

tact between the Greek and Latin literature. It seems then probable that the Irish prosody influenced the Latin.

A short analysis increases the probability. The earliest pieces of Greek literature are two poems attributed by tradition to Amergin, a bard of the Milesian invaders, a thousand or so years before Christ. Dr. Hyde, in his *Literary History of Ireland*, says they are the oldest pieces of literature in any European vernacular except Greek. In one of these poems we find systematic alliteration and "conachlon" rime—that is the riming of the last word of one line with the first of the next. The other poem by Amergin is in "rosg", that is rhythmic but unrimed. "It is the earliest example of blank verse." It is remarkable that the Irish—the inventors of rime—should have also invented blank verse, an indefinite number of centuries before it appears in other European literatures. It will also be noticed that the words "conachlon", and "rosg", as indeed all the terms of Irish prosody are native Irish—a further and very important proof that the verse system is of native development.

In a poem ascribed traditionally to the cousin of Amergin, but the real age of which is uncertain, we find alliteration, assonant and consonant rime used systematically. In the poems attributed to authors of the first four centuries of the Christian era, and a few of which certainly do date from this period, we find alliteration rimes, assonant rimes, double-end rimes, inlaid rimes and other forms, in an elaborated fashion.

Our argument may be summarised thus: The sudden appearance in the decadent Latin literature of the fifth century of alliteration, assonant and consonant rime he speaks the influence of a foreign prosody. Irish literature alone had a prosody of this kind. Contact was possible. The conclusion of the syllogism seems to follow.

But that is not all. The first Latin writers to employ systematically, alliteration and assonance, and among the very first to employ rime, were Irishmen! The first of these Irishmen who became a continental Latin writer is Sedulius. His "*Carmen Paschale*" (fifth century) forms the first Christian epic worthy of the name. He employed in his Latin the Irish prosody. Many of his verses with perfect assonant rime, were judged by latter Latinists who like ourselves are deaf to assonance, to be unperfect, and consonant or ordinary rime was substituted in their place! St. Secundius, a nephew of St. Patrick and consequently of the same century during which Latin rime just appeared, put the three characteristics of Irish pro-