

ENGLISH PROSODY AND THE NATIONAL READERS.

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MY object in the present paper is to offer some suggestions which may assist the profession in teaching the Reading of Poetry. To do this satisfactorily it is very necessary to understand the principles upon which verse is constructed. All poetry is based upon some form, and although the varieties are almost endless, a careful examination of a few of them will enable us to analyze every possible form which can be adopted. At the same time it may be laid down that no composition of any length adheres strictly to its adopted model, but is marked by irregularities which also require a careful study. These irregularities are by no means to be regarded as faults, as they often add life and vigour to what would otherwise be tame and insipid. In the metrical analysis of a poem, then, we have first to find out the model on which it is based, and then to examine how far it comes up to its standard, and to what extent it deviates therefrom.

The component parts which enter into the construction of verse are syllables, feet, lines, and stanzas.

Syllables in Prosody are generally equivalent to those in Etymology, but there are some exceptions. For instance, in Etymology, *Assyrian** is a word of four syllables, while metrically

it has but three. Israel* may have two or three syllables. Salvation† may have three or four. Syllables are either accented or unaccented. Disyllables generally follow the ordinary rules. Trisyllables and polysyllables have often an additional accent, as in

"It was a famous vic-to-ry."

—Bk. IV., p. 180.

and in

"Lord! Thou didst love Je-rú-sa-lém."

—Bk. IV., p. 339.

Some monosyllables are always accented, others invariably unaccented, while a few are common, that is, sometimes they are accented, and at other times they are unaccented, according to their relation to the words which precede and follow them.

Feet are groups of syllables, and are of different kinds, according to the number and order of the accented and unaccented syllables. In English Prosody the feet differ from those in the Greek and Latin classics, inasmuch as in the latter the foot is determined by long and short syllables, while in the former it is regulated by accent. Though the difference between quantity and accent is great,

* "When Is-ra-el, of the Lord below'd."—*Scott*. Bk. VI., p. 19.

† "Is-ra-el in ancient days."—*Cowper*.

"Fallen is thy throne, O Is-ra-el."—*Moore*. Bk. IV., p. 339.

‡ "Sal-va-tion, O! the joyful sound."—*Watts*.

"A joyful noise make to the Rock

Of our sal-va-ti-on."

—Psalm XCV., Scotch version.

* "The As-sy-ri-an came down like a wolf on the fold."—*Byron*. Bk. IV., p. 291.