

XXII.—DR. GUEST AND DR. ABBOTT ON ENGLISH
METRE. By PROFESSOR J. B. MAYOR.

THERE are persons to whom system generally is a bugbear, and to whom systems of prosody are especially distasteful. The object of rhythm and metre, they argue, is to please the ear. If they fail to do this, they fail of their object, and nothing is gained by shewing that they are conformable to certain rules of grammarians. The final authority rests, not with the grammarian, but with those for whom the poet sings. It may be answered that, just in the same way, the primary object of the musician and of the painter is to afford pleasure to the eye and the ear. If they fail in this, they too fail in their object; but none will deny the importance of theory and rules in these branches of art, both for the purpose of training the artist in the means by which he may attain his end, and for educating the hearer and spectator to appreciate a higher and more refined order of beauty. Or we might take our illustration, not from an art, but from a science, such as botany. The use of botany is to enable us to describe in exact and definite terms the various characteristics of plants, to arrange and classify all that is known about them, and to reduce the various phenomena to their simplest types and laws. So the use of prosody is to supply a technical language by which to describe each specimen of verse brought before us; to distinguish the different kinds of verse, and establish a type of each, with reference to which existing varieties may be compared, and finally to state the laws of composition which have been observed by those whom the world recognizes as poets. Then from this we may draw practical rules of art for the use of the poet or the reader.

In a subject like prosody there is a danger of confused treatment, arising from its connection with history on the one hand, and æsthetics on the other. There are thus three views which may be taken of it: that which has been just described, the purely scientific, or logical; secondly, the historical, which brings in the succession of time, and traces

the growth of one form out of another; thirdly, the æsthetic, or subjective, which adds criticism to statement of fact, and points out beauties and defects in the different metres, or in the manner in which they have been handled. It is of great importance that the first view should be kept clear of the other two, that an antiquarian yoke, for instance, should not be laid upon readers and writers of the present time, and their verses be denied to be metrical at all, or else twisted and mangled to suit the usage of five centuries ago; just as a modern sentence might be condemned as ungrammatical because it could not be explained on antiquarian views of syntax. The first thing to ascertain is the existing $\tau\acute{\iota}$, then we may safely proceed to the $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ and the $\pi\acute{o}\tau\omicron\nu$.

Dr. Guest's learned work on the History of English Rhythm was published nearly forty years ago. Though the book is very scarce, it has never been reprinted, and it is therefore doubtful how far it can be considered to embody the present opinions of the author. However this may be, it would probably be still regarded by most persons as the chief authority on the subject of which it treats, and it is in fact especially referred to, as such, by the Cambridge Editors in their preface. Both on the ground of antiquity, therefore, and of authority, we are led to treat of it first. Speaking generally, the fault which I should find with the book is that it does not sufficiently distinguish between the views mentioned above. Calling itself a history, it is of course entitled to give prominence to the historical view; but I venture to think that this is carried too far when the "rhythmical section" is made the logical foundation of our existing metres, and modern poets are condemned for transgressing rules which seem scarcely to have survived the period of alliterative verse. I condense the passages in which the theory is most clearly given. "Our Anglo-Saxon poems consist of certain *sections* bound together in pairs by alliteration. The pure elementary section cannot have more than three, or less than two, accents. Each couple of adjacent accents must be separated by not more than two unaccented syllables; but two accents may come together if the place of

the intervening syllable is supplied by a pause. When the accents are separated by one syllable, the rhythm is called *common measure*; when by two, *triple measure*. A section may begin (and similarly it may end) with an accented syllable or with not more than two unaccented syllables." These different kinds of sections give 1296 possible varieties of the five-accent-line containing two sections—what we commonly call the 'heroic'; and Dr. Guest regrets "that when novelty of rhythm has been sought, often to the sacrifice of the highest principle, a path so promising (as experimenting on these) should have been adventured so seldom." (vol. i. pp. 163–166.) "There are three *pauses* which serve for the regulation of the rhythm, *final*, *middle*, and *sectional*. The first occurs at the end of a verse, the second divides it into two sections, the third is found in the midst of one of these sections. The pauses have ceased to be identical with *stops*, but as a general rule we may lay it down that the final and middle pauses ought always to coincide with the close of a sentence or a clause." (pp. 148, 149.)

We proceed to quote some examples in illustration of the above rules. The sections are divided by (:), the accented syllable is followed by a bar. And, first, of the triple measure, *i.e.* where the accents are separated by two unaccented syllables. In pp. 170, 229, we find the following instances:—

Stood o|pen wide|: belch|¹ing ou|²trage|³ous flame|
 Floats|¹ as they pass|: fann'd|² with un|³num|berd plumes|
 Sound drums|¹ and trum|²pets: bold|³ly and cheer|fully|
 The guilt|less dam|sel: fly|¹ing the mad|² pursuit|
 So dread|ful to| thee: that|¹ thou art nak|²ed, who|
 Convert| to ang|er: blunt|¹ not the heart|² enrage| it
 We m²ay bold|ly spend|: upon| the hope| of what|
 In elec|tion for|: the Ro|man em|peror|
 A Tal|bot, a Tal|bot: cri|ed out| amain|

I make no objection to the scanning of these lines, with the exception of the first two; but it seems to me scarcely

consistent with the view expressed in other parts of the book: *e.g.* p. 61, Tyrwhitt is exclaimed at for quoting the line

Celest|ial spir|its in bond|age nor| the abyss|

as an instance of a triple third foot, and so in p. 181 for taking *pillar* as a dissyllable (not *pill'r*), and giving as an instance of a second foot containing three syllables,

A pill|ar of state| deep on his front engraven.

In the same page Wordsworth and Coleridge are found fault with for using the word *delicate* where the rhythm required a dissyllable, for they, it is said, would certainly shrink from pronouncing it *del'cate* as Shakespeare did. And why should not 'flying' in the fourth line quoted be treated as a monosyllable, according to the rule given in p. 41: "A short vowel is elided after a long *i*," which is illustrated in the next page by

Half *flying*| behoves| him now|: both oar| and sail| ?

Again, why is not the last syllable of *boldly* in the third line to be treated as an example of *synalæpha*, according to the rule given in p. 69, which is illustrated there by the lines

Stiff|ly to stand| on this|: and *proud|ly approve|*

Pass|ion and ap|athy|: and *glor|y and shame|* ?

Similarly we should have expected the fifth and sixth lines to be read with the elisions *thou'rt*, *th'heart*. In fact, much of the ground for the general argument on the omission of syllables in ch. iii. must disappear, if the legitimacy of the triple measure is recognized.

Going on now to the doctrine of the sections. Put in more familiar language, this means that there should be a stop, or at all events a break in the line, at the end of the second or third foot, or in the middle of the third or fourth. This is at any rate a rule easy of observance; if it is really essential to the rhythm, there is no excuse to be made for the poet who neglects it. And so in fact Dr. Guest feels. He quotes (p. 153) with reprobation the lines

Unbrid|led sen|sual|ity begat|

Thy an|ger un|appeas|able| still ra|ges.

And in p. 190, after granting that "the adoption of foreign metre brought into our language many verses which neither had, nor were intended to have, the middle pause," he goes on to say that "our poetry quickly worked itself free from such admixture," and therefore, "when we meet (four-accent) verses such as the following :

Guiding the fiery : -wheeled throne,
The cherub Con : templatation,

I do not see how we can treat them otherwise than as false rhythm ; or, if the middle pause be disowned, at least require that they should not intrude among verses of a different character and origin. If the poet make no account of the pause, let him be consistent and reject its aid altogether. If he prefer the rhythm of the foreigner, let him show his ingenuity in a correct imitation, and not fall back upon our English verse when his skill is exhausted. Both foreign and English rhythms are injured by being jumbled together in this slovenly and inartificial manner." Again, in ii. 276, speaking of Milton's use of the heroic verse, it is said, "He varied the flow of the rhythm and lengthened the sections ; these were legitimate alterations ; he split the sections and overlaid the pauses, and the law of his metre was broken, the science of his versification gone."

I confess all this seems to me an example of misplaced antiquarianism, much like the attempt to get rid of all but Gregorian Chants in church music. And I find it hard to reconcile with what follows : "Can our language furnish no well-defined system of rhythm, fit to embody the conceptions of a man like Milton ? Suppose a metre to consist of verses of five accents, rejecting the sectional pause ; here we have a very simple and definite law, admitting of a varied rhythm which might satisfy even a Milton's passion for variety." But the fault found with Milton is that he does occasionally reject, not only the sectional, but the middle and final pause. If he is always to observe the two latter, it is plain that the liberty granted is not enough ; if he is never to admit them, for fear of mixing up incongruous systems of rhythm, he will be under a still more cramping rule than before.

We have still to speak of the final pause, and the admission of unaccented syllables at the close of either section. Of the omission of the final pause it is said (i. 150), "A serious fault is committed when the final pause separates a qualifying word from the word qualified, *e.g.*

And God created the great whales, and *each*
Soul living, each that crept.

To judgment he proceeded on the *accursed*
Serpent, though brute.

Or when it separates the preposition from the words governed by it, or the personal pronoun from the governing verb, as :

——— Read o'er this,
And after this, and then to breakfast *with*
What appetite you have.

——— Let it suffice thee that thou *know'st*
Us happy, and without love no happiness."

This "serious fault," it may be observed, is one to which Shakespeare became more and more prone as his genius matured. In his earliest plays the sense very commonly closes at the end of the line; in the later his structure is more broken, and his lines frequently close with unaccented syllables connected in sense with what follows.

Unaccented syllables at the close of the section may be really supernumerary, as in the following :

Give| me the *dag|gers* : the sleep|ing and| the dead|
Or| by *eva|sions* : thy crime| uncov|erest more|
Come| for the third| *Laer|tes* : you do| but *dal|ly*.

Such lines, and they are very common in Shakespeare, are of interest, as showing that there was in his time sufficient remembrance of the two original sections to allow of the insertion of an extra syllable between them; but Dr. Guest puts in the same category lines which have the regular number of syllables, *e.g.*

Of reb|el an|gels : by| whose aid| aspir|ing.

And, in fact, by his system of disregarding the number of syllables in the line, and making everything turn upon the accents of the section, he has succeeded in throwing together

lines regular and irregular, possible and impossible, in the most bewildering confusion.

The next point for consideration is the exceptional case where two accented syllables come together. Great fault is found with Dr. Johnson for suggesting that sometimes the accent is equally strong upon two adjoining syllables, as (p. 78):

Thus at their shady lodge arrived, *both stood,*
Both turned.

"Here," it is said, "every reader of taste would pronounce the words *stood, turned*, with a greater stress than that which falls on the word preceding. But these words are at least equal in quantity, and Johnson fell into the mistake of considering quantity identical with accent." Besides the distinction thus drawn between accent and quantity, we have a further distinction between accent and emphasis. Thus it is said (p. 83): "When the emphatic syllable adjoins one which ought, according to the usual laws of construction, to be more strongly accented, we commonly have a transference of the accent. In Shakespeare's verse,

Is| this *the*| Lord Tal|bot: uncle Glos|ter? ¹

the emphasis which is thrown upon the article gives it an accent stronger than that of the word either preceding or succeeding. Sometimes, however, it would seem that we distinguish the emphatic syllable by sharpness of tone, and leave the stress of the voice, the essential part of the accent, on the ordinary syllable. Thus in Spenser's line,

Flesh| may *im*pair| quoth she|: but rea|son can| *re*pair|

the first syllable of *im*pair and *re*pair is emphatic, but the last is accented; and so in Milton:

Who made| our laws| to bind *us*|: not| himself|
Knowing who| I am|: as I| know who| *thou* art|."

Lastly, where neither resource is available, the poets are

¹ The true scanning of this line is:

Is this| the Lord Tal|bot un|cle Glou|cester|

See other examples of trisyllabic *Gloucester, Worcester*, etc., in Abbott, S.G. § 487.

flatly charged with false accentuation. Thus the "accent of construction" is said to be violated in the following:

A third| thought wise| and vir|tuous: a| fourth rich|
 The treach|rous col|ours: the| fair art| betray|
 Crea|ted hu|gest: that| swim th' o|cean flood|
 Profaned| first by| the ser|pent: by| him first|
 Made common.

["Here the pronoun requires an emphasis which makes the false accentuation still more glaring."]

That I| may sit|: and pour| out my| sad sprite|.

Of which last it is said, "This verse of Fletcher has even more than his usual proportion of blunders."

In p. 88 it is justly said that, when two or more words of the same kind follow each other consecutively, they all take an equal accent. This law is said to be violated in such lines as

Fear, sick|ness, age|: *loss*, la|bour, sor|row, strife|

But Milton's famous line,

Rocks, *caves*,| *lakes*, *fens*,| *bogs*, *dens*|: and shades| of death|

is excused on the ground that "where the words are collected into groups, the law affects the groups only, and not the individuals."

On all this I would remark that my own ear (and, as far as I can judge, this is true of people in general) is perfectly satisfied with the rhythm of these lines, without supposing any false accentuation. Starting without any *a priori* system, I lay the stress where the sense requires it to be laid, as I believe the writers themselves did, and I draw my rules from their practice. Where there is a discrepancy between a system of prosody and the practice of the poets, it is the system which is condemned, not the practice of the poets. But let us see now under what circumstances it is conceded that adjacent syllables may be accented.

"When two syllables are separated by a pause, each of them *may* receive the accent, the pause filling the place of a syllable. In the verses

Vir|tue beau|tie and speech|: did strike|—wound|—charm|
 My heart|—eyes|—ears|: with won|der love| delight|

strike, wound, charm, heart, eyes, and ears, are all accented." (p. 79.) That is to say, this is an Alexandrine, or six-accent line, the pause in which might be replaced by additional syllables without altering the metre, *e.g.*

My heart| and eyes| and ears| with won|der love| delight.

But in p. 155 we have the remainder of the passage, no line of which contains more than ten syllables, while there are several which would certainly be unsuspectingly read with five accents. For myself I have no objection to recognize six accents here, though I could not call it an Alexandrine, holding, as I do, that this is in part determined by the number of syllables; but I should on the same ground agree with Mitford in giving eight accents to the line beginning *Rocks, caves*. A fuller account of these adjacent accents is found in book ii. ch. 8, on the sectional pause. It is there stated that this pause is commonly used in Anglo-Saxon for the purpose of giving emphasis, and examples are quoted from later writers, many of which appear to me very doubtful. Thus:

To the Venetian state : come| bring| him along|

is read as an Alexandrine. I should have no hesitation in making *come bring* one foot. It is surely not more difficult than *Rocks, caves*, above.

How in my strength you please : for you|, Ed|mund.

The last syllable is treated as supernumerary, and the pause after *you* reckoned as an unaccented syllable. I should myself read *Edmund* as the complete fifth foot, with its usual accent; but if the final 'trochee' gives offence to any, the device of 'false accentuation' is more easily applicable here than in the cases mentioned before.

The two following are scanned as regular lines :

I knew not which to take : and what| to leave,| ha !
Bound to keep life in drones : and id|dle moths ?| No|.

The first is read as prose in the Globe Shakespeare; but surely no one in the present day would doubt that, if they

are treated as verse, the exclamations *ha!* and *no!* must be considered extra-metrical (see Abbott, Shaks. Gr. §. 512).

A love of mine? I would: it were| no worse| broth|er.

Instead of making this an Alexandrine, it would be better to take *brother* as two supernumerary syllables. See Abbott, § 458.

This principle of the sectional pause is also employed to explain the rhythm of iambus followed by trochee, *e.g.*

The gods| not| the patric|ians: make| it, and|

Perhaps the best way of testing any system of prosody is to see whether the lines which please the ear are in accordance with its rules, and the lines which are felt to be discordant are the contrary. I think I may assume that the examples already given are sufficient to prove that Dr. Guest's system cannot stand this test; but before concluding, I add a few more taken at random from the pages of the book.

p. 158. "A very favourite stop with Shakespeare is the one before the last accented syllable of the verse. . . . This is opposed to every principle of accentual rhythm." Among the examples we have the exquisite lines:

Loud, as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices uttering joy.

p. 161. "Our poets sometimes place a stop after the third syllable, but I think never happily, *e.g.*

— What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support."

p. 162. "When we see how nearly the freedom of our elder poets approached to licence, we may appreciate in some measure the obligations we are under to the school of Pope and Dryden. The attempts to revive the abuses which they reformed have happily, as yet, met only with partial success."

p. 171. Tyrwhitt is attacked for supposing that *ominous* could be trisyllabic in the line,

Ominous conjecture on the whole success.

Which can only be reduced to metre on Dr. Guest's system by reading,

Om'|nous conject|ure on the whole success.

How would he treat such lines as

Galloping| of hor|ses o|ver the gras|sy plain|.
 Petulant| she spoke| and at| herself| she laughed|
 Modulate| me soul| of min|cing mi|micry|
 Hammering| and clink|ing chat|tering sto|ny names|
 Glorify|ing clown| and sat|yr whence| they need|
 Timorous|ly and as| the lead|er of| the herd|?

p. 216. In this and the following pages we have a number of instances of verses beginning with an accented syllable instead of an iambus, Dr. Guest's *section 1*. Dr. Abbott, dealing with similar cases, says (§ 484), "Monosyllables containing diphthongs and long vowels are often so emphasized as to dispense with an unaccented syllable. . . . Whether the word is dissyllabized or merely requires a pause after it, cannot in all cases be determined." Among other examples Dr. Guest gives:

Vive| le roi|: as| I have banked| their towns|.

Dr. Abbott rightly treats *vive* as a dissyllable, and quotes several other French words in which the final *e* is sounded. § 489.

Jael| who|: with hos|pita|ble guile|

That such a line as this should have been found in accordance with rule, is with me a strong argument against the truth of the system. The real reading is *inhospitable*, which gives a perfectly regular line,

Jael| who with| inhos|pita|ble guile|.

A similar instance occurs in p. 240, where the omission of *my* before *former* passes unobserved, and causes no difficulty,

So| by (my) for|mer lec|ture: and| advice|.

Several instances given contain exclamations, which may of course be lengthened at pleasure, or broken phrases suggesting a pause, thus:

Tut!| when struckst| thou: one| blow in| the field|
 O| this lear|ning: what| a thing| it is|
 Ne|ver! nev|er!: come| away| away|

In other cases what *we* read as a monosyllable was formerly treated as a dissyllable, e.g. *hèar* and *òur* in

Hear| me cap|tain : are| you not| at leis|ure
Of| our grand|eur : and| become| as great|

We find many verses quoted as Alexandrines in the 257th and following pages, which may be perfectly well read as ordinary five-foot iambics :

Hath| he asked| for me| : know| you not| he has|
O| ye gods| ye gods| : must I| endure| all this|

[*O* should be treated as extra-metrical.]

We'll| along| ourselves| : and meet| them at| Philip|pi

[The first syllable of *along* disappears. See Abbott, § 460.]

Vir|tue as| I thought| : truth du|ty so| enjoin|ing
Just|ly yet| despair| not : of| his fi|nal par|don.

[In both these the second and third syllables run into one, *virtue'as, justly'yet.*]

I need not perhaps quote further. Dr. Guest's book is full of learning, and must always be a store-house of information for those who are working at the subject : later writers might have avoided some errors into which they have fallen if they had considered more carefully the evidence which he has accumulated. But the system of prosody contained in the book, though worked out with great ingenuity, is in my opinion entirely misleading. It insists on a rule which has been obsolete for more than two centuries. It condemns, as unrhythmical, verses which, I will venture to say, the great majority of educated men find perfectly satisfying to their ear ; it approves what to them appears mere discord. And, lastly, it is so difficult and complicated that it could never come into general use. Dr. Guest's, therefore, is not the system we are in search of.

Dr. Guest's system of prosody is, as far as I know, original ; that which comes next for consideration, Dr. Abbott's, is a modification of what may be called the traditional system. In its general outline I believe this to be also the true and natural system, giving technical expression to the practice of

the best writers and readers of poetry, and not setting up an artificial or antiquarian standard to which they are required to conform. In its details, however, there seems to me a good deal which is open to criticism.

The general theory is given in the *Shakespearian Grammar* §§ 452-515, and in the Third Part of *English Lessons for English People*.

The *foot*, not the *section*, is assumed as the basis of metre. "The smallest recurring combination of syllables is called a foot. In English the names of feet, trochee, iambus, etc., denote groups of accented and non-accented syllables without regard to quantity. *Accent* means a loud stress of the voice. A distinction is made between the *word-accent* and the *metrical-accent*. Every polysyllable has at least one word-accent. The accent of monosyllables depends upon their collocation. The metrical-accent, if it falls on a word at all, must fall on its principal word-accent, but it may also fall on a syllable which has no word-accent.

The three main rules for accentuation are :

- (1) We can never have three consecutive clearly pronounced syllables without a metrical-accent.
- (2) We cannot have two consecutive syllables in the same word metrically accented.
- (3) In polysyllables, metrical-accent, if it falls on more than one syllable, falls on alternate syllables.

Emphasis is a stress laid on monosyllables or on the word-accent of polysyllables, for the purpose of calling attention to the meaning. In poetry an emphatic syllable generally, but not always, receives the metrical-accent. Any monosyllable that comes between two unaccented monosyllables must receive a metrical-accent in dissyllabic metre. When two emphatic monosyllables come together, and one receives the metrical-accent, the other may be without the metrical-accent. It is rarely that all the metrical-accent of a line are also emphatic."

We pause here for a moment to consider the doctrine of the accent contained in the above passage. And first we will consider the three sorts of stress here distinguished, word-

accent, metrical-accent, and emphasis. The distinction between accent generally and emphasis is plain: accent gives prominence to a syllable among syllables, emphasis to a word among words. But is the distinction between the two kinds of accent admissible? Undoubtedly the same word is found with varying accent according to the context in which it occurs, both in prose and verse; but this is due to emphasis. Undoubtedly also poets have taken the liberty of changing the ordinary accentuation of a word; *e.g.* 'Galilee' must have the accent on the last syllable in Byron's lines,

And the sheen| of their spears| was like stars| on the sea|
Where the blue| waves roll night|ly on deep| Galilee|.

But this I should describe by saying that the poet has chosen to alter the word-accent of 'Galilee,' as he has also chosen to disregard the emphasis which a prose reader would have given to 'roll.' Does metrical-accent denote anything more than that the syllables which are said to be metrically accented are those which ought to have the word-accent if the metre were perfectly regular, to which therefore the general influence of the rhythm may seem to impart a sort of shadow of the word-accent? If we take some of the examples given (*Eng. Less.* p. 155 ff.), is it possible to read them so as to make the metrical accent on the italicized syllables in any sense correspond to the definition of accent, "a loud stress of the voice"?

Oh, wéep for Adonáis. *Thé* quick dreáms.

Then tóre with bloódy tálon *thé* rent pláin.

It is plain that in these lines *the* is about the least important word, and is intentionally prefixed to the important words *quick* and *rent* to give them additional emphasis. In technical language, *the* is here a *proclitic*; so far from laying any stress upon it, a good reader would pass it over more lightly than any other word in the lines. I am unable, therefore, to see the propriety of speaking of it as bearing the metrical accent. As far as the reading goes, accentuation, on this principle, becomes unmeaning, and the only thing to regard is emphasis, or the distinction between the emphatic and unemphatic syllables. All verses will be perfectly regular as regards

accents or feet, but variety will be produced by the overriding emphasis. This is a simple and logical view, but, as we shall see presently, it is not consistently adhered to.

We go on now to the rules of accentuation. The first rule seems to forbid such lines as those quoted above from Tennyson's *Princess*,

Módulate| me soúl| of min|cing mim|iery|

the first two accents being divided by three unaccented syllables, which ought to be as clearly and distinctly pronounced as any other unaccented syllables.

Again, the third rule is contradicted by such words as *párisyllábic*, *Thúcydidéan*, *úninterrupted*, or in fact any word which would form the ending of a hexameter line.

The importance of the first rule is shown by its corollary, that "any monosyllable, however unemphatic, which comes between two unaccented syllables, must receive the accent in dissyllabic metre." Therefore, in the following, *the*, *a*, *to*, have the metrical accent.

But fóoled by hópe men fávor *thé* de céit.

Make sátre á lampóon and fictiön lié.

Smit with the mighty pleásure tó be seén.

If by metrical accent is merely meant the nominal or fictitious accent before spoken of, falling in accordance with the strict law of the metre on each alternate syllable, there is nothing more to be said, except that it was not worth while to particularize one or another metrical phrase as obedient to a law which holds good universally. But if accent here means its definition, "a loud stress of voice," then I cannot think that any good reader would place the accent on the words italicized. They are the weakest words in the several lines, and should be read as such, giving no prominence to them either in pitch, loudness, or quantity.

The view taken of the "unemphatic metrical-accent" in the *Lessons* is not quite the same as we find in *S.G.* § 457, where we are told, "*the* seems to have been regarded (in Shakespeare's time) as capable of more emphasis than with us," but still attempts are made to explain away the instances in which

the, and still more *a*, appear to receive this accent. Thus the accent on *a* is avoided by reading

A dévil| a bór|n dév|il ón| whose nát|ure,
that on *the* by reading

Your breáth| first kíndled| the déa|d cóal| of wár|
More néeds she| the divíne| thán the| physí|cián|
Then méet| and jóin| Jove's líght|eníngs| the precúr|sors

It is needless to point out the extreme harshness of the rhythm which follows from this attempt to ignore the simple fact, that it is not necessary for all the feet to have what is called in the *Lessons* the emphatic accent, what I should rather call simply the accent.

I proceed to consider the account given of the heroic metre. "This consists of five feet of two syllables each, the second syllable in each foot being accented; but to prevent monotony, the line is varied sometimes (1) by changing the position of the accent, (2) by introducing trisyllabic and monosyllabic feet. These licences are subject to certain laws." *S. Gr.* § 452. The first licence is called, in *English Lessons*, p. 203, "the licence of trochee," and it is there said to be "admissible in the initial foot, and after a pause. A very slight pause, such as is caused by a preceding long syllable, is sufficient; but some pause is necessary, and hence it may be laid down as a rule in iambic metre that one trochee cannot follow another. Milton's line,

U'nivérsl reproách far wórse to beár,

would be a monstrosity if read with the usual accents. It is far more likely that Milton pronounced the word *universál*, perhaps influenced by the fact that the *i* is long in Latin." Another rule is that "a trochee must not follow an unemphatic accent, as it does in Milton's line,

Burned áfter thém to *thé* bóttomless píť."

The first remark which suggests itself on this, is that the principle of fictitious accentuation is here abandoned. The accent of the foot is declared to be reversed when the emphasis falls on the first instead of the second syllable. But if the metrical accent is to be determined by the real or natural stress given to each syllable by a good reader, it will

be found necessary to admit other licences besides that of the trochee. The so-called unemphatic accent is no accent at all in this sense of the term, so that we shall find ourselves compelled to admit pyrrhics on the one hand, and on the other hand, since two emphatic syllables may come together in verse as well as prose, we shall find that there are natural spondees just as there are natural trochees.¹ It may be granted that the use of the trochee is generally confined within the limits specified, but there is no such stringent and absolute law as to constitute any exception a 'monstrosity.' I endeavoured to show this in reference to the particular word 'universal,' in the *Academy* for March, 1872; but on the more general question I may refer here to Dr. Abbott's earlier view given in *S.G.* § 453, and to Dr. Guest's *English Rhythms*, p. 220, where other examples of the double trochee will be found. Dr. Guest even treats the verse commencing with the double trochee as a recognized variety of the ten-syllable iambic. Authority apart, it seems to me that the rhythm of such lines as the following is satisfactory to the ear, and would not be improved by the alternative given in italics:

brávest, gréatest, and best; a king of men.
the brave, the great, the good; a king of men.
 éndless sórrow, eternity of woe.
undying pain, eternity of woe.

¹ To test the frequency of these irregular feet in Shakespeare, I have been carefully through *Macbeth*, and I find there 175 spondees in all, distributed as follows: 20 in the first foot, 60 in the second, 19 in the third, 23 in the fourth, and 53 in the fifth. Of these 31 follow trochees, 75 follow pyrrhics, 40 come after a pause, and 29 are continuous after a long syllable. As examples of what I call spondees, I would mention the foot made up of the last syllable of an iambus and the first of a trochee, *e.g.*

Would cre|ate sol|diers make| our wom|en fight|
 that made up of an emphatic monosyllable and the first syllable of a trochee, *e.g.*

Sit, wor|thy friends| my lord| is of|ten thus|
 Promised| no less| to them|. *That trust|ed home*

or of two emphatic monosyllables,

Why do| you show| me this?| a fourth! *Start, eyes!|*
 especially where the emphasis is required to give the right sense, as

But screw| your cou|rage to| the stick|ing place|
Who wrought| with them| and all| things else| that might|
Making| the green| one red,

or for the sake of antithesis, *e.g.*

That which| hath made| *them drunk|* hath made| *me bold|*
 Lest our| *old robes|* sit eas|ier than| our new|.

Besides the theoretical objections which have been stated to Dr. Abbott's view of accentuation, a practical difficulty arises in applying it to educational purposes. In the Preface to *English Lessons* it is said that the object of the chapters on Metre is practical utility, to teach the pupil how to read a verse so as to mark the metre, without converting the metrical line into monotonous doggerel. If the pupil's metrical exercise were confined to dividing a line into feet and marking the emphatic and unemphatic syllables, neglecting the metrical-accent altogether, the task is simple. But the admission of the trochee complicates matters. Even Dr. Abbott hesitates (*E. L.* p. 159) whether in the line

The lone| couch of| his ev|erlas|ting sleep|

the second foot shall be called a trochee, or an iambus consisting of a long emphatic unaccented syllable followed by a short unemphatic accented syllable. So in p. 157 we have the line,

Proud to| catch cold| at a| Vene|tian door|

in which it is said to be doubtful whether *at a* should be considered a trochee or iambus. And many other instances occur.

The quantity of syllables seems to introduce a still further confusion, as we are told (*E. L.* p. 168) that "though it has quite a secondary position in English metre, yet Shakespeare, Milton, etc., are fond of using monosyllables without the metrical-accent, however long their quantity may be, *e.g.*

O'er bog or steep, through strait, *rough*, dense, or rare,
With head, *hands*, wings, or feet pursues his way."

Here *rough* and *hands* are treated simply as long syllables, but it is plain that their rhythmical weight is owing to their emphasis, and to the stop which follows them; otherwise *rough* in itself is no longer than *of*. However, I note this merely to point out that the pupil has here a fourth sort of stress to add to the three (emphasis and the two accents) before considered.

We go on now to the syllabic licence in dissyllabic metre. That of defect, the monosyllabic foot for the dissyllabic, is on

the whole well treated in *S.G.* § 479 ff. We find, however, several instances in which the fear of an unaccented foot has led to intolerably harsh scanning, *e.g.*

For an|cient quárrels| and quite| lost the|ir hearts|.

[The line becomes regular if the second foot is made to end in the middle of *quarrels*, but this would give an unaccented third foot.]

How in| my strength| you please| for yo|u Ed|mund.

[*You* is divided unnecessarily to escape the final trochee.]

To fa|il in the| dispo|sing of| these chan|ces.

[In order to avoid an unaccented second foot, *fail* is made dissyllabic, and a supernumerary unaccented syllable is assigned to the second foot, though it is not followed by a pause.]

Doth com|fort thée in| thy sle|ep live| and flou|rish.

[The second foot should end with *thee*, *thy* is emphatic, contrasting the sleep of Henry with the troubled dreams of Richard.]

Full fif|teen hundred| besi|des com|mon men|.

[*Besides* made trisyllabic to avoid an unaccented third foot.]

Go to the| créating| a whó|le tribe| of fôps|.

[Here the third foot is properly unaccented, the second ending with the second syllable of *creating*.]

But could| be willing| to ma|rch on| to Cal|ais.

[*March* made dissyllabic, to avoid unaccented third foot.]

Of Lion|el Duke| of Clarence| the thi|rd son|.

[*Third* made dissyllabic, to avoid unaccented fourth foot.]

Yóu and| your crá|fts yóu| have craft|ed fair.

[The line (Cor. iv. 6, 118) is incomplete; it should run:

You and| your crafts| you've craft|ed fair| you've brought.]

The Go|ds not| the patric|ians make| it and|.

[*Gods* made dissyllabic, to avoid the trochee in the second place.]

With Ti|tus Larcus| a mo|st val|iant Ro|man.

[*Most* made dissyllabic, to avoid an unaccented second foot.]

The syllabic licence of excess may consist either in syllables supernumerary, not counted in the feet; or in syllables within the feet, which may be either more or less slurred, or distinctly pronounced. Of the first we read, *S.G.* § 454, "An extra syllable is frequently added before a pause, especially at the end of a line, but also at the end of the second,¹ and, less frequently, of the third foot; rarely at the end of the fourth." And § 458, "Two extra syllables are sometimes allowed before a pause, especially at the end of a line." It will be observed that these rules do not justify such scanning as we have had in the lines

To fa*il* in the| dispos|ing of| these chanc|es.

Go to the| creat|ing| a who|le tribe| of fops|.

where the superfluous syllable appears without a pause, and (in the second line) at the close of the first as well as of the second foot.

The account given of trisyllabic feet seems to me generally satisfactory. I notice one or two points in which I should disagree. In *S.G.* § 456 it is said, "Almost any syllables, however lengthy in pronunciation, can be used as the unaccented syllables in a trisyllabic foot, provided they are unemphatic. It is not usual, however, to find two such unaccented syllables as

Which most gi|bingly| ungrave|ly he| did fas|hion."

It appears to me better to divide this and the preceding line (*Coriol.* ii. 3, 233) as follows:

Th' apprehén|sion óf| his prés|ent pórt|ance which|
Most gi|bingly| ungráve|ly hé| did fásh|ion.

Perhaps the principle of slurring is carried a little too far, especially in the attempt to get rid of Alexandrines (*S.G.* § 495 ff.). No doubt Dr. Abbott has succeeded in showing that many apparent Alexandrines are to be read as ten-

¹ The example given seems to me wrongly scanned,

For mine| own sáfeties| you máy| be right|ly júst|
I should divide,

For mine own| safeties| you may| be right|ly just|.

syllable iambs, but I see no reason for objecting to the following, for instance :

That seem|ing to| be most| which we| indeed| least are|
Acquire| too high| a fame| when him| we serve's| away|
Besides| I like| you not|. If you| will know| my house|

Nor does it seem to me worth while to insist on the distinction between the Alexandrine and what he calls the trimetre couplet, *e.g.*

Why ring| not out| the bells| aloud| throughout| the town|

I shall not carry further my examination of Dr. Abbott's system. I have stated the chief objections which I think it is open to, but no one can dispute the judgment, the acuteness, and the laborious industry which are exhibited in his volumes. As a critic of Shakespeare he seems to me to err on the side of regularity, by which I mean that he is too anxious to reduce every line to the normal shape. No doubt he allows many broken lines; but I think he goes too far in endeavouring to raise the following, for instance, to the full number of syllables by dissyllabizing *will* and *fare* :

Why then| I wi|ll. Fa|rewell| old Gaunt|.

Surely it is better to suppose the actor to supply the want of the missing syllable by the pause which marks the change of subject, than to dwell on such a monosyllable as *will*.

In the conversation which followed the reading of the paper, Mr. A. J. Ellis, while agreeing with the criticisms passed on the systems of Dr. Guest and Dr. Abbott, expressed his dislike to the application of the classical terminology to modern metres, and objected to laying down minute and mechanical rules of prosody. He considered that in the English heroic the unit of measure was indiscriminately either dissyllabic or trisyllabic, and that, with regard to the accent, the only essential was that the stress should fall either on the final syllable of the third measure, or on the final syllables of the second and fourth measures.

Mr. Nicol and Mr. Cayley considered that a knowledge of the old French and Italian metres was requisite for understanding the development of English metre, and that in this respect all English treatises on the subject were defective. Mr. Nicol promised to send a quotation (given below) from Gaston Paris on this subject.

Mr. Sweet allowed that the use of metre by modern poets was as unrestricted as Mr. Ellis had stated; but children and uneducated persons generally read poetry in a mechanical sing-song, and he believed that the ancient reading of poetry was not very unlike this, and that the law of accentual metre was as definite and exact in the first instance as that of the quantitative metre of the Greeks and Romans.

Mr. Nicol thought this was certainly the case with Chaucer and Gower.

It was remarked that in that case the original English heroic must have been far more monotonous than the Hexameter or the Iambic Senarius, which not only admit alternative feet in several places, but also vary the rhythm by opposing accentual to quantitative stress. Thus the rude soldier's sing-song makes the metrical (quantitative) stress coincide with the accent in

Gállí|as sublégit| Cáesar| Níco|médes| Cáesar|em,

but Virgil, the great master of rhythmical art, balances the one by the other in the first four feet of

Itáli|am fá|to prófu|gus La|vínia| vénit|.

Mr. Furnivall stated that he knew as a fact that Dr. Guest had refused to allow of a second edition of his book, and that he must therefore not be held responsible for the views contained in it. He also mentioned that Tennyson repudiated Dr. Abbott's scanning of at least one of his lines; that, namely, given in *Eng. Less.* § 138:

Down the| low turr|et sta|irs pa'|pitating.

OLD FRENCH DECASYLLABIC METRE.

Extract from M. Gaston Paris's edition of *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, poème du XI^e siècle (Paris, 1872), p. 131 :—

“Le vers a dix syllabes au *minimum*; il peut en avoir onze ou douze si l'hémistiche¹ et le vers ont une terminaison féminine. Il y a donc quatre types : 1^o vers de dix syllabes, masculins à l'hémistiche et à la rime : ||*Ja máis*| *n'iert téls*|| *com fút*| *as an*|*ceisórs*|| ; 2^o vers de onze syllabes, masculins à l'hémistiche, féminins à la rime : ||*Sor toz*| *ses pèrs*|| *l'amát*| *li em*|*perédre*|| ; 3^o vers de onze syllabes, féminins à l'hémistiche, masculins à la rime : ||*Enfánt*| *nos donè*|| *qui séit*| *a ton*| *talént*|| ; 4^o vers de douze syllabes, féminins à l'hémistiche et à la rime : ||*Donc li*| *remembrèt*|| *de son*| *seinór*| *celéstè*||. Le vers est donc un *décasyllabe*, pouvant avoir une syllabe de plus, nécessairement atone, après la quatrième et après la dixième... Le décasyllabe apparaît pour la première fois dans le poème de Boèce, où il a exactement le même caractère que dans le nôtre; c'est aussi le vers du *Roland* et de la plupart des anciennes chansons de geste. Le vers est toujours très-exactement fait, et toutes les syllabes comptent : ...pour savoir ...la juste mesure il faut tenir compte des cas où se produit l'*élision*.”

I have marked the feet and hemistich; and put an acute over the accented words and syllables, a grave over the extra unaccented syllable. M. Paris does not state—it being generally known—that the second syllable of the second and fifth feet must be accented. Words ending in a syllable with unaccented *e* have the accent on the one before it; all others on the last. The accents in the other feet (always dissyllabic) are not fixed; the cesura is always after the second foot.

The poem on Boethius is of the tenth century, and is the oldest Provençal work of which a fragment has been pre-

¹ “ Cette dénomination est admise, bien qu'à la rigueur elle soit inexacte.”

served; here are two lines (from Bartsch's *Chrestomathie Provençale*, 2^e édition, Elberfeld, 1868, p. 1):

Pro non| es gáigrè||, si pe|nedén|za 'n prén||.
No cre|dét déu|| lo nós|tre cre|atór||.

There are no feminine rhymes; in the first example the *e* of *en* is elided after the preceding *a*.

The *Chanson de Roland* is eleventh century, rather later than the *Alexis*, and its versification is just the same (Th. Müller's edition of the Oxford MS., Göttingen, 1863, p. 1, 2):

Cárles| li réis||, nóstre em|peré|re mágnè||.
Il en| apélèt|| e ses| dúx e| ses cúntès||.
Blancan|drins fút|| des plus| saíves| païéns||.
De vas|selágè|| fut a|séz che|valér||.

The first of these has the unaccented *e* of *nostre* elided before the following vowel, as usual.

H. NICOL.