

ual verses lies the source of some of the faults of Browning's verse. The accented ending, by bringing the line to an accented close, marks the completion of a line very strongly, and so detracts from the flexibility of the rhythm. Thus in Shakespeare's best verse the lines flow together almost imperceptibly, and of themselves, as it were; and we have no sense of having passed from one line into another. When the ending of a verse is catalectic, and the anacrusis is dropped from the succeeding one, the two accented syllables are thrown immediately together, and the line-rhythm is made doubly strong. Cases of this are comparatively frequent in Browning, rising to about 50 per cent. in Guido's second speech.

This method of verse-construction could produce a rhythm which would be intolerably monotonous, if there were no compensating principle of fusion, which would blend the individual verses together to form the larger strophe-groups. This compensation Browning finds in *enjambement*, or *run-on lines*. By means of this principle, all the advantages of a closely-defined line-rhythm are combined with the characteristic which all the best blank verse has — a free and varied rhythm, and a continuous flow from line to line. Had Browning emphasized his line-structure less and preserved his characteristic boldness in the use of *enjambement*, the result would have been a chaotic verse, differing as little from prose as the decadent Elizabethan product. But combining the close line-structure and the free *enjambement*, the result is a verse characteristically his own, and suited to all the purposes of blank verse, without any descent into mere prose.

In *The Ring and the Book* the proportion of run-on lines is large, varying from 24 to 34 per cent. The use of the run-on lines is, however, not varied in any mechanical or arbitrary way, but organically, and in keeping with the characters. Pompilia's verse remains more within the limits of the line than the others, only 24 per cent. of her lines