

## CHAPTER VII

### Rhymed Poetry

THE most precious contribution of the Irish to the literature of the world is rhyme in poetry which is an invention of the early Christian poets in Ireland. It has been contended that rhyme was an invention of the Arabs but there is no good evidence of any kind for this. The Arabs did not come into any prominence in literature until the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century and rhyme was already not only in existence but in very perfect form among Irish poets for considerably more than a century before that. Latin literature was so deeply influenced by Greek that there was no question of the use of rhyme. The genius of the Greek tongue did not lend itself to rhyme and though we have Greek literature for nearly a thousand years, there is never any hint of the use of similar sounds at regular intervals to add the music of speech to the regular measured length of line with recurring quantities and the cesural pause.

The first certain examples of rhyme in poetry are found on Celtic soil and among Celtic nations. Constantine Negra, the distinguished European scholar, does not hesitate to say that we are forced to the conclusion that the Celtic poets in the rules of their