

laity, should go to Wales and judge of facts for themselves. We no longer want men to go down and make speeches as soon as they arrive, on one side or the other, but men who will take the advice which the Dean of Llandaff offered to his old pupil, Sir George Trevelyan—advice which, unfortunately, was not followed, first to “inquire, and then reflect.”

The matter is one of vast and abiding interest, not only to Wales but to England, and is not to be decided on *ex parte* statements. The Church has a right to demand from politicians that they should only act after the closest investigation, and on the fullest information.

H. GRANVILLE DICKSON.

ART. V.—THE PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN.

Cambridge Philological Society. Summary of Answers received in Reply to Circular of Inquiry on Reform of Latin Pronunciation. Pronunciation of Latin in the Augustan period. Trübner and Co.

THE replies sent by head-masters, lecturers, etc., to the questions of the Cambridge Philological Society, show that there is—as there has been for some time—a strong party in favour of changing our English pronunciation of Latin. Out of 51 answers, 41 were favourable, 4 neutral, 6 unfavourable. The scheme of pronunciation, as put forth this last year (1887), may be taken to be the newest utterance on the matter, being mainly the same as that sent round to the members of the Society nearly two years ago.

In Greek as well as in Latin many are nowadays urging a change of pronunciation, ridiculing us as insular and isolated. But, curiously enough, while they bid us pronounce Greek as the Greeks pronounce it now—giving up not only the English, but altogether the so-called Erasmian pronunciation (or attempt at old classical) as guesswork and invention—in Latin we are not to regard much how the Italians speak now, but are to reconstruct a pronunciation—surely guesswork in part, however good the guessers. “Speak Greek as it is spoken in A.D. 1887; Latin as it may have been spoken B.C. 87.” The arguments for the modern Greek, though not quite convincing, seem to me stronger than those for the Augustan Latin; but it is only with the latter I am now to deal.

It is bold to criticise a scheme backed by such names as the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Hayman, Dr. Peile, and Mr. Whitelaw; yet Mr. Mayor and Mr. Weldon oppose, and (I hope) many more who do not appear. Three questions occur:

1. Is the universal adoption of such a new system practically possible?

2. Does this, or can any new scheme, give us a pronunciation really correct for, say, any half-century?

3. Grant it correct, and adopted, what shall we have gained or lost?

As to (1), Englishmen are not likely to adopt with readiness such a change. And a partial and slow adoption would entail such inconvenience and confusion in schools and education that on this score alone the wisdom of the attempt appears questionable.

As to (2), a restoration of the Augustan pronunciation can but be approximate, and open to objection in details. This scheme may be the best possible. The criticisms of it offered here shall be brief. Doubtless the Italian vowels (which in the main are adopted) are more correct than our English ones. Demonstrative proof has hardly yet been given about the invariable hardness of the consonants *c* and *g*, even before *e* and *i*. Soft they have become in the derived languages; there seems to be a tendency that way. When they lost their original hardness—whether everywhere at the same time—is difficult to decide. The same may be said of the hard *t*, which it is proposed to restore in such words as *natio*. And is it not rather strong to say “it is a gross mispronunciation” to let *th* sound as in “thin,” *ph* as *f*? For *th* and *ph* are for Greek θ and ϕ , which surely sound now with Greeks as in “thin” and “fin,” whatever they may once have been. “Philosophia,” too, has been “filosofia” in Italy for a long time.

But by far most important is question (3). By this scheme what is gained? What in study of languages, in comparison, say, of Latin with Italian and French? In Italian little, if anything; for while the vowels would bring our Latin nearer to Italian, the hard consonants would put it farther away. “Viva voce,” English-wise, is about as near Italian as “weewah wokey.” In French the changed vowels would be more like the French of to-day in some simple cases: but plenty of French vowel sounds would remain just as different. While in the consonants *c*, *g*, and *t* before *i* our English use is now something like the French; but would then be utterly unlike. On the whole, Latin spoken Augustan-wise would be no greater help to French; probably less.

But a great use—nay, the greatest—to many Englishmen the only use of Latin (beside the power of reading the Latin authors, which does not depend on pronunciation) is its bearing on their own tongue. No half-dozen lines of English can be taken which do not present many words from the

Latin—words better understood by a knowledge of Latin, which now at once to the sight and by their sound reveal their parentage. But read Latin with the reformed pronunciation, and much of this light is lost; scores of like words become unlike. “Face, space, civil, vigil, adjacent, vice-regent” tell their own tale now to a very moderate Latinist, but will they do so as plainly when “fakkeeays, spattium, wiggil, keeweelis, adyakens, wikkey-reggens” have become imperative and habitual?

And to our English boys or girls learning Latin, what additional difficulties! “As easy to start with one set of vowels, etc., as with another.” But we all *do* start with our English ones. And it is a gain, an interest at every step, to find our own tongue helping us to another—the other helping us more thoroughly to know our own. Is all this to be sacrificed? Ready enough are some to cry out that we spend too much time on Greek and Latin, too little on English. These will have more reason if we make Latin harder by making it more unlike our own tongue, and yet not like any other.

Scholars of different nations could understand each other better, it may be urged. Latin scholars in England nowadays (if worthy of the name) know some modern languages: they can learn a continental pronunciation of Latin in a day or two. Or let the learned of different lands, if they like and can, agree on a common pronunciation for their own use; not, however, needed now as once, when they exchanged their thoughts mainly through Latin.

But the present proposal is for a Ciceronian or Augustan pronunciation to be taught throughout the schools of England. After all was done, John Bull’s accent would be still recognisable by Frenchman, German, or Italian, and assuredly by Cicero, Augustus, and Virgil, could he converse with those shades. Nay, let us contentedly remain English in utterance. The proposed change, with a show of learning, might (*quod absit!*) hinder rather than help the extension of learning; this attempt to mimic the sounds of the mighty dead might cause fewer to study their thoughts and sense.

W. C. GREEN.

