

and short syllables was arranged in strict accordance with the rules of classical prosody; not as our verses are, merely by ear and accent. There are signs of change in the fifth century hymn-writers which become more and more marked as the Latin language decays; to speak more truly, grows into a new form, that of middle age Latin.

Rhyme begins as prosody ends, and first appears in the hymns of Venantius Fortunatus in the sixth century. He, flying from the Lombard invasion of Italy, found refuge in Gallia, where a dialect of Latin was still the language of the educated classes. Being of pleasant manners and a *bon vivant*, he found favour—scandal whispered too much favour—with countesses and great ladies, to whom he addressed “society verses” and amatory poems of some merit. (See essay on his writings in Thierry’s Works.) In those days literary merit did not disqualify a man from being a bishop. Venantius was raised to the episcopate, and henceforth wrote hymns—some of the best and most spirited yet composed. His was the glorious

*Vex illa Regis pro de unt!*

(The Royal Standard onward go,)

now sung in the Roman and English churches. (See Hymns Ancient and Modern.) Distinct traces of rhyme appear in this poet, who is the connecting link between classical Latin and the Middle Ages. From his time it becomes more and more an ornament of Latin poetry. It is a subject of dispute from what source and in what manner rhyme came into European verse; probably not, as some have thought, from the Arabian poets. Surely it may have developed spontaneously in the increasing complexity and demand for intricacy of form of the new European verse. It is the great difference between the old classical poetry and the new. Goethe

makes Helen, as representative of the old classical culture, wake to modern life. What astonishes her most is the change in poetry, the two lines having the same ending of rhyme at the end of each—as she puts it, “the two lines kissing each other.”

The tenth century, which Hallam calls the darkest of the Dark Ages, witnessed a retrograde movement towards the hymns in the form used in the East. With the gladness and opening life of the eleventh and following centuries came the rise of the European Universities, and the flowering forth of Gothic architecture. It was no longer pent into massive arches, to make gloomier the asceticism of the anchorite; the sense of beauty awakened into life; even churches became cheerful with the summer wild-flower carved on their columns, and the colours of rose and violet shining bright in the windows. The poetry used by the hymn-writers partook of this change; to them we owe the beautiful seven-syllable trochaic metre so lovable in some of our most perfect lyric poetry—as in Byron’s “Maid of Athens,” Shelley’s “Lines written among the Euganean Hills,” and Morris’s “In the Merry White-thorn Brake.” It occurs in some lovely lines attributed to St. Hildebert, and quoted in Longfellow’s “Golden Legend.” But enough of the mediæval poetry; it served a purpose of transition; and what life it had faded as illuminating became a lost art, and the colours in the cathedral windows grew dimmer in the coming dawn of the Reformation. During the reaction from the Church in Provence, which the Church in the day of her power was able to stamp out in blood, among the sectaries of Provence arose a new school of lyric poetry, in part derived from the rhymed Latin verse, but with far more intricacy of structure and a cadence of refrain and recurrence of rhyme—key-notes