RHYME.

Our ministers and orators like to speak of sins of omission and commission, of apprehending but not comprehending, of bearing and forbearing, of health and wealth, and moil and toil. A western editor classed his births, marriages, and deaths as follows: "Hatched," "Matched," "Despatched." Sidney Smith and Puseyism was "inflection and genuflection; posture and imposture; bowing to the east and curtseying to the west." Gibbon was once quite pleased at a compliment which, it was said, Sheridan, on the trial of Warren Hastings, paid his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," calling it the luminous page of Gibbon. "Luminous!" said Sheridan, when he was asked about it, "I said voluminous." Thackeray called Paul de Kock's novels and similar French works "fi-fi literature;" and foo-foo is nowadays a familiar cognomen of contempt. Such conceits in sound have always pleased the ear.

To the untutored mind the rhyme is a thing of vast significance; and the men who can make one is supposed to be possessed of the highest order of genius. I have seen people in New England, who thought they had developed the profoundest capacities of intellect, when they were able to bring the words "time" and "rhyme" into a juxtaposition, which would show their similarity of sound. These people believe rhyme to be synonymous with poetry. The descent from poetry to prose is easier than that from the sublime to the ridiculous. The following, for instance, is poetry:

> There was a miller who owned a mill,
> And if he ain't sold it, he owns it still.

By changing the word "still" into "yet," it becomes prose. It is amusing to notice the exertion, the contortions of sense and grammar, and the distortions of pronunciation which are necessary to the composition of a few lines of this sort of poetry. The occasion requiring such an effort is often of a solemn character, and the poem in demand an epitaph or elegy. In Manchester, England, the following was discovered:

> Here lies, alas! more's the pity,
> All that remains of Nicholas Newcity.
> N.B.—His name was "Newtown."

A correspondent, some years ago, told the story of a pole, standing bleak and bare upon the coast near the lighthouse at Holmes' Hole. "Years since, three fishermen went out to fish in a small sloop. During the day a heavy shower came on, and the lightning struck the sloop and killed the men. It was resolved by the inhabitants to erect a cedar pole over their grave, with a suitable epitaph. The intellect of the vicinity was brought into requisition to secure it; and the following was chosen from the epitaphs submitted:

> Here lie three friends who in their lives
> Were never known to rankle:
> Holmes' hole, cedar pole,
> Crankle, crinkle, crankle.

The last line is supposed to describe vividly the fact of death by lightning. The tablet could be seen in the churchyard a few years ago; but it is fallen now.

There is a surprising confusion of pronouns in the following, from an English tombstone:

> Him shall never more come back to we,
> But us shall surely one day go to he.

So the Puritans despised rules of accent when incompatible with rhyme and song:

> The race is not always to be got
> By them that fastest run.
> Nor the battell by the peopell
> That shoot with the longest gun.

The following is a Suffolk (Eng.) weather saying:

> A Saturday's noon and a Sunday full,
> Never was good nor never wull.

The ludicrousness of this sort of mispronunciation has been shown to advantage in the exquisite and artistic little poem relating the story of "George Washington" and the apple tree, commencing,

> There once lived a plantier
> With a son, his only love;
> To whom, upon his birth-day
> A bran new axe he guv.

Sometimes words are expanded or contracted for purposes of rhyme. An instance of expansion is the new version of "poeta nascitur, non fit:"

> T'aint every man can be a poet,
> No more'n a sheep can be a go-at.

A company of Irishmen, it is said, becoming possessed once of two fowls, agreed that they should be given to the man who could make six lines of poetry on the spot. The successful rhymster achieved his triumph by contradicting his words whenever necessary, as follows:

> Good friends, as I'm to make a po'm,
> Excuse me if I just step home,
> Two lines already—be not cru'l,
> Consider, honeys, I'm a fool.
> There's four lines—now I'll gain the fowls,
> With which I soon shall fill my bow'ls.

As a contrast to the difficulty experienced by people unpractised in rhymes, it is astonishing how those who are accustomed to handle words, as the stonelayer handles the stones that are to go into the wall, will place them and fit them so as to conform to the framework of the verse and to produce all sorts of harmonious and pleasant methods of expression. There seems to be scarcely a word in the English language which by some device, illegitimate and undignified though it may be, may not be hammered into rhyme.

Byron said that there was no English rhyme for "silver." A correspondent of the *Evening Post* proposed, some time ago, that its readers should exercise their ingenuity upon it. Half a dozen communications appeared in answer. One man wanted to know where the correspondent was brought up, not to remember the affecting lyric:

> Little Dickey Dilver
> Had a bow of silver—
> He bent his bow to shoot a crow
> And killed the old cat in the window.

Another refers to Kilve, a place mentioned in one of Wordsworth's poems, and produces a rhyme with the words, "Kilve or." Carl Benson pointed out that rhymes could be made to any extent by separating words, as—

> In this world of ill, vir-
> Tue often yields to silver.

Mickey Rooney, sometimes known as the Alderman, gave two lines, in which there was reason, if there was no rhyme:

> When for good milk we pays our silver,
> What the divil do they give us swill for?

One from the Latin was good:

> You ask, Can you give a rhyme for silver? *Nil vir.*

After all, there was no good English rhyme produced.

The next hard word produced was "spirit." One suggested "clear it," "fear it," etc.; another broke the word irrit-able into two parts, but a third was successful in finding in the dictionary the word "skirrit," which is the name of a garden-plant. A correspondent calling himself "Quicquid," asked for a rhyme for "liquid." Mickey Rooney proposed "chickweed," which they "oftin cure the sick wid." "Thick quid" was suggested by several, as:

> Of tobacco from Virginia a sailor chews a thick quid,
> He then from time to time ejects the brownish liquid.

Also:

> If from headache you'd be quick rid,
> Abandon stimulating liquid.

The "Knickerbocker Magazine," some years ago, offered a brass quarter dollar to the person who would find a rhyme for window. The prize was won by the following excellent stanza:

> A cruel man a beetle caught
> And to the wall him pinned, oh!
> Then said the beetle to the crowd,
> "Though I'm stuck up I am not proud,"
> And his soul went out at the window.

For the word "garden," "barr'd den" and "harden" have been suggested. For "carpet," "harp it" was proposed; and also the following "to a pretty barmaid:"

> Sweet maid of the inn,
> 'Tis surely no sin
> To toast such a beautiful bar pet.
> Believe me, my dear,
> Your feet would appear
> At home on a nobleman's carpet.

"Chicago" has been supposed to offer difficulties; and an unfortunate person has used "cargo" and "embargo" in a poem about it. But a right-minded youth has referred to some one by the name of Iago, who wanted to let his pa and ma go to the city of Chicago.

It is said that Coleridge, being asked for a rhyme for Juliana, replied:

> Coughing in a shady grove
> Sat my Juliana;
> Lozenges I gave my love,
> Ipecacuanha.

It was not a correct rhyme, however, for the sound of "ana" is identical in both lines. Hannah, manna, or Hosanna would have been better. As a counterpart to a line ending with Germany, Coleridge wrote, "Where sheets of paper we did blur many."

"Porringer" has been rhymed as follows:

> The Duke of York a daughter had,
> He gave the Prince of Orange her;
> Then said the prince, "Oh, I'm so glad,
> She'll make a rousing porringer."

The word "Timbuctoo" has occasionally employed the wit of writers. Here is one stanza:

> I went a hunting on the plains,
> The plains of Timbuctoo;
> I shot one buck for all my pains,
> And he was a slim buck, too.

Another proposed, if he were a cassowary on the sands of Timbuctoo, to eat a missionary, body, clothes, and *hymn-book too;* while a third, during the time of Mr. Buchanan's presidency, included Jim Buck too.

The hardest English monosyllable to rhyme is "month."

A stanza is extant, I believe, which breaks the phrase "gun thrown away," so that "gun the —" becomes a rhyme; and another rhymster says he tried a hundred times and succeeded the hundred and onth. But most people will disagree with him in calling that a success. There are but two or three good rhymes for "step;" though, of course, by separating syllables a great many may be produced.

"Twickenham" was supposed to be a rather difficult word for the poet; but a contributor to *Punch* exerted himself, and produced the following:

ON THE RIVER.

> I sat in a punt at Twickenham,
> I've sat at Hampton Wick in 'em—
> I hate sea boats, I'm sick in 'em—
> The man, I, Tom, and Dick in 'em.
> Oh, gentles! I've been pickin' 'em
> For bait, the man's been stickin' 'em
> (Cruel) on hooks with kick in 'em.
> The small fish have been lickin' 'em,
> And when the hook was quick in 'em,
> I with my my rod was nickin' 'em,
> Up in the air was flickin' 'em,
> My feet, so cold, kept kickin' 'em,
> We'd hampers, with *aspic* in 'em,
> Sandwiches made with chicken; 'em
> We ate; we'd stone jars thick, in 'em
> Good liquor; we pick-nic-ing 'em
> Sat, till our necks, a rick in 'em,
> We turned again t'wards Twickenham
> And paid our punts: for tickin' 'em
> They don't quite see at Twickenham.

A revision of the last stanza of Lowell's "Beaver Brook" is worth noticing, as showing a remarkable facility in the use of rhyme. As first printed it read:

> In that new childhood of the world,
> Life of itself shall dance and play;
> Fresh blood through Time's shrunk veins be hurled,
> And Labour meet Delight half way.

Few persons, not practised in verse, could have made different endings to the first and third lines with but the change of four words. As now printed it reads:

> In that new childhood of the earth,
> Life of itself shall dance and play;
> Fresh blood in Time's shrunk veins make mirth,
> And Labour meet Delight half way.

Puttenham gives a plon for testing a master of verse, "Make me so many strokes or lines with your pen as ye would have your song contain verses; and let every line bear its several length even as ye would have your verse of measure, suppose of four, five, six, eight or more syllables, and set a figure of every number at the end of the line, whereby ye may know its measure. Then where you will have your rhyme to fall, mark it with a stroke or semicircle passing over those lines, be they far or near in distance." After this, he says, give the theme; and if a man writes a poem according to the directions he is "master of the craft."

A literary society of Toulons, during the reign of Louis IV., proposed annually, for some time, rhymed ends for a song, generally in honour of the king, and the writer of that which was deemed the best, received a silver medal. It is said that the French writer Dulot, in the seventeenth century, once complained to some friends that he had lost a number of papers, among which were three hundred sonnets. Surprise being expressed that he had written so many, he explained that they were merely sonnets in blank, or rhymed ends of sonnets which had not yet been filled in. A French writer named Mallemans, who died in 1716, wrote a "Defiance of the Muses," consisting of a collection of thirty sonnets, composed in three days, on fourteen rhymed ends, proposed to him by a noble lady.

It is related by a young man named A. H. Bogert, a native of Albany, who died in 1826, aged 21, that he was never unsuccessful at any test of this nature. It was sometimes said that his impromptus were prepared beforehand, and his friends, Col. John B. Van Schaick and Charles Fenno Hoffman, on one occasion desired to put him to trial. Van Schaick picked up a copy of Byron, in which was the name of Lydia Kane, a clever and beautiful young lady known to them. As the name contained the same number of letters as the lines of a stanza of Childe Harold, Van Schaick suggested that the letters be written in a column, that he should open the book at random, and that Bogert should be required to write an acrostic on Miss Kane's name, with the rhymes of the stanza on which his finger should happen to rest. This was done, and the following was the stanza indicated by Van Schaick's finger:

> And must they fall? The young, the proud, the brave,
> To swell one bloated chief's unwholesome reign?
> No step between submission and a grave!
> The rise of rapine and the fall of Spain?
> And doth the Power that man adores ordain
> Their doom nor heed the suppliant's appeal?
> Is all that desperate valor acts in vain?
> And counsel sage and patriotic zeal,
> The veteran's skill, youth's fire, and manhood's heart of steel?

The time fixed was ten minutes; but before that had passed, Bogert had composed the following:

> Lovely and loved, o'er the unconquered brave,
> Your charms resistless, matchless girl, shall reign!
> Dear as the mother holds her infant's grave
> In love's own region, warm, romantic Spain!
> And should your fate to courts your steps ordain,
> Kings would in vain to regal pomp appeal,
> And lordly bishops kneel to you in vain,
> Nor valour's fire, nor law's power, nor Churchman's zeal
> Endure 'gainst love's (time's up) untarnished steel.

It is a common thing to string together an almost interminable number of words ending in *ation*, as in the following supposed epistles:

MADAM:

> Most worthy of estimation, after long consideration
> And much meditation, of your great reputation,
> You possess my admiration, and if such oblavation
> Is worthy of observation, and can obtain consideration,
> It will be aggrandization beyond all calculation,
> To the joy and exultation
> Of yours, SANS DISSIMULATION.

SIR:

> I perused your oration, with much deliberation,
> And a little consternation, at the great infatuation
> Of your weak imagination to show such veneration
> On so light a foundation; but after examination
> And serious contemplation, I suppose your animation
> Was the fruit of recreation, and had sprung from ostentation
> To display your education by odd enumeration.
> Or rather multiplication, of words of the same termination,
> Though of great variation in each respective signification
> Not without disputation, your laborious application
> To so tedious an occupation, deserves commendation
> And thinking imitation a sufficient gratification,
> I am, without hesitation,
> Yours, MARY MODERATION.

Another has written a poem on Night, with several lines on one syllable, commencing:

> Light
> Fades,
> Night
> Shades
> Appalling
> Are falling.

Southey's "Cataract of Lodore" is a wonder of rhyme. The original idea of that poem was probably taken from some lines in Garnett's "Tour of Scotland," which are stated to have been found in an album kept at the inn at Lanark, as follows:

> What fools are mankind,
> And how strangely inclined
> To come from all places
> With horses and chaises,
> By day and by dark,
> To the Falls of Lanark!
> For, good people, after all,
> What is a waterfall?

(The question might receive a somewhat different reply at the present day than the poet gives.)

> It comes roaring and grumbling,
> And leaping and tumbling,
> And hopping and skipping,
> And foaming and dripping,
> And struggling and toiling,
> And bubbling and boiling,
> And beating and jumping,
> And bellowing and thumping,
> I have much more to say upon
> Both Lime and Bonniton;
> But the trunks are tied on,
> And I must be gone.

In Rogers' "Table Talk," it is said that Porson was very fond of repeating these lines. One of the most difficult feats of rhyming ever performed was Hood's "Nocturnal Sketch," in which each line ends with three rhymes. It commences:

> Even has come; and from the dark park, hark
> The signal of the setting sun—one gun!

Most of the poets have amused themselves by overcoming stubborn words; Butler (in Hudibras) and Byron, perhaps, as much as any others. Swift's letters to Sheridan are very odd, but do not contain many perfect rhymes. The verses of Winthrop Mackworth Praed are remarkable for the apparent ease with which they run to rhyme. In his poetry is seen, peculiarly, the truth of the hackneyed saying of Butler:

> For rhyme the rudder is of verses,
> With which, like ships, they steer their courses.

He will sometimes follow out an idea that was suggested by a rhyme through two or three lines. He, as well as Butler, would use Ralph or Ralpho without regard to appropriateness, according to the exigencies of his verse. The influence of the rhyming and alliterative words is quite evident in the following lines from "Marriage Chimes," taken almost at Random:

> Some victims fluttered like a fly,
> Some languished like a lily;
> Some told their tale in poetry,
> And some in Piccadilly.
> Some yielded to a Spanish hat,
> Some to a Turkish sandal:
> Hosts suffered from an *entrechat*,
> And one or two from Handel.

Or in this couplet:

> She was a very pretty nun,
> Sad, delicate, and five feet one.

And what queer rhymes he has; as mole stir, bolster; ashes, moustaches; scientifics, hieroglyphics; Venus, between us; effront'ry, country; rondo, John Doe; pedantic, Atlantic; paternoster, Duke of Glo'ster; suggestions, questions; pyxes, crucifixes; Venice, tennis; mighty, Aphrodite; comical, astronomical; sick, Catholic; sing, revelling; trust in, Augustin; lilies, Achilles; lop-sided, I did, etc. Lowell has many ludicrous rhymes, not only in his imitations of the Yankee dialect, but elsewhere; as in the poem "To J. B. on sending me a Seven-yound Trout," where we find, for instance, "college or," and "sogdologer;" "moccasins," and "stock o' sins;" "falls us soft," and "appals us oft;" "tragi-comedies," and "with cool *aplomb* at ease;" "o'erstep it half," and "epitaph."

In writing any macaronic sort of verse, the liberty of changing the language on the pronunciation of a word takes away some of the difficulty of rhyming. This is evident in Burns' works, as in the use of the "gie us" with "see us;" "hame" (home) with "dame;" "stane" (stone) with "rain;" "siller" (silver) with "miller;" "brither" with "togither;" or in the following stanza from the lines "On a Scotch Bard gone to the West Indies."

> Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
> An' help him in a cozie biel;
> Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
> And fu' o' glee;
> He wadna wrang'd the vera de'il,
> That's owre the sea.

It would have been somewhat difficult to weave the words well, biel (or shelter), child, and devil into a similar poem.

It has often been strenuously urged that rhyme is a curse to our literature, and many efforts have been made to write pleasing verse without its use. The result has been to give an infinite and delightful variety to our poetical literature, but not to banish rhyme from it. Warton, speaking of Lord Surrey's translation of the second and fourth book of Virgil as the first pretentious composition in blank verse in the English language, calls it a noble attempt to break the bondage of rhyme. Blank verse was then growing fashionable in the Italian poetry, the school of Surrey. Felice Figlinei, a native of Sienna in Tuscany, as quoted by Warton, "In his admirable Italian commentary on the ethics of Aristotle, entitled 'Filosofia Morale Sopra il libri d'Ethica d'Aristotle,' declaims