

the complex and heterogeneous. This differentiation never took place with the Semitics, whose poetry may therefore be left out of account in our review of the history of metrical form.

The earliest Greek and Latin poetry shews signs of a past state of the literature when the poetry was still exclusively religious. The earliest known Latin versés were the Salian hymns. The Homeric hymns are survivals of the religious stage of Greek poetry, as is the solemn invocation of the Muse at the beginning of the *Iliad*. Still, these are merely survivals—the poetry of Homer is essentially secular and non-religious. From music it is not as yet differentiated. It was recited musically to the simple accompaniment of a lyre with four strings. From the time or tune necessitating some division into bars, arose the rhythm which we call *hexameter*, each line of which was complete in itself as a musical period, and had six bars or metres, hence the name *six-mètre*. Each of these metres might consist either of two long notes, or of one long and two short ones, excepting the last bar or metre but one (the fifth); for the distinguishing feature of the musical and metrical movement was that the last two metres or feet were invariably of the same time, as may be exemplified in the words:

“Strawberry. Ice-cream.”

The other four bars or metres or feet may be either of two long syllables, or of one long with two short, and these may be blended or alternated in any proportions. Thus the first four feet may be each of two long syllables, which the Greeks called a *spondee* i.e. the *thumb* with its two long joints. As thus:

Boys and | girls de | light in | eating | straw-
berry | ice-cream.

Or, the first four feet may be each of one long syllable and two short, in

Greek a dactyl, i.e. a *finger* with one long joint and two short, as

Whose are the | funds that de | fray the ex-
pense of the | strawberry ice-cream?

Or, dactyls and spondees may be varied in any proportions, as

For ten | cents you can | get your | girl a |
strawberry ice-cream.

This capability of variation gives infinite freshness to this measure, in spite of the inevitable monotony of the last two feet, varied by an occasional substitution of a spondee in the fifth foot, as

Ice-creams | never | yet were | made of | huckle-
berries.

The great narrative poems of Homer and Virgil were written in this metre, which has a majesty suited to what Mr. Mathew Arnold calls “the grand manner.” Its peculiar strength and grandeur are well described in words which we venture to translate from Schiller—

“Mightily sweepeth it on with swell of limitless surges!”

All around as you gaze there is only the sky and the waters.”

The hexameter rhythm lent itself also to widely divergent styles of poetry; after the age of the Homeric poems it ceased to be associated with music, or with a language in which, like Greek, every vowel sound had its own musical notation of long and short. The quantity, i.e. the length or shortness of each syllable, in Latin was determined by a series of arbitrary rules which assumed a very complicated form, but may be mainly reduced to two:—1. Every vowel before another vowel is *short*, as *Dei*a. 2. Every vowel before two consonants is *long*, as *Con*stance.

In hexameters were written the charming idyls of Theocritus, of which it has been well said, “If such was Greek poetry in its decadence, what was Greek poetry in its prime?” the