

Rhymes of a Rounder

cate medieval forms. For all practical purposes I had been ignorant of them until I bought the anthology. Of their value in old French, or as to how well they satisfied an ancient demand, I cannot judge, for I am not learned in these matters. But from what I read of them they seemed for the most part parlor trifles, curios in rhyme, verbal bric-a-brac to the vigor of English unsuited. I found a few turned out in slang by Halverson of Toronto—ballade, villanelle, triolet, rondeau and roundel—more to my liking than the labored conceits of the anthology. And, doubtless, in Old Provence, when some troubadour-knight would set forth in springtime, with merry jongleurs by his side, to visit a neighboring castle, his plaints and love-songs uttered in these involved forms made good listening for all his audience. But in first attempting them I felt as if I were fingering obsolete instruments in the dead atmosphere of a museum; rotes, rebecks, ghitterns, theorbos, giques, cloncordes, galoots, and what not troubadourish fiddles; goblin-bellied things fantastically stringed; well enough one time maybe for a low serenade to some lady barely out of reach, but now fit for little more than a toy symphony. However, I am quite ready to admit that these forms may have merit beyond my appreciation. Certainly I have never been so crass as to undervalue precise form in verse. Quite the contrary. To me some verse-forms are destinate vehicles of poetic emotion; so much so as to appear in the order of nature. For