of ingenuity. Although in a language like the English it does no doubt require considerable ingenuity to construct a satisfactory sonnet of octave and sestet running upon four rhymes, this ingenuity is only a means to an end, the end being properly that a single wave of emotion, when emotion is either too deeply charged with thought, or too much adulterated with fancy, to pass spontaneously into the movements of pure lyric, shall be embodied in a single metrical flow and return. Whether any given sonnet be composed like that of Pier delle Vigne (of two quatrains with rhymes running a, b, a, b, a, b a, b, and of two tercets with rhymes running c, d, e, c, d, e), or whether the verses be arranged (on the authority of Shakespeare and Drayton) in three quatrains of alternate rhymes clinched by a couplet, or, as in the sonnet of Petrarch, in an octave of two rhymes and a sestet of either two or three rhymes, —in each case the peculiar pleasure which the ear derives from the sonnet as a metrical form lies in the number and arrangement of the verses being *prescribed,* and distinctly recognizable as being prescribed. That the impulse to select for the rendering of single phases of feeling or reflexion a certain recognized form is born of a natural and universal instinct is perhaps evidenced by the fact that even when a metrical arrangement discloses no structural law demanding a prescriptive number and arrangement of verses, the poet will nevertheless, in certain moods, choose to restrict himself to a prescribed number and arrangement, as in the cases of the Italian *stornello,* the Welsh *triban,* and the beautiful rhymeless short ode of Japanese poetry, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to Mr Chamberlain. And perhaps, if space permitted us to probe the matter deeply, we should find that the recognized prescription of form gives a sense of oneness that nothing else save the refrain can give to a poem which, being at once too long for a stanza in a series and too short to have the self-sustaining power of the more extended kinds of poetic art, suffers by suggesting to the ear a sense of the fragmentary and the inchoate. It is not then merely the number of the verses, it is also their arrangement as to rhymes,—an arrangement leading the ear to expect a prescribed sequence and then satisfying that expectation,—which entitles a form of fourteen verses to be called a sonnet.

Hence the so-called irregular sonnets of S. T. Coleridge, which lead the ear of the reader to expect the pleasure of a prescribed arrangement when what they have to offer is a pleasure of an exactly opposite kind—the pleasure of an absolute freedom from prescribed arrangement—are un­satisfactory, while (as the present writer has often pointed out) the same poet’s fourteen-line poem, “ Work without Hope,” in which the reader expects and gets freedom from prescription, is entirely satisfactory. This same little poem of Coleridge’s also affords an excellent illustration of another point in connexion with the sonnet. If we trace the history and the development of the sonnet from Pier delle Vigne to Rossetti we shall find that the poet’s quest from the very first has been to write a poem in fourteen verses so arranged that they should, better than any other number and arrangement of verses, produce a certain melodic effect upon the ear, and an effect, more­over, that should bear iteration and reiteration in other poems similarly constructed. Now if we ask ourselves whether, beautiful as is this poem, “Work without Hope,” taken as a single and original metrical arrangement, we should get out of a series of poems modelled line for line upon it that pleasure of iteration which we get out of a series of Petrarchan sonnets, we shall easily see why the regular sonnet of octave and sestet on the one hand, and what is called the Shakespearean sonnet on the other, have survived all other competing forms.

In modern Europe the sonnet has always had a peculiar fascination for poets of the first class—poets, that is, in whom what we have called poetic energy (see Poetry) and plastic power are equally combined. It would seem that the very fact that the sonnet is a recognized structure sug­gestive of mere art—suggestive in some measure, indeed, of what Schiller would call “ sport ” in art—has drawn some of the most passionate poets in the world to the sonnet as the medium of their sincerest utterances. Without being coldly artificial, like the rondeau, the sestina, the *ballade,* the *villanelle,* &c., the sonnet is yet so artistic in structure, its form is so universally known, recognized, and adopted as being artistic, that the too fervid spontaneity and reality of the poet’s emotion may be in a certain degree veiled, and the poet can whisper, as from behind a mask, those deepest secrets of the heart which could otherwise only find expression in purely dramatic forms.

That the sonnet was invented, not in Provence, as French critics pretend, but in Italy in the 13th century, is pretty clear, but by whom is still perhaps an open question. Mr S. Waddington *(Sonnets of Living Writers)* and several other contemporary critics attribute to Fra Guittone the honour of having invented the form. But Mr J. A. Symonds has reminded us that the sonnet beginning *Perd ch' amore,* attributed to Pier delle Vigne, secretary of state in the Sicilian court of Frederick, has claims which no student of early Italian poetry can ignore.

As regards English sonnets, whether the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean are really the best of all possible forms we need not inquire. But, inasmuch as they have become so vital and so dominant over other sonnet forms that when­ever we begin to read the first verse of an English sonnet we expect to find one or other of these recognized rhyme- arrangements, any departure from these two arrangements, even though the result be such a magnificent poem as Shelley’s “Ozymandias,” disappoints the expectation, baffles the ear, and brings with it that sense of the fragmentary and the inchoate to which we have before alluded. If, however, some writer should arise with sufficient originality of metrical endowment and sufficient poetic power to do what Keats, in a famous experiment of his tried to do and failed,—impress the public ear with a new sonnet structure, impress the public ear so powerfully that a new kind of expectance is created the moment the first verse of a sonnet is recited,—then there will be three kinds of English sonnets instead of two.

With regard to the Petrarchan sonnet, all critics are perhaps now agreed that, while the form of the octave is invariable, the form of the sestet is absolutely free, save that the emotions should govern the arrangement of the verses. But as regards the division between octave and sestet, Mr Mark Pattison says, with great boldness, but perhaps with truth, that by blending octave with sestet Milton missed the very object and end of the Petrarchan scheme. Another critic, however, Mr Hall Caine, in his preface to *Sonnets of Three Centuries,* contends that by making “ octave flow into sestet without break of music or thought ” Milton consciously or unconsciously invented a new form of sonnet ; that is to say, Milton, in his use of the Petrarchan octave and sestet for the embodiment of intellectual substance incapable of that partial disin­tegration which Petrarch himself always or mostly sought, invented a species of sonnet which is English in impetus, but Italian, or partially Italian, in structure. Hence this critic, like Mr William Sharp *(Sonnets of this Century),* divides all English sonnets into four groups :—(1) sonnets of Shakespearean structure; (2) sonnets of octave and sestet of Miltonic structure ; (3) sonnets of contemporary structure, *i.e.*, all sonnets on the Petrarchan model in which the metrical and intellectual “wave of flow and