten thy repose,
 The blóssom buds, the fóuntain flows;

Ló! to crown thy healthful board,
All that milk and fruits afford.

Séek no more—the rest is vain;
Pléasure ending soon in pain:
Añguish lightly gilded o'er;
Close thy wish, and seek no more.

—SHENSTONE

Parisyllabic verse should regularly be composed of all iam-buses; that is to say, all its even syllables should be accented. Yet it is very common for the first foot of the line to be a trochee as in this verse:

Yé who e'er lóst an añgel, pity mé!

Sometimes a trochee is found in the midst of this verse. But this is extremely rare indeed. The following, however, are instances of it taken from Milton.

To dó ought góod *néver* will bé our tásk
Behésts obéy, *wórtthiest* to bé obéyed.

Than sélf-esteém, *gróounded* on júst and ríght
Leans the huge elephant the *wísest* of brutes!

In these instances it has not a good effect, but in the follow-ing it has:

This hánd is míne—*óh!* *what* a hánd is hére!
So soft, souls sink into it and are lost.

When this trochee is placed at the beginning of a verse, if it be not too often repeated it produces a variety in the measure which is pleasing. The following is a specimen of the parisyl-labic verse, wherein the instances of this trochee beginning the verse are noted:

Píty the sórrors óf a poór old mán,
Whose tremblíng límbhs have bórne him tó your doór.

Whóse dáys are dwindled tó the shórttest span;
Oh! *give* reliéf, and Heáven will bléss your stóre.

These tattered clóthes my póvertý bespéák,
These hoáry loéks próclaim my léngthen'd yéars
And mañy a fúrrów ín my griéf-worn chéek
Has béen the chánnel to a flóod of téars.

Yon hóuse, érected ón the rísing gróund,
With temptíng áspect, dréw me fróm my róad;
For pléntry thére a résidénce has fóund,
And grándeúr á magníficént abóde.

Hárd is the fáte of thé infírm and póor!
Here, as I craved a mórsel of their bréad,
A pamper'd ménial drove me fróm the doór,
To séek a shéltér ín an húmblér shéd.

Oh! *take* me tó your hóspítáble dóme;
Keén *blows* the wínd, and píercing is the cóld;
Shórt is my pássage tó the fríendly tómb,
For I am poór, and míseráblý óld.

Heáven sènds mísfórtunes; wý why should wé repíne!
Tis Heáven has bróught me tó the státe you sée;
And yóur condítion máy be sóon like míne,
The chíld of sórrów and of míserý.

—MOSS

Trisyllabic verse consists altogether of anapests, that is, of feet made up of two unaccented and one accented syllable; and it does not admit a mixture of any other feet. The follow-ing is a specimen of this kind of verse:

I have fóund out a gift for my fair;
I have fóund where the wóod-pigeons bréed;
But lét me that plúnder forbéar,
She will sáy 'twas a bárbarous déed:

For he né'er could be trúe, she averr'd,
Who could rób a poor bírd of its yóung;

And I lovéd her the móre when I héárd
Such tenderness fall from her toungue.

—SHENSTONE

The following are instances of an iambus in an anapestic verse:

Or únder this túrf, or ev'ń what they wíll.

—POPE

It néver was knówn that círcular létters.

—SWIFT

They are extremely rare and are deformities, which cannot be admitted to belong to the verse, notwithstanding the authority of the writers from whom they are quoted. Indeed, the pieces from which they are taken are merely pieces of sport on which they did not mean to rest their poetical merit.

But to what class shall we give the following species of verse? "God save great Washington." It is triple verse, but the accent is on the first syllable of the foot instead of the third. Is this an attempt at dactylic verse? or shall we consider it still as anapestic, wherein either the two unaccented syllables which should begin the verse are omitted; or else the two which should end it are, in reciting, transposed to the next verse to complete the first anapest of that, as in Virgil in the following instance, the last syllable of the line belongs to the next, being amalgamated with that into one.

I am not able to recollect another instance of this kind of verse and a single example cannot form a class. It is not worth while, therefore, to provide a foreigner with a critical investigation of its character.

OF ELISION.

The vowels only suffer elision except that "v" is also omitted in the word over and "w" in will, "h" in have. This is actually made in most cases, as it was with the Greeks. Sometimes, however, it is neglected to be done, and in those cases the reader must make it for himself, as in the following examples:

Thou yet *mightest* act the friendly part
And lass *unnoticed* from malignant right
And *fallen* to save his injur'd land
Impatient for *it is* past the promis'd hour.

He *also against* the house of God was bold
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow *and* pain
Of Phlegma with *the* heroic race was joined
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond
All her *original* brightness, nor appear'd
Open or understood must be resolv'd.

OF SYNECPHONESIS.

Diphthongs are considered as forming one syllable. But vowels belonging to different syllables are sometimes forced to coalesce into a diphthong if the measure requires it. Nor is this coalescence prevented by the intervention of an "h," a "w" or a liquid. In this case the two syllables are run into one another with such rapidity as to take but the time of one.

The following are examples:

And wish *the avenging* fight
Be it so, for I submit, his doom is fair.
When wint'ry winds deform the plenteous year
Droop'd their fair leaves, nor knew *the unfriendly* soil
The *radiant* morn resumed her orient pride
While born to bring the Muse's happier days
A patriot's hand protects a poet's lays
Ye midnight lamps, ye *curious* homes
That eagle *genius!* had he let fall—

Fair fancy wept; and *echoing* sighs confest
The sounding forest *fluctuates* in the storm
Thy greatest *influence* own
Issueing from out the portals of the morn
What groves nor streams bestow a *virtuous* mind
With many *a* proof of recollected love.
With kind concern our *pitying* eyes o'erflow
Lies yet a little *embryo* unperceiv'd—

Now Margaret's curse is fall'n upon our heads
 And *even a* Shakespeare to her fame be born
 When *mineral* fountains vainly bear
 O how self-fettered was my *groveling* soul!
 To *every* sod which wraps the dead
 And beam protection on a *wandering* maid
 Him or his children, *evil he* may be sure
 Love *unlibidinous* resigned, nor jealousy
 And left to *herself*, if evil thence ensue.
 Big swell'd my heart and own'd the *powerful* maid
 Proceeding, runs low *bellowing* round the hills
 Thy cherishing, thy *honouring*, and thy love
 With all its *shadowy* shapes is shown
 The shepherd's so civil *you have* nothing to fear.

The elision of a vowel is often actually made where the coalescence before noted be more musical. Perhaps a vowel should never suffer elision when it is followed by a vowel or where only an "h," a "w" or a liquid intervenes between that and a next vowel, or in other words there should never be an elision where synecphonesis may take place. Consider the following instances:

Full of the dear ecstatic pow'r, and sick
 Dare not th' infectious sigh; thy pleading look
 While ev'ning draws her crimson curtains round
 And fright the tim'rous game
 Fills ev'ry nerve, and pants in ev'ry vein.

Full of the dear ecstatic power, and sick
 Dare not the infectious sigh; thy pleading look
 While evening draws her crimson curtains round
 And fright the timorous game
 Fills every nerve, and pants in every vein.

The pronunciation in these instances with the actual elision is less agreeable to my ear than by synecphonesis.

OF RULES FOR THE ACCENT.

Accent deciding the measure of English verse as quantity does that of the Latin, and rules having been formed for

teaching the quantity of the Latins it would be expected that rules should also be offered for indicating to foreigners the accented syllable of every word in English. Such rules have been attempted. Were they to be so completely formed as that the rules and their necessary exceptions would reach every word in the language, they would be too great a charge on the memory and too complicated for use either in reading or conversation. In the imperfect manner in which they have been hitherto proposed they would lead into infinite errors. It is usage which has established the accent of every word, or rather I might say it has been caprice or chance, for nothing can be more arbitrary or less consistent. I am of opinion it is easier for a foreigner to learn the accent of every word individually, than the rules which would teach it. This his dictionary will teach him, if, when he recurs to it for the meaning of a word, he will recollect that he should notice also on which syllable is its accent. Or he may learn the accent by reading poetry, which differs our language from Greek and Latin, wherein you must learn their prosody in order to read their poetry. Knowing that with us the accent is on every odd syllable or on every even one or on every third, he has only to examine of which of these measures the verse is to be able to read it correctly. But how shall he distinguish the measure to which the verse belongs?

If he can find in the piece any one word the accent of which he already knows, that word will enable him to distinguish if it be parisyllabic or imparisyllabic. Let us suppose, for example, he would read the following piece:

How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
 By all their country's wishes blest!
 When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,
 Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
 She there shall dress a *sweeter* sod
 Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung;
 By forms unseen their dirge is sung;
 There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
 To bless the turf that wraps their clay;

And Freedom shall a while repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

—COLLINS

He finds the word *sweeter*, the accent of which he has already learned to be on the first syllable, sweet. He observes that that is an even syllable, being the sixth of the line. He knows then that it is parisyllabic verse and from that he can accent the whole piece. If he does not already know the accent of a single word he must look in his dictionary for some one, and that will be a key to the whole piece. He should take care not to rely on the first foot of any line, because, as has been before observed, that is often a trochee even in the parisyllabic verse. Without consulting his dictionary at all, or knowing a single accent, the following observation will enable him to distinguish between these two species of verse when they are in rhyme. An odd number of syllables with a single rhyme, or an even number with a double rhyme, prove the verse to be imparisyllabic. An even number of syllables with a single rhyme, or an odd number with a double one, prove it to be parisyllabic, *e. g.*:

Learn by this unguarded lover
When your secret sighs prevail
Not to let your tongue discover
Raptures that you should conceal.

—CUNNINGHAM

He sung and hell consented
To hear the poet's prayer
Stern Proserpine relented
And gave him back the fair.

—POPE

If in thus examining the seat of the accent he finds it is alternately on an odd and an even syllable, that is to say, on the third, sixth, ninth, twelfth syllables, the verse is trisyllabic.

With her how I stray'd amid fountains and bowers!
Or loiter'd behind, and collected the flowers!

Then breathless with ardor my fair one pursued,
And to think with what kindness my garland she view'd!
But be still, my fond heart! this emotion give o'er;
Fain wouldst thou forgêth thou must love her no more.

—SHENSTONE

It must be stated that in this kind of verse we should count backward from the last syllable, if it be a single rhyme, or the last but one if it be double; because one of the unaccented syllables which should begin the verse is so often omitted. This last syllable in the preceding example should be the twelfth. When the line is full it is accented of course. Consulting the dictionary, therefore, we find in the first line the ninth syllable accented; in the second, the sixth; in the third line the accented syllables there being alternately odd and even, to wit, the third, sixth, ninth and twelfth, we know the verse must be trisyllabic.

The foreigner then first determining the measure of the verse, may read it boldly. He will commit a few errors, indeed; let us see what they are likely to be. In imparisyllabic verse none, because that consists of trochees invariably; if an unaccented syllable happens to be prefixed to the verse, he will discover it by the number of syllables. In parisyllabic verse, when a trochee begins the verse, he will pronounce that foot wrong. This will perhaps happen once in ten lines; in some authors more, in others less. In like manner he will pronounce wrong the trochee in the middle of the line. But this he will encounter once in some hundreds of times. In the trisyllabic verse he can never commit an error if he counts from the end of the line. These imperfections are as few as a foreigner can possibly expect in the beginning; and he will reduce their number in proportion as he acquires by practice a knowledge of the accents.

The subject of accent cannot be quitted till we apprise him of another imperfection which will show itself in his reading, and which will be longer removing. Though there be accents on the first, the second or the third syllables of the foot, as has been before explained, yet is there subordination among these accents, a modulation in their tone of which it is impossible to give a precise idea in writing. This is intimately

connected with the sense; and though a foreigner will readily find to what words that would give distinguished emphasis, yet nothing but habit can enable him to give actually the different shades of emphasis which his judgment would dictate to him. Even natives have very different powers as to this article. This difference exists both in the organ and the judgment. Foote is known to have read Milton so exquisitely that he received great sums of money for reading him to audiences who attended him regularly for that purpose. This difference, too, enters deeply into the merit of theatrical actors. The foreigner, therefore, must acquiesce under a want of perfection which is the lot of natives in common with himself.

We will proceed to give examples which may explain what is here meant, distinguishing the accents into four shades by these marks ' ' ' ' the greater number of marks denoting the strongest accents.

Oh when the growling winds contend and all
The sounding forest fluctuates in the storm
To sink in warm repose, and hear the din
Howl o'er the steady battlements, delights
Above the luxury of vulgar sleep.

—ARMSTRONG

Life's cares are comforts; such by heav'n design'd
He that has none, must make them or be wretched
Cares are employments; and without employ
The soul is on a rack, the rack of rest.

—YOUNG

O! lost to virtue, lost to manly thought,
Lost to the noble sallies of the soul!
Who think it solitude, to be alone.
Communion sweet! communion large and high!
Our reason, guardian angel, and our God!
Then nearest these, when others most remote;
And all, ere long, shall be remote, but these.

—YOUNG

By nature's law, what may be, may be now;
There's no prerogative in human hours.
In human hearts what bolder thought can rise,
Than man's presumption on to-morrow's dawn?
Where is to-morrow? In another world.
For numbers this is certain; the reverse
Is sure to none; and yet on this perhaps,
This peradventure, infamous for lies,
As on a rock of adamant, we build
Our mountain hopes; spin out eternal schemes.
As we the fatal sisters could outspin,
And, big with life's futurities, expire.

—YOUNG

Cowards die many times before their deaths:
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear,
Seeing that death, a necessary end,
Will come when it will come.

I cannot tell what you and other men
Think of this life, but for my single self,
I had as lief not be as live to be
In awe of such a thing as I myself.
I was born free as Cæsar, so were you;
We both have fed as well, and we can both
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.

The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.

I am far from presuming to give this accentuation as perfect. No two persons will accent the same passage alike. No person but a real adept would accent it twice alike. Perhaps two real adepts who should utter the same passage with infinite perfection yet by throwing the energy into different

words might produce very different effects. I suppose that in those passages of Shakespeare, for example, no man but Garrick ever drew their full tone out of them, if I may borrow an expression from music. Let those who are disposed to criticise, therefore, try a few experiments themselves. I have essayed these short passages to let the foreigner see that the accent is not equal; that they are not to be read monotonously. I chose, too, the most pregnant passages, those wherein every word teems with latent meaning, that he might form an idea of the degrees of excellence of which this art is capable. He must not apprehend that all poets present the same difficulty. It is only the most brilliant passages. The great mass, even of good poetry, is easily enough read. Take the following examples, wherein little differences in the enunciation will not change the meaning sensibly.

Here, in cool grot and mossy cell,
We rural fays and faeries dwell;
Though rarely seen by mortal eye,
When the pale Moon, ascending high,
Darts through yon lines her quivering beams,
We frisk it near these crystal streams.

Her beams, reflected from the wave,
Afford the light our revels crave;
The turf, with daisies broider'd o'er,
Exceeds, we wot, the Parian floor;
Nor yet for artful strains we call,
But listen to the water's fall.

Would you then taste our tranquil scene,
Be sure your bosoms be serene:
Devoid of hate, devoid of strife,
Devoid of all that poisons life:
And much it 'vails you, in their place
To graft the love of human race.

And tread with awe these favor'd bowers,
Nor wound the shrubs, nor bruise the flowers;
So may your path with sweets abound;

So may your couch with rest be crown'd!
But harm betide the wayward swain,
Who dares our hallow'd haunts profane!

—SHENSTONE

To fair Fidele's grassy tomb
Soft maids and village hinds shall bring
Each opening sweet, of earliest bloom,
And rifle all the breathing Spring.

No wailing ghost shall dare appear
To vex with shrieks this quiet grove,
But shepherd lads assemble here,
And melting virgins own their love.

No wither'd witch shall here be seen,
No goblins lead their nightly crew;
The female fays shall haunt the green,
And dress thy grave with pearly dew;

The red-breast oft at evening hours
Shall kindly lend his little aid,
With hoary moss, and gather'd flowers,
To deck the ground where thou art laid.

When howling winds, and beating rain,
In tempests shake thy sylvan cell;
Or 'midst the chase on every plain,
The tender thought on thee shall dwell.

Each lonely scene shall thee restore,
For thee the tear be duly shed;
Belov'd, till life can charm no more
And mourn'd, till Pity's self be dead.

—COLLINS

OF THE LENGTH OF VERSE.

Having spoken of feet which are only the constituent part of verse, it becomes necessary to say something of its larger divisions, and even of the verse itself. For what is a verse? This question naturally occurs, and it is not sufficiently an-

swered by saying it is a whole line. Should the printer think proper to print the following passage in this manner:

Ὡς εἰπὼν οὐ παιδὸς ὀρέξατο φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ. ἄψ δ' ὁ
παῖς πρὸς κόλπον ἐϋζώνιοιο τιθήνης ἐκλίθη ἰάχων, πατρὸς
φίλου ὄψιν ἀνυχθεῖς, ταρβήσας χαλκὸν τε ἰδὲ λόφον
ἵππιοχαίτην, δεινὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κόρυθος νεύοντα νοήσας
ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ τε φίλος καὶ πότνια μήτηρ. αὐτίκ' ἀπὸ
κρατὸς κόρυθ' εἶλετο φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ, καὶ τὴν μὲν
κατέθηκεν ἐπὶ χθονὶ παμφανόωσαν· αὐτὰρ ὁ γ' ὄν φίλον
υἷον ἐπεὶ κύσε πῆλέ τε χερσίν, εἶπεν ἐπευξάμενος Διὶ τ'
ἄλλοισιν τε θεοῖσιν· Ζεῦ ἄλλοι τε θεοί, δότε δὴ καὶ τόνδε
γενέσθαι παιῖδ' ἐμόν, ὡς καὶ ἐγὼ περ, ἀριπρεπέα Τρῶεσσιν,
ὡδε βίην τ' ἀγαθὸν καὶ Ἰλίου ἴφι ἀνάσσειν· καὶ ποτέ τις
εἴποι, 'πατρός γ' ὅδε πολλὸν ἀμείνων' ἐκ πολέμου ἀνιόντα·
φέροι δ' ἔναρα βροτόεντα κτείνας δῆϊον ἄνδρα, χαρεῖν δὲ
φρένα μήτηρ. Ὡς εἰπὼν ἀλόχοιο φίλης ἐν χερσίν ἔθηκε
παῖδ' ἕον· ἦ δ' ἄρα μιν κηῶδεϊ δέξατο κόλπῳ δακρυόεν
γελάσασα· πῶσις δ' ἐλέησε νοήσας, χειρὶ τέ μιν κατέρεξε
ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἐκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·

it would still be verse; it would still immortalize its author were every other syllable of his compositions lost. The poet then does not depend on the printer to give a character to his work. He has studied the human ear. He has discovered that in any rhythmical composition the ear is pleased to find at certain regular intervals a pause where it may rest, by which it may divide the composition into parts, as a piece of music is divided into bars. He contrives to mark this division by a pause in the sense or at least by an emphatical word which may force the pause so that the ear may feel the regular return of the pause. The interval then between these regular pauses constitutes a verse. In the morsel before cited this interval comprehends six feet, and though it is written in the manner of prose, yet he who can read it without pausing at every sixth foot, like him who is insensible to the charm of music, who is insensible of love or of gratitude, is an unfavored son of nature to whom she has given a faculty fewer than to others of her children, one source of pleasure the less in a world where there are none to spare. A well-organized ear makes the pause regularly whether it be printed as verse or as prose.

But not only the organization of the ear but the character of the language have influence in determining the length of the verse. Otherwise the constitution of the ear being the same with all nations the verse would be of the same length in all languages, which is not the case. But the difference in language occasions the ear to be pleased with a difference of interval in the pause. The language of Homer enabled him to compose in verse of six feet; the English language cannot bear this. They may be of one, two, three, four, or five feet, as in the following examples:

One foot.

Turning
Burning
Changing
Ranging
I mourn
I sigh
I burn
I die
Let us part—
Let us part
Will you break
My poor heart?

Two feet.

Flow'ry mountains
Mossy fountains
Shady woods
Crystal floods
To me the rose
No longer glows
Ev'ry plant
Has lost its scent.

Prithee Cupid no more
Hurl thy darts at threescore
To thy girls and thy boys
Give thy pains and thy joys.

Three feet.

Farewell fear and sorrow
Pleasure till to-morrow.

Yes, ev'ry flow'r that blows
I passed unheeded by
Till this enchanting rose
Had fix'd my wand'ring eye.
—CUNNINGHAM

The rose though a beautiful red
Looks faded to Phyllis's bloom;
And the breeze from the bean-flower bed
To her breath's but a feeble perfume;
A lily I plucked in full pride
Its freshness with hers to compare,
And foolishly thought till I try'd
The flow'ret was equally fair.
—CUNNINGHAM

Four feet.

From the dark tremendous cell
Where the fiends of magic dwell
Now the sun hath left the skies
Daughters of Enchantment, rise!
—CUNNINGHAM

Come Hope, and to my pensive eye
Thy far foreseeing tube apply
Whose kind deception steals us o'er
The gloomy waste that lies before.
—LANGHORNE

'Mongst lords and fine ladies we shepherds are told
The dearest affections are barter'd for gold
That discord in wedlock is often their lot
While Cupid and Hymen shake hands in a cot.
—CUNNINGHAM

Here the parisyllabic alone bears one foot more.

Oh liberty! thou goddess heav'nly bright
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight,
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling Plenty leads thy wanton train;
Eas'd of her load subjection grows more light,
And Poverty looks cheerful in thy sight;
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of nature gay
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.
—ADDISON

The last line furnishes an instance of six feet, usually called an Alexandrian; but no piece is ever wholly in that measure. A single line only is tolerated now and then, and is never a beauty. Formerly it was thought that the language bore lines of seven feet in length, as in the following:

'Tis he whose ev'ry thought and deed by rules of virtue
moves;
Whose gen'rous tongue disdains to speak the thing his heart
disproves
Who never did a slander forge his neighbor's fame to
wound;
Nor listen to a false report by malice whisper'd round.
—PSALM 15

But a little attention shows that there is as regular a pause at the fourth foot as at the seventh, and as verse takes its denomination from the shortest regular intervals, this is no more than an alternate verse of four and of three feet. It is, therefore, usually written as in the following stanzas of the same piece:

Who to his plighted vows and trust
Has ever firmly stood
And, though he promise to his loss,
He makes his promise good.

The man who by this steady course
Has happiness ensur'd
When earth's foundations shake, will stand
By Providence secur'd.

We may justly consider, therefore, verses of five feet as the longest the language sustains, and it is remarkable that not only this length, though the extreme, is generally the most esteemed, but that it is the only one which has dignity enough to support blank verse, that is, verse without rhyme. This is attempted in no other measure. It constitutes, therefore, the most precious part of our poetry. The poet, unfettered by rhyme, is at liberty to prune his diction of those tautologies, those feeble nothings necessary to introtrude the rhyming word. With no other trammel than that of measure he is able to condense his thoughts and images and to leave nothing but what is truly poetical. When enveloped in all the pomp and majesty of his subject he sometimes even throws off the restraint of the regular pause:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, heavenly Muse! that on the sacred top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning, how the Heavens and Earth
Rose out of Chaos.

Then stay'd the fervid wheels, and in his hand
He took the golden compasses, prepared
In God's eternal store, to circumscribe
This universe, and all created things
One foot he centred, and the other turn'd
Round, through the vast profundity obscure
And said, "Thus far extend."

There are but two regular pauses in this whole passage of seven verses. They are constantly drowned by the majesty of the rhythm and sense. But nothing less than this can authorize such a license. Take the following proof from the same author:

Again, God said, "Let there be firmament
Amid the waters, and let it divide
The waters from the waters;" and God made
The firmament. —MILTON 7: 261

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the
waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
And God made the firmament. —GENESIS 1: 6

I have here placed Moses and Milton side by side, that he who can may distinguish which verse belongs to the poet. To do this he will not have the aid either of the sentiment, diction or measure of poetry. The original is so servilely copied that though it be cut into pieces of ten syllables, no pause is marked between these portions.

What proves the excellence of blank verse is that the taste lasts longer than that for rhyme. The fondness for the jingle leaves us with that for the rattles and baubles of childhood, and if we continue to read rhymed verse at a later period of life it is such only where the poet has had force enough to bring great beauties of thought and diction into this form. When young any composition pleases which unites a little sense, some imagination, and some rhythm, in doses however small. But as we advance in life these things fall off one by one, and I suspect we are left at last with only Homer and Virgil, perhaps with Homer alone. He like

Hope travels on nor quits us when we die.

Having noted the different lengths of line which the English poet may give to his verse it must be further observed that he may intermingle these in the same verse according to his fancy.

The following are selected as examples:

A tear bedews my Delia's eye,
To think yon playful kid must die;
From crystal spring, and flowery mead,
Must, in his prime of life, recede!

She tells with what delight he stood,
To trace his features in the flood;
Then skipp'd aloof with quaint amaze,
And then drew near again to gaze.

—SHENSTONE

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

—GRAY

There shall my plaintive song recount
Dark themes of hopeless woe,
And faster than the drooping fount
I'll teach mine eyes to flow.

There leaves, in spite of Autumn green
Shall shade the hallow'd ground,
And Spring will there again be seen
To call forth flowers around.

—SHENSTONE

O Health! capricious maid!
Why dost thou shun my peaceful bower,
Where I had hope to share thy power,
And bless thy lasting aid?

—SHENSTONE

The man whose mind, on virtue bent
Pursues some greatly good intent
With undivided aim
Serene beholds the angry crowd
Nor can their clamors fierce and loud
His stubborn purpose tame.

Ye gentle Bards! give ear,
Who talk of amorous rage,
Who spoil the lily, rob the rose,
Come learn of me to weep your woes:
"O sweet! O sweet Anne Page!"

—SHENSTONE

Too long a stranger to repose,
At length from Pain's abhorred couch I rose
And wander'd forth alone,
To court once more the balmy breeze,
And catch the verdure of the trees,
Ere yet their charms were flown.

—SHENSTONE

O thou, by Nature taught
To breathe her genuine thought,
In numbers warmly pure, and sweetly strong;
Who first, on mountains wild,
In Fancy, loveliest child,
Thy babe, and Pleasure's, nursed the powers of song!

—COLLINS

'Twas in a land of learning,
The Muse's favorite city,
Such pranks of late
Were play'd by a rat,
As—tempt one to be witty.

—SHENSTONE

Yet stay, O stay! celestial Pow'rs!
And with a hand of kind regard
Dispel the boisterous storm that low'rs
Destruction on the fav'rite bard;
O watch with me his last expiring breath
And snatch him from the arms of dark oblivious death.

—GRAY

What is grandeur, what is power?
Heavier toil, superior pain.

What the bright reward we gain?
 The grateful memory of the good.
 Sweet is the breath of vernal shower,
 The bee's collected treasures sweet,
 Sweet music's melting fall, but sweeter yet
 The still small voice of gratitude.

Methinks I hear, in accents low,
 The sportive, kind reply:
 Poor moralist! and what art thou?
 A solitary fly!
 Thy joys no glittering female meets,
 No hive hast thou of hoarded sweets,
 No painted plumage to display;
 On hasty wings thy youth is flown;
 Thy sun is set, thy spring is gone—
 We frolic while 'tis May.

—GRAY

Then let me rove some wild and heathy scene;
 Or find some ruin, 'midst its dreary dells,
 Whose walls more awful nod
 By thy religious gleams.

Or, if chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
 Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut,
 That, from the mountain's side,
 Views wilds, and swelling floods.

—COLLINS

Though the license to intermingle the different measures admits an infinitude of combinations, yet this becomes less and less pleasing in proportion as they depart from that simplicity and regularity of which the ear is most sensible. When these are wholly or nearly neglected, as in the lyric pieces, the poet renounces one of the most fascinating charms of his art. He must then look well to his matter and supply in sublimity or other beauties the loss of regular measure. In effect these pieces are seldom read twice.

A Tour to some of the Gardens of England

[*Memorandums made on a tour to some of the gardens in England, described by Whateley in his book on gardening.*] While his descriptions, in point of style, are models of perfect elegance and classical correctness, they are as remarkable for their exactness. I always walked over the gardens with his book in my hand, examined with attention the particular spots he described, found them so justly characterized by him as to be easily recognized, and saw with wonder, that his fine imagination had never been able to seduce him from the truth. My inquiries were directed chiefly to such practical things as might enable me to estimate the expense of making and maintaining a garden in that style. My journey was in the months of March and April, 1786.

Chiswick.—Belongs to Duke of Devonshire. A garden about six acres;—the octagonal dome has an ill effect, both within and without: the garden shows still too much of art. An obelisk of very ill effect; another in the middle of a pond useless.

Hampton-Court.—Old fashioned. Clipt yews grown wild.

Twickenham.—Pope's original garden, three and a half acres. Sir Wm. Stanhope added one and a half acre. This is a long narrow slip, grass and trees in the middle, walk all round. Now Sir Wellbore Ellis's. Obelisk at bottom of Pope's garden, as monument to his mother. Inscription, "Ah! Editha, matrum optima, mulierum amantissima, Vale." The house about thirty yards from the Thames: the ground shelves gently to the water side; on the back of the house passes the street, and beyond that the garden. The grotto is under the street, and goes out level to the water. In the centre of the garden a mound with a spiral walk round it. A rookery.

Esher-Place.—The house in a bottom near the river; on the other side the ground rises pretty much. The road by which we come to the house forms a dividing line in the middle of the front; on the right are heights, rising one beyond and above another, with clumps of trees; on the farthest a temple.