

hills. The materialist of to-day has, in his main conclusions, not gone a step beyond Lucretius and Democritus. The sceptic merely echoes what was said as forcibly by Pyrrho and the Eleatic Zeno: The pessimist is parroting the arguments of Hegesippus. The germ of every modern speculative system is discernible in Plato and his mighty pupil. The mind of man, in fact, exhausted all the possibilities of philosophic thought some twenty centuries ago, and since then human ingenuity has formulated nothing new. Everything has been thought, everything has been written; and it is all *Mayâ*—beginning nowhere and ending in a fog.

Unthinking persons sometimes speak of mere "blind faith." But in the sphere of things like these, it is rather Reason, unguided and uncontrolled, that is really smitten with eternal blindness; that gropes and stumbles, and that after toiling painfully over many a weary path, finds itself fainting and exhausted at the very place from which it started; while Faith alone, whose undimmed eyes have been divinely opened, sees clearly down the endless vista of eternity. Reason falters, but Faith is sure. Reason becomes at last impoverished, but Faith grows richer with the lapse of time. Reason sickens and falls fainting by the way; but Faith goes on serenely to the end.

There is need of Faith to-day in philosophy and in religion, two spheres which in the highest sense are one; for in the end it is Faith alone that satisfies the needs of every human soul. It is here that we can find the secret of the

wonderful power of Catholicism—that it has learned and thoroughly assimilated this great fundamental truth which Protestantism seems unable to acquire. There come to us the warring of unnumbered sects and controversial clamour without end between those, on the one hand, who would make religious truth turn on the pointing of a Hebrew text in some ink-smeared palimpsest; and those who, on the other hand, imagine that salvation is to be secured by setting up sporadic soup-kitchens and by stocking missionary homes with parti-coloured pen-wipers.

But he who wanders in the darkness of uncertainty and who has found in reason but a treacherous guide, needs something higher, deeper, richer and more spiritual far than this. Struggling onward through the storm and night, repelled and driven further by the cold, chill formalism that looks out on him superciliously from its grated windows, he plunges with a growing terror into a still deeper darkness; following perhaps the fitful lead of Atheism that with ghastly grin beckons him onward when he shrinks back shuddering at the chasm's brink where yawn abysmal deeps of infinite despair; until at last, beyond the beating of the storm and the gloom of an unfathomable darkness, he sees the House of Faith, serenely radiant with light, filled with the sound of melodious music, and opening wide its gates to shelter and defend; and to diffuse through all the depths of his poor shaken soul the peace, the comfort, and the divinely perfect beauty of an endless benediction.

Harry Thurston Peck.

AN INQUIRY AS TO RHYME

"I have a theory about double rhymes for which I shall be attacked by the critics, but which I could justify perhaps on high authority, or, at least, analogy," wrote Mrs. Browning to a friend not long after the publication of one of her books. "These volumes of mine have more double rhymes than any two books of English poems that ever to my knowledge were printed; I mean of English poems, not comic. Now of double

rhymes in use, which are perfect rhymes, you are aware how few there are, and yet you are also aware of what are admirable in effect in making a rhythm various and vigorous double rhyming is in English poetry. Therefore I have used a certain license; and after much thoughtful study of the Elizabethan writers have ventured it with the public. And do you tell me—you who object to the use of a different vowel in a double rhyme—why you

rhyme (as every body does, without blame from everybody) *given to heaven*, when you object to my rhyming *remember to chamber*? The analogy is all on my side, and I believe that the spirit of the English language is also."

Here Mrs. Browning raises a question of interest to all who have paid any attention to the technique of verse. No doubt, double rhymes do give vigour and variety to a poem, although no modern English lyricist has really rivalled the magnificent mediæval *Dies Irae*, wherein the double rhymes thrice repeated fall one after the other like the beating of mighty trip-hammers. There is no doubt also that the English language is not so fertile in double rhymes as the Latin, the German, or the Italian; and that some of the English poets, clutching for these various and vigorous effects, have refused to abide by the strict letter of the law, and have claimed the license of modifying the emphatic vowel from one line to its mate. Mrs. Browning defends this revolt, and finds it easy to retort to her correspondent that he himself has ventured to link *heaven* and *given*. Many another poet has coupled these unwilling words; and not a few have also married *river* and *ever*, *meadow* and *shadow*, *spirit* and *inherit*.

Mrs. Browning is prepared to justify herself by authority or at least by analogy; and yet, in bringing about the espousal of *chamber* and *remember*, she is evidently aware that it is no love-match she is aiding and abetting, but at best a marriage of convenience. She pleads precedence to excuse her infraction of a statute the general validity of which she apparently admits. The most that she claims is that the tying together of *chamber* and *remember* is permissible. She seems to say that these ill-mated pairs are, of course, not the best possible rhymes, but that, since double rhymes are scarce in English, the lyricist may, now and then, avail himself of the second best. An American poet of my acquaintance is bolder than the British poetess; he has the full courage of his convictions. He assures me that he takes pleasure in the tying together of incompatible words like *river* and *ever*, *meadow* and *shadow*, finding in these arbitrary matings a capricious and agreeable relief from the monotony of more regular rhyming. To

me this is as though he did not object to the bonds of matrimony, but appreciated also the occasional advantages of free love.

This forces us to consider the basis upon which any theory of "allowable" rhymes must rest—any theory, that is, which, after admitting that certain rhymes are exact and absolutely adequate, asserts also that certain other combinations of terminal words, although they do not rhyme completely and to the satisfaction of all, are still tolerable. This theory accepts certain rhymes as good, and it claims in addition certain others as "good enough." Upon these latter a stigma may rest, it is true, but not quite justly, since their union is not really illegitimate; although they cannot show any wedding certificate, their friends like to believe that they may have been morганatically married once upon a time.

The objection to the pairing of *spirit* and *inherit*, of *remember* and *chamber*, and the like, cannot be founded upon the fact that in the accepted orthography of the English language the spelling of the terminations differs. Rhyme has to do with pronunciation and not with orthography; rhyme is a match between sounds. The symbols that represent these sounds—or that may misrepresent them more or less violently—are of little consequence. What is absurdly called a "rhyme to the eye" is a flagrant impossibility, or else *though* may pair off with *enough*, *clean* with *ocean*, and *plague* with *ague*. The eye is not the judge of sound, any more than the nose is the judge of colour. *Height* is not a rhyme to *eight*; but it is a rhyme to *sight*, to *bite*, to *proselyte*, and to *indict*. So *one* does not rhyme with either *gone* or *tone*; but it does with *son* and with *bun*. *Tomb* and *comb* and *rhomb* and *bomb* are not rhymes; but *tomb* and *doom*, and *spume* and *rheum* are. The objection to the linking together of *meadow* and *shadow*, and of *ever* and *river* is far deeper than any superficial difference of spelling; it is rooted in the difference of the sounds themselves. In spite of the invention of printing, or even of writing itself, the final appeal of poetry is still to the ear and not to the eye.

Probably the first utterances of man were rhythmic, and certainly poetry had advanced far toward perfection long be-

fore the alphabet was devised as an occasional substitute for speech. In the beginning the poet had to charm the ears of those whom he sought to move, since there was then no way by which he could reach the eye also. To the rhapsodists verse was an oral art solely, as it is always for the dramatists, whose speeches must fall trippingly from the tongue, or fail of their effect. The work of the lyrist—writer of odes, minnesinger, troubadour, ballad-minstrel—has always been intended to be said or sung; that it should be read is an after-thought only. Even to-day, when the printing-press has us all under its wheels, it is by our tongues that we possess ourselves of the poetry we truly relish. A poem is not really ours till we know it by heart, and can say it to ourselves, or at least until we have read it aloud, and until we can quote it freely. If a poem has actually taken hold on our souls, it rings in our ears, even if we happen to be visualisers also, and can call up at will the printed page whereon it is preserved.

This fact, that poetry is primarily meant to be spoken aloud rather than read silently, although obvious when plainly stated, has not been firmly grasped by many of those who have considered the technique of the art, and therefore there is often obscurity in the current discussions of rhyme and rhythm. In the rhetoric of verse there is to-day not a little of the confusion which existed in the rhetoric of prose before Herbert Spencer put forth his illuminating and stimulating essay on the "Philosophy of Style." Even in that paper he suggested that the Principle of Economy of effort was as applicable to verse as to prose; and he remarked that "were there space, it might be worth while to inquire whether the pleasure we take in rhyme, and also that which we take in euphony, are not partly ascribable to the same general cause."

This Principle of Economy of Attention explains why it is that any style of speaking or writing is more effective than another, by reminding us that we have, at any given moment, only just so much power of attention, and that, therefore, however much of this power has to be employed on the form of any message must be subtracted from the total power, leaving just so much less

attention available for the apprehension of the message itself. To convey a thought from one mind to another, we must use words the reception of which demands more or less mental force, and therefore that statement is best which carries the thought with the least verbal friction. Some friction there must be always; but the less there is, the more power of attention the recipient has left to master the transmitted thought.

It is greatly to be regretted that Spencer did not spare the space to apply to verse this principle, which has been so helpful in the analysis of prose. He did go so far as to suggest that metrical language is more effective than prose, because when "we habitually pre-adjust our preceptions to the measured movement of verse" it is "probable that by so doing we economise attention." This suggestion has been elaborated by one of his disciples, Mr. Grant Allen, in his treatise on *Physiological Esthetics*, and it has been formally controverted by the late Mr. Gurney, in his essay on the "Power of Sound." Perhaps both Spencer and Gurney are right; part of our pleasure in rhythm is due to the fact that "the mind may economise its energies by anticipating the attention required for each syllable," as the former says, and part of it is "of an entirely positive kind, acting directly on the sense," as the latter maintains.

Whether or not Spencer's Principle of Economy of Attention adequately explains our delight in rhythm, there is no doubt that it can easily be utilised to construct a theory of rhyme. Indeed, it is the one principle which provides a satisfactory solution to the problem propounded by Mrs. Browning. No one can deny that more or less of our enjoyment of rhymed verse is due to the skill with which the poet satisfies with the second rhyme the expectation he has aroused with the first. When he ends a line with *gray*, or *grow*, or *grand*, we do not know which of the two score or more of possible rhymes to each of these the lyrist will select, and we await his choice with happy anticipation. If he should balk us of our pleasure, if he should omit the rhyme we had confidently counted upon, we are rudely awakened from our dream of delight, and we ask ourselves abruptly what has happened. It is as

though the train of thought had run off the track. Spencer notes how we are put out by halting versification; "much as at the bottom of a flight of stairs a step more or less than we counted upon gives us a shock, so too does a misplaced accent or a supernumerary syllable."

So, too, does an inaccurate or an arbitrary rhyme. If verse is something to be said or sung, if its appeal is to the ear primarily, if rhyme is a terminal identity of sound, then any theory of "allowable" rhymes is impossible, since an "allowable" rhyme is necessarily inexact, and thus may tend to withdraw attention from the matter of the poem to its manner. No doubt there are readers who do not notice the incompatibility of these matings, and there are others who notice yet do not care; but the more accurately trained the ear is, the more likely these alliances are to annoy, and the less exact the rhyme the more likely the ear is to discover the discrepancy. The only safety for the rhymester who wishes to be void of all offence is to risk no union of sounds against whose marriage anybody knows any just cause of impediment. Perhaps a wedding within the prohibited degrees may be allowed to pass without protest now and again, but sooner or later somebody will surely forbid the banns.

Just as a misplaced accent or a supernumerary syllable gives us a shock, so does the attempt of Mrs. Browning to pair off *remember* and *chamber*; so may also the attempt of Mrs. Browning's correspondent to mate *heaven* and *given*, and of Tennyson to unite *river* and *for ever*, and of Poe to link together *valleys* and *palace*. The lapse from the perfect ideal may be but a trifle, but a lapse it is nevertheless. A certain percentage of our available attention may thus be wasted, and worse than wasted; it may be called away from the poem itself, and absorbed suddenly by the mere versification. For a brief moment we may be forced to consider a defect of form, when we ought to have our minds absolutely free to receive the poet's meaning. Whenever a poet cheats us of our expectancy of perfect rhyme, he forces us to pay exorbitant freight charges on the gift he has presented to us.

It is to be noted, however, that as rhyme is a matching of sounds, certain

pairs of words whose union is not beyond reproach can hardly be rejected without pedantry, since the ordinary pronunciation of cultivated men takes no account of the slight differences of sound audible if the words are uttered with absolute precision. Thus Tennyson in the "Revenge" rhymes *Devon* and *Heaven*; and thus Lowell in the *Fable for Critics* rhymes *irresistible* and *unwistable*. In *Elsie Venner* Dr. Holmes held up to derision "the inevitable rhyme of Cockney and Yankee beginners, *morn* and *dawn*," but, at the risk of revealing myself as a Yankee of New York, I must confess that any pronunciation of this pair of words seems to me stilted that does not make them quite impeccable as a rhyme.

It is in the *Adventures of Philip* that Thackeray records his hero's disapproval of a poet who makes *fire* rhyme with *Marire*. Even if the rhyme is made accurate to the ear, it is only by convicting the lyrist of carelessness of speech—not to call it vulgarity of pronunciation. But Dr. Holmes himself, sharp as he was upon those who rhymed *dawn* and *morn*, was none the less guilty of a peccadillo quite as reprehensible—*Elizas* and *advertiser*s. Whittier ventured to chain *Eva* not only with *leave her* and *receive her*, which suggest a slovenly utterance, but also with *give her*, *river*, and *never*, which are all of them wrenched from their true sounds to force them unto a vain and empty semblance of a rhyme. A kindred Cockney recklessness can be found in one of Mrs. Browning's misguided modernisations of Chaucer:

Now grant my ship some smooth haven win her,
I follow Statius first, and then Corinna.

In each of these cases the poet takes out a wedding license for his couplet, only at the cost of compelling the reader to mis-call the names of these ladies, and to address them as *Marire*, *Elizer*, *Ever*, and *Corinner*; and though the rhymes themselves are thus placed beyond reproach, the poet is revealed as regardless of all delicacy and precision of speech. Surely such a vulgarity of pronunciation is as disenchanting as any vulgarity in grammar.

Far less offensive than this wilful slovenliness, and yet akin to it, is the trick of forcing an emphasis upon a final syllable which is naturally short, in order

that it may be made to rhyme with a syllable which is naturally long. For example, in this exquisite lyric of Lovelace's, "To Althea from Prison," in the second quatrain of the second stanza we find that we must prolong the final syllable of the final word:

When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
When healths and draughts go free,
Fishes that tipple in the deep
Know no such liberty.

Here the rhyme evades us unless we read the last word *libertee*. But what then are we to do with the same word in the second quatrain of the first stanza? To get his rhyme here, the poet insists on our reading the last word *libertie*:

When I lie tangled in her hair
And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air
Know no such liberty.

Lovelace thus forces us not only to give an arbitrary pronunciation to the final word of his refrain, but also to vary this arbitrary pronunciation from stanza to stanza, awkwardly arresting our attention to no purpose, when we ought to be yielding ourselves absolutely to the charm of his most charming poem. Many another instance of this defect in craftsmanship can be discovered in the English poets, one of them in a lyric by that master of metrics, Poe, who opens the "Haunted Palace" with a quatrain in which *tenanted* is made to mate with *head*:

In the greenest of our valleys,
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its *head*.

In the one poem of Walt Whitman's in which he seemed almost willing to submit to the bonds of rhyme and metre, and which—perhaps for that reason partly—is the lyric of his now best known and best beloved, "O Captain, My Captain," certain of the rhymes are possible only by putting an impossible stress upon the final syllables of both words of the pair:—

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people
all *exulting*,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel
grim and *during*.

And again:

For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths, for you
the shores *a-crowding*;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager
faces *turning*.

In all these cases—Lovelace's, Poe's, Whitman's—we find that the Principle of Economy of Attention has been violated, with a resulting shock which diminishes somewhat our pleasure in the poems, delightful as they are, each in its several way. We have been called to bestow a momentary consideration on the mechanism of the poem, when we should have preferred to reserve all our power to receive the beauty of its spirit.

It may be doubted whether any pronounciation, however violently dislocated, can justify Whittier's joining of *bruised* and *crusade* in his "To England," or Browning's conjunction of *windows* and *Hindoos* in his "Youth and Art." In "Cristina" Browning tries to combine *moments* and *endowments*; in his "Another Way of Love" he conjoins *spider* and *consider*; and in his "Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister" he binds together *hose-hairs* and *Corsair's*. Perhaps one reason why Browning has made his way so slowly with the broad public—whom every poet must conquer at last, or in the end confess defeat—is that his rhymes are sometimes violent and awkward, and sometimes complicated and arbitrary. The poet has revelled in his own ingenuity in compounding them, and so he flourishes them in the face of the reader. The Principle of Economy of Attention demands that in serious verse the rhyme must be not only so accurate as to escape remark, but also wholly unstrained. It must seem natural, necessary, obvious, even inevitable, or else our minds are wrested from a rapt contemplation of the theme to a disillusioning consideration of the sounds by which it is bodied forth.

"Really the metre of some of the modern poems I have read," said Coleridge, "bears about the same relation to metre, properly understood, that dumb-bells do to music; both are for exercise, and pretty severe too, I think." A master of metre Browning proved himself again and again, very inventive in the new rhythms he introduced, and almost unfailingly felicitous; and yet there are poems of his in which the rhymes impose on the reader a steady muscular exercise. In "The Glove," for example, there not only abound manufactured rhymes, each of which in turn arrests the attention, and each of which demands a most conscientious articulation before the ear

can apprehend it; but with a persistent perversity the poet puts the abnormal combination first, and puts last the normal word with which it is to be united in wedlock. Thus *aghast I'm* precedes *pastime*, and *well swear* comes before *elsewhere*. This is like presenting us with the answer before propounding the riddle.

In comic verse, of course, difficulty gaily vanquished may be a part of the joke, and an adroit and unexpected rhyme may be a witticism in itself. But in the *Ingoldsby Legends* and in the *Fable for Critics* it is generally the common word that comes before the uncommon combination the alert rhymester devises to accompany it. When a line of Barham's ends with *Mephistopheles* we wonder how he is going to solve the difficulty, and our expectation is swiftly gratified with *coffee lees*; and when Lowell informs us that Poe

. . . talks like a book of iambs and *pentameters*,

we bristle our ears while he adds:

In a way to make people of common sense
damn metres.

But "The Glove" is not comic in intent; the core of it is tragic, and the shell is at least romantic. Perhaps a hard and brilliant playfulness of treatment might not be out of keeping with the psychologic subtlety of its catastrophe; but not a few readers resentfully reject the misplaced ingenuity of the wilfully artificial double rhymes. The incongruity between the matter of the poem and the manner of it attracts attention to the form, and leaves us the less for the fact.

It would be interesting to know just why Browning chose to do what he did in "The Glove" and in more than one other poem. He had his reasons, doubtless, for he was no unconscious warbler of unpremeditated lays. If he refused to be loyal to the Principle of Economy of Attention, he knew what he was doing. It was not from any heedlessness—like that of Emerson when he recklessly rhymed *woodpecker* with *bear*; or like that of Lowell when he boldly insisted on rhyming the same *woodpecker* with *hear*. Emerson and Lowell—and Whittier also—it may be noted, were none of them enamoured of technique; and when a couplet or a quatrain or a stanza of theirs happened to attain perfection, as these

do not infrequently, we cannot but feel it to be only a fortunate accident. They were not untiring students of versification, for ever seeking to spy out its mysteries and to master its secrets, as Milton was, and Tennyson and Poe.

And yet no critic has more satisfactorily explained the essential necessity of avoiding discords than did Lowell when he affirmed "that not only metre but even rhyme itself was not without suggestion in outward nature. Look at the pine, how its branches, balancing each other, ray out from the tapering stem in stanza after stanza, how spray answers to spray, strophe and antistrophe, till the perfect tree stands an embodied ode, Nature's triumphant vindication of proportion, number, and harmony. Who can doubt the innate charm of rhyme who has seen the blue river repeat the blue o'erhead; who has been ravished by the visible consonance of the tree growing at once toward an upward and a downward heaven on the edge of the twilight cave; or who has watched how, as the kingfisher flitted from shore to shore, his visible echo flies under him, and completes the fleeting couplet in the visionary vault below? . . . You must not only expect, but you must expect in the right way; you must be magnetised beforehand in every fibre by your own sensibility in order that you may feel what and how you ought."

Here Lowell is in full agreement with Poe, who declared that "what, in rhyme, first and principally pleases, may be referred to the human sense or appreciation of equality." But there is no equality in the sound of *valleys* and *palace*, and so the human sense is robbed of its pleasure; and there is no consonance, visible or audible, between *woodpecker* and *hear*, and so we are suddenly demagnetised by our own sensibility, and cannot feel what and how we ought.

So long as the poet gives us rhymes exact to the ear and completely satisfactory to the sense to which they appeal, he has solid ground beneath his feet; but if once he leaves this, then is chaos come again. Admit *given* and *heaven*, and you cannot deny *chamber* and *remember*. Having relinquished the principle of uniformity of sound, you land yourself logically in the wildest anarchy. Allow *shadow* and *meadow* to be legitimate, and how

can you put the bar sinister on *hear* and *woodpecker*? Indeed, I fail to see how you can help feeling that John Phoenix was unduly harsh when he rejected the poem of a Young Astronomer beginning, "O would I had a telescope with fourteen slides!" on account of the atrocious attempt in the second line to rhyme *Pleiades* with *slides*.

Just as every instance of bad grammar interferes with the force of prose, so in verse every needless inversion and every defective rhyme interrupts the impression which the poet wishes to produce. The greatest poets have accepted the obligation, and there is scarcely an imperfect rhyme in all Shakespeare's works and in all Milton's. And there are really very few in Pope's poems, although there may seem to be many, for since Queen Anne's day our language has modified its pronunciation here and there, leaving only to the Irish now the *tea* which is a perfect rhyme to *obey*, and the *join* which is a perfect rhyme to *line*.

Perhaps the prevalence in English verse of the intolerable "allowable" rhymes is due in part to an acceptance of what seems like an evil precedent, to be explained away by our constantly changing pronunciation. Perhaps it is due in part also to the present wretched orthography of our language. The absurd "rhymes to the eye" which abound in English are absent from Italian verse and from French. The French, as the

inheritors through the Latin of the great Greek tradition, have a finer respect for form, and strive constantly for perfection of technique, although the genius of their language seems to us far less lyric than ours. Théodore de Banville, in his little book on French versification, declares formally and emphatically that there is no such thing as a poetic license. And Voltaire, in a passage admirably rendered into English by the late Frederick Locker-Lampson, says that the French "insist that the rhyme shall cost nothing to the ideas, that it shall be neither trivial, nor too far-fetched; we exact vigorously in a verse the same purity, the same precision, as in prose. We do not admit the smallest license; we require an author to carry without a break all these chains, yet that he should appear ever free."

In a language as unrhythmic as the French, rhyme is far more important than it need be in a lilting and musical tongue like our own; but in the masterpieces of the English lyrists, as in those of the French, rhyme plays along the edges of a poem, ever creating the expectation it swiftly satisfies and giving most pleasure when its presence is felt and not flaunted. Like the dress of the well-bred woman, which sets off her beauty without attracting attention to itself, rhyme must be adequate and unobtrusive, neither too fine nor too shabby, but always in perfect taste.

Brander Matthews.

THE FIRST BOOKS OF SOME AMERICAN AUTHORS

I. HAWTHORNE, EMERSON, THOREAU, WHITTIER.

Great authors have generally begun writing and printing early in life. Their first books, often issued anonymously and in small numbers, are usually of comparatively little literary value in themselves, but as forerunners of more important work appearing in after years they are of some interest to the general reader and of great interest to the student of an author's work. Published when the writer was unknown to fame, they have a meagre sale in their little day, and

most copies are destroyed or lost; frequently too an author has made a special effort to gather in and destroy all procurable copies of some such early and premature work.

This was the case with Hawthorne, whose first published book, *Fanshawe*, appeared in Boston in 1828. He was then a young man, shy of disposition and little known, having published previous to this date, only a few short tales in New England magazines of small