

A STUDY OF METRE

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649470297

A Study of Metre by T. S. Omond

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

T. S. OMOND

**A STUDY
OF METRE**

A STUDY OF METRE

A STUDY OF METRE

BY

T. S. OMOND

"The ear is a rational sense, and a chief judge of proportion."—THOS. CAMPION.

"A dunce like myself measures verse . . . by ear and not by finger."—A. C. SWINBURNE.

LONDON

GRANT RICHARDS

1903

TO ALL LOVERS OF ENGLISH POETRY.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY	ix
I. THE "PERIOD"—TIME AND PAUSE	1
II. THE "PERIOD"—ACCENT	17
III. THE "PERIOD"—QUANTITY	32
IV. DUPLÉ METRE (GENERAL)	43
V. DUPLÉ METRE (SPECIAL)	61
VI. TRIPLE METRE	83
VII. QUADRUPLÉ METRE, ETC.	99
VIII. EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF METHOD	120
APPENDIX: PSEUDO-CLASSICAL MEASURES	141



INTRODUCTORY

MODERN English prosody dates from Coleridge's dictum, in the preface to "Christabel" (1816), that not the syllables but the accents of his lines were to be reckoned. This remark of a great master cannot have been intended to give a complete theory. It says nothing about the arrangement of these accents, which is at least as vital as the fact of their occurrence. Probably he assumed their order of succession as obvious. This order, however, has been ignored by very many of his successors, who speak as if mere casual recurrence of accents sufficed to constitute verse. Thus, for example, our ordinary "heroic" line¹ is often said to be a line carrying *five stresses*, as though that were in itself distinctive. But the same description applies to many a prose sentence. Prosody is bound to furnish a criterion distinguishing verse from prose. Coleridge's "new principle," as he called it—new to the critics of his

¹ This name belongs to the best-known of all our lines, containing normally ten syllables, used by Shakespeare in his plays, Milton in "Paradise Lost," Pope in his *Essays* and *Satires*. It may be rhymed or rhymeless, in blank verse, couplet, or stanza.

INTRODUCTORY

day, but old as English poetry in meaning and application—gives a starting-point to those seeking such criterion. It indicates the path, which his pupils must follow for themselves.

A step forward was taken when Coventry Patmore, in the essay now appended to his *Poems*, proclaimed that the accents must be separated by "isochronous intervals." This pronouncement brought him into line with our musical scansionists, to all of whom Joshua Steele (*"Prosodia Rationalis,"* 1775) may be accounted father. Scansion by musical notation has not found much favour in this country, though Ruskin made use of it in his *"Elements of English Prosody"* (1880), representing the units of verse—termed by him "metres"—under the guise of minims and crotchets. In America it seems to have made more way. Sidney Lanier developed it systematically in *"The Science of English Verse"* (Boston, 1880), a book which has received strangely little attention on this side the Atlantic. Other independent workers have pursued the subject since. One of the latest, Mr. J. P. Dabney (*"The Musical Basis of Verse,"* New York and London, 1901), follows Lanier in general conception while criticising him in details, and seems almost to think that his leader invented the whole idea of musical scansion.

These writers naturally emphasize the idea of *time*. By the majority of our grammarians, on the other hand, it is completely ignored. While theoretically admitting time as an element in all verse, they practically leave it out of their account. Ordinary manuals of prosody never mention it, and usually