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Author: Harry Thurston Peck

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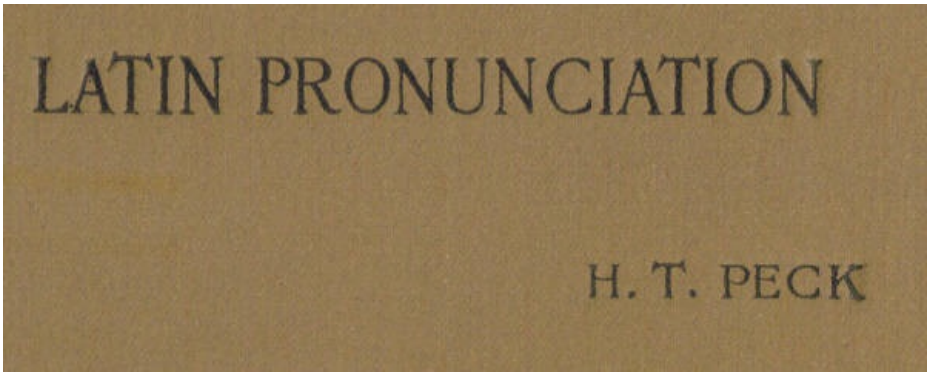

LATIN PRONUNCIATION

A SHORT EXPOSITION OF THE ROMAN METHOD

BY

HARRY THURSTON PECK, M.A., PhD
PROFESSOR IN COLUMBIA COLLEGE

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LATIN PRONUNCIATION.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THIS short manual is primarily intended for those who, being interested in the study of Latin, have accepted the Roman method of pronunciation upon the authority of the Grammars, but have either not been able to command the time to make themselves familiar with the arguments upon which this system is based, or have been repelled by the technicalities employed in treating the question from the standpoint of the specialist. It is believed that the following pages will be found to give in simple form the main facts bearing upon this interesting question; and that nothing has been introduced that is either unnecessary or obscure. For those who may wish to pursue their investigations farther after mastering these facts, a bibliography of the subject is given at the end.

The Roman method of pronouncing Latin has now received the approval of all Latinists of authority in Europe and America, as giving substantially the pronunciation employed by educated Romans of the Augustan Age. It has been formally adopted at our leading Universities. The most recent Grammars of the language recognize no other method. Thus, one great reproach to classical scholarship seems likely to be soon removed, and one universal pronunciation of the noblest of the ancient languages to receive general acceptation.[1] This little book will more than accomplish its object if it shall have aided ever so slightly in discrediting the barbarisms of a method which, to use the expression of a distinguished scholar, "ought long since to have

followed the Ptolemaic system of astronomy into the limbo of unscientific curiosities."

[1]. It is natural that the Roman system should make its way more rapidly into use in this country than in Europe, not because Americans are more given to experiments, but because here in the United States the inconveniences of having no standard system have been more sharply felt. New England being wholly settled from Old England, long continued the English system of pronouncing Latin. In the Middle States, the Germans and Dutch introduced their own methods; in the South and West, the French pronunciation came in quite frequently; and all over the Union, the Catholic clergy in their schools and colleges have propagated the traditional usage of their Church. Hence a Babel of pronunciations and systems existing and practised side by side, in a picturesque confusion such as no European country ever knew; and hence the general willingness to accept a single method, especially one that is based upon historic truth.

II.

SOURCES OF OUR INFORMATION.

A QUESTION of much interest to the student of Latin, and one that does not always receive a satisfactory answer, relates to the sources of our information.

What knowledge have we of how the Romans pronounced their own language nineteen hundred years ago? How is it possible after so long an interval to reconstruct the laws of a pronunciation which prevailed at a given period of the remote past?

Briefly summarized, the sources of our information are six in number.

(1) **Statements of the Roman writers themselves,** which modern scholarship has laboriously collected. These are of different degrees of explicitness, and of different degrees of value. It is evident that a statement of Cicero, however brief, is more trustworthy and more convincing, with regard to the usage of his own time, than whole pages of testimony in a writer like Priscian who wrote in the sixth century, by which period the language had become corrupt.

We may, then, broadly divide the ancient authorities on this subject into two groups,—the first consisting of those writers who themselves belonged to the classical age; the second, of those grammarians and commentators who have left us very full statements, though the date at which they wrote somewhat impairs the value of their testimony.

The chief classical authorities to whom appeal can be made are M. Terentius Varro, a contemporary of Cicero, whose treatise on the Latin language has in part come down to us; Cicero himself, from whose rhetorical works one can gather many valuable facts; and M. Fabius Quintilianus, the author of the treatise *Institutio Oratorio,* in twelve books. It is not merely when these authors speak of definite points of language and pronunciation that they are valuable; sometimes a casual remark, an anecdote, or a pun, may be of very great importance, as will be seen from time to time in the following pages.

Of the other writers on language who treat the subject very minutely, a great number might be cited[1]. The most important are Terentianus Maurus, who wrote, perhaps about the third century, a poem on letters, syllables, feet, and metres, which is twice quoted by St. Augustine; Verrius Flaccus, the tutor to the grandchildren of the Emperor Augustus and author of a work on the meaning of words which has come down to us in a later abridgment; Aulus Gellius, who, toward the end of the second century, compiled a huge scrap-book on a variety of subjects, many of them of great linguistic interest, and, with the exception of a few chapters, still extant; Priscianus Caesariensis, who wrote under Justinian at Constantinople eighteen books of grammatical commentaries which form the most complete grammar of antiquity; and Aelius Donatus (A.D. 333), whose elementary treatise was so highly thought of in the Middle Ages that the name "donat" (Chaucer) was used as a generic term for a grammar.

From these and many other writers one gathers a great mass of instructive facts; and their very silence is sometimes as significant as what they say.

(2) **The orthography of the language itself** as seen in the inscriptions. Latin orthography was in the main phonetic (Quintilian, I. 7. 11). The language was pronounced as it was spelled. But as is always the case, changes in orthography lagged a little behind changes in the pronunciation. Hence even the blunders made by an ignorant lapidary in cutting an inscription are often a source of information to us.

(3) **The representation in Greek letters of Roman sounds.** A number of Greek writers treated of Roman history, Roman biography, and Roman geography. In so doing they were obliged to represent many Latin names and words in Greek characters. But many of these writers had no particular knowledge of the Latin language, and hence spelled these Latin names and words phonetically. Their method of doing this is both interesting and instructive. The writers of this sort who are oftenest cited are Polybius (B.C. 175), the friend of the younger Scipio and the author of a General History of Rome from the Second Punic War down to the conquest of

Macedonia; Strabo the geographer (24 B.C.); Diodorus Siculus, the contemporary of Julius Caesar and author of an Historical Library in forty books; and Plutarch (A.D. 80), the best known of the Greek writers on Roman subjects[2].

(4) **A critical comparison of all the modern languages of Europe that are derived from the Latin** (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese) with reference to those points wherein they all agree. This source of information is of less importance than one would think, because these languages are not derived directly from the classical Latin, but from Latin that was either provincial or modified by foreign influences. Still, this comparison is useful in corroborating facts that are elsewhere learned, and is of positive value when not contradicted by other evidence.

(5) **The traditions of scholars,** and especially of the Roman Catholic Church, which in its rites has employed Latin continuously from the first century down to the present time. The rhymes of the early Christian hymns also have a bearing on this subject.

(6) **The general principles of the science of phonology,** which are now well established and understood, and are of great value in detecting erroneous assumptions which would otherwise pass unchallenged.

From these six sources can be gained a very accurate understanding of how Latin was pronounced in the days of Cicero and Caesar. It is not too much to claim that the system of pronunciation upon which scholars are now agreed, differs less from that of the Romans of the Augustan Age than does our modern pronunciation of English differ from that of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

[It is not always remembered that only very gradually was the true pronunciation of Latin lost in Europe. Scholars long retained the essential features of it, and by the fact of their constant intercourse long prevented the growth of local and national variations from the established method. Great teachers like Erasmus passed from country to country, lecturing in Latin at the universities of Italy, Germany, Holland, Trance, and England, teaching pupils of all nationalities, and being everywhere understood without any difficulty, for Latin was the *lingua franca* of the educated, and one general pronunciation of it prevailed. Even in England, it was only after that country's isolation, political and religious, in the sixteenth century, that an "English pronunciation" arose, and this was long protested against, e.g. by Cardinal Wolsey, by Milton, and as late as the last century by Ainsworth (1746) and Philipps (1750). For the Continental traditions, see Justus Lipsius in his *Dialogus de Recta Pronunciatione Linguae Latinae;* and Erasmus, *De Recta Latini Graecique Sermonis Pronunciatione* (Basic, 1528). In Scotland, the Continental sound of the vowels was long retained, on which see the incident imagined by Sir Walter Scott in his novel *The Fortunes of Nigel,* ch. ix.]

[1]. Schneider in his *Elementarlehre der Lateinischen Sprache* cites more than fifty ancient authors. Besides those mentioned above, reference is often made to Velius Longus, Servius, Marius Victorinus, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella.

[2]. Others are Josephus, the Jewish historian; Dionysius of Halicarnassus; Appian; and Dio Cassius,—the last a Roman who wrote in Greek.

III.

THE LATIN ALPHABET.

IN its earliest form, the Latin alphabet consisted of 21 characters,—A, B, C, D, E, F, Z, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, V, X. These letters were derived from the alphabet used by the Dorian Greeks of Campania. At a very early period the letters K and Z fell into disuse, although K continued to occur in a few ancient abbreviations, such as Kal. for *Kalendae*, K. S. for *carus suis*, K. K. for *calumniae causa* (a legal phrase), KK. for *castrorum*, KA. for *capitalis*; and the use of Z was subsequently revived in transliterating Greek words. Originally, the character C had the sound which was afterwards given to G; but when K was abandoned, C took its place and its sound; while a new letter, G, was formed by slightly changing the original C. Plutarch says that the character G was first employed by Spurius Carvilius about the year 230 B.C. In Cicero's time the letter Y was introduced to represent the sound of the Greek *Y*; but its presence in a word always marks a foreign origin, so that the character can scarcely be regarded as an essential part of the Roman alphabet. About the year A.D. 44, the Emperor Claudius tried to introduce three new symbols into the alphabet: (1) the inverted diagamma to mark the consonantal sound of V; (2) the character known as "anti-sigma" to express the sound denoted by the Greek *ψ* (*ps* or *bs*); and (3) the sign , which was to have the sound of the Greek *υ*, i.e. of modern French *u* or German *ü*. It may be mentioned also, that consonants were not doubled in writing Latin until the practice was adopted from the Greek by Ennius (B.C. 239-169), who in various ways conformed Roman usages to those of the Greeks.

The Roman alphabet, like the early alphabet of the Greeks, lacked distinctive characters for the long and short vowels. This defect, which was partly corrected in Greek by the adoption of the letters *η* and *ω* (traditionally ascribed to Epicharmus of Syracuse, B.C. 500), was never fully remedied in Latin, though at different times various devices were employed to distinguish between ā and ă, ē and ĕ, ū and ŭ, ō and ŏ. These were:

(1) The doubling of the vowel when long, as in modern Dutch; thus, *vootum* = *votum*; *aara* = āra. This method was persistently used by the poet Attius[1].

(2) By the use of a species of accent (*apex*) over the long vowel. This became quite general in the Augustan Age.

(3) The length of the vowel ī was denoted sometimes by making it longer than the other letters and sometimes by writing it *ei*; thus, DĪCO, PVEREI.

The Roman numerals V, X, L, C, D, M originated in various ways[2].

V represented originally the open palm with the thumb extended, just as our 0 (zero) is thought to represent a closed hand.

X perhaps = , an old form of *θ*;; according to others, it is merely two V's placed together.

L = = or *χ*, a Greek letter which the Romans did not need in their alphabet and hence used only as a numeral.

C = , another form of *θ*, and confounded with C as though standing for *centum*.

M = *φ*, becoming first CI and then M, as though standing for *mille*, D is one half of this figure, or I [3].

[1]. Quintilian, I. 7, 14. When *i* is doubled it always denotes the consonantal *i* (j); e.g. *maiior*.

[2]. Cf. Ball's *History of Mathematics*, pp. 119, 120.

[3]. See, on the whole subject, Taylor, *The Alphabet* (London, 1883); Kirchhoff, *Geschichte des Griechischen Alphabets* (4th ed, Gütersloh, 1887); Berger, *Histoire de L'Écriture dans l'Antiquité;* (Paris, 1891); Cantor, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Mathematik* (Leipzig, 1880); Martin, *Les Signes Numéraux et l'Arithmétique chez les Peuples de L'Antiquité;* (Rome, 1864); and Friedlein, *Die Zahlzeichen* (Erlangen, 1869).

IV.

SOUNDS OF THE LETTERS.

1. A: ā had the sound of *a* in English "far"; ă had the sound of *a* in English "trespass."

There is no disagreement of opinion regarding the proper pronunciation of Latin *a*. All the modern languages derived from the Latin practically agree in the sounds which they give to this character. Furthermore, its pronunciation is described for us by Terentianus Maurus (p. 328 in the edition by Keil); by Marius Victorinus (p. 32 in the edition of the same editor); and also by Martianus Capella (III. 261).

[NOTE.—It must be remembered in the pronunciation of the Latin vowels that the short vowel does not differ in *quality* from the corresponding long one, but only in *quantity*, i.e. it occupied less time in pronouncing. This is an important distinction between Latin and English.]

2. B: had in general the sound of English *b*; but before *s* or *t*, the sound of *p*.

(*a*) The ordinary sound of Latin *b* is described for us by Martianus Capella (III. 261); and by Marius Victorinus (p. 32 Keil).

(*b*) That it was sounded like *p* when it stood before *s* we know because very often in inscriptions it is so written, e.g. *pleps* for *plebs*; Araps for Arabs; *urps* for *urbs*. In certain verbs this usage has modified the common orthography, e.g. *scripsi* for *scribsi* from *scribo*; and *opseguor* for *obsequor*. And so before *t*, as we learn both by the spelling of certain words (*optulit*, *scriptum*);

and from the statement of Quintilian (I. 7. 7): "When I pronounce the word *obtinuit*, our rule of writing requires that the second letter should be *b*: but the ear catches the sound of *p*."

3. C: always had the sound of English *k*.

The facts upon which this statement is founded are as follows:

(*a*) The pronunciation of this letter is so described for us by Martianus Capella (III. 261) as to prove it a hard palatal.

(*b*) *C* took the place of an original *k* in the early alphabet as previously stated; and in succeeding ages at times *c* reappears in inscriptions indifferently before the various vowels. Thus we have the form *Caelius* alternating with *Kaelius*, *Cerus* with *Kerus*, and *decembres* with *dekembres*,—showing that *c* and *k* were identical in sound. Quintilian (I. 7. 10) says: "As regards *k*, I think it should not be used in any words...This remark I have not failed to make, for the reason that there are some who think *k* necessary when *a* follows; though *there is the letter C, which has the same power before all vowels*."

(*c*) In the Greek transliteration of Latin names, Latin *c* is always represented by *k*; and in Latin transliteration of Greek names, *k* is always represented by Latin *c*. And we know that Greek *k* was never assibilated before any vowel. Suidas calls the C on the Roman senators' shoes, "the Roman kappa."

(*d*) Words taken into Gothic and Old High German from the Latin at an early period invariably represent Latin *c* by *k*; thus, Latin *carcer* gives the Gothic *karkara* and the German *Kerker*; Latin *Caesar* gives the German *Kaiser*; Latin *lucerna* gives the Gothic *lukarn*; the Latin *cellarium* gives the German *Keller*; the Latin *cerasus* gives the German *Kirsche*. Also in late Hebrew, Latin *c* is regularly represented in transliteration by the hard consonant *kôph*.

[Advocates of the English system claim that Latin *c* had the sound of *s* before *e* or *i* because every modern language derived from the Latin has in some way modified *c* when thus used. It is true that modern languages have so modified it; but, as already noted, the modern languages are the children not of the classical Latin spoken in the days of Cicero, but of the provincial Latin spoken five or six centuries later. There is no doubt that at this late period, Latin *c* had become modified before *e* or *i* so as to be equivalent to *s* or *z*. Latin words received into German at this time represent *c* before *e* or *i* by *z*. But had this modification been a part of the usage of the classical language, it would have been noticed by the grammarians, who discuss each letter with great minuteness. Now no grammarian ever mentions more than one sound for Latin *c*. Again, if Latin *c* had ever had the sound of *s*, surely some of the Greeks, ignorant of Latin and spelling by ear, would at least occasionally have represented Latin *c* by *σ*,—a thing which none of them has ever done. It is probable that the modification of *c* which is noticed in the modern languages was a characteristic of the Umbrian and Oscan dialects and so prevailed to some extent in the provinces, but there is absolutely not the slightest evidence to show that it formed a part of the pronunciation of cultivated men at Rome.]

4. D: had regularly the sound of English *d*; but at the end of words nearly that of *t*.

(*a*) The position of the vocal organs in uttering this letter is described by Terentianus Maurus (p. 331 Keil); Marius Victorinus (p. 33); and Martianus Capella (III. 261).

(*b*) That final *d* was sounded like *t* is clear from the positive statements of Quintilian and from the fact that in inscriptions, as well as in the best manuscripts of Plautus and Vergil, we find almost indifferently *ad* and *at*, *apud* and *aput*, *haud* and *haut*, *quid* and *quit*, as well as *adque* and *atque* and many others.

[At about the fourth century A.D., *di* before a vowel began to be pronounced somewhat like the French *j*, just as in Aeolic Greek we find *ζά* for *διά*. Hence in the modern languages *g* and *j* arise out of Latin *di*. Compare Latin *diurnus* with the Italian *giorno* and the French *jour*.]

5. E: *ē* had the sound of English *e* in "they" or of the French *ê*; *ĕ* had the sound of English *e* in "net".

(*a*) The position of the vocal organs in pronouncing *e* is described by Terentianus Maurus (p. 329 Keil); Marius Victorinus (p. 32); and Martianus Capella (III. 261). It is regularly represented in Greek transliterations by *ε* when short, and by *η* when long.

(*b*) The sound of the letter *e* seems to have varied more than was the case with other vowels. The later grammarians give to *ē* a sound approximating to the sound of *i*. (Cf. Donatus in Servius p. 421, Keil [1]). And confusion of *ĕ* and *ĭ* in words like *timidus*, *navibos* (written *timedus*, *navebos*) is to be seen in early Latin. But too much importance has been given to this. The fact is that one short unaccented vowel is very likely to be mistaken, for another, especially by the uneducated and by careless speakers. The hearer cannot detect the difference, and in fact there is none, practically. The extremely accurate and discriminating elocution of which we hear was in all probability confined to the highly cultivated classes.

6. F: had practically the sound of English *f*.

Latin *f* is not like the Greek *φ*, which was a double sound rather than a single one, namely *p* + *h* with each element distinctly audible, as in English *top-heavy*, *uphill*. Quintilian says: "The Greeks are accustomed to aspirate; whence Cicero in his oration for Fundanius ridicules a witness who could not sound the first letter of that name."[2] The descriptions given by Priscian and Terentianus Maurus of the position of the lips and teeth in pronouncing *f* show that it was formed precisely as our *f*, i.e. with the lower lip against the upper teeth.

7. G: *g* always had the hard sound of English *g* in "get".

(*a*) "When *g* comes before an *s* it produces *x*, thus showing that it is a guttural: e.g. *lex* = *leg* + *s*; and *rex* = *reg* + *s*.

(*b*) No Roman grammarian mentions more than one sound as belonging to *g*, although they treat of the letters minutely.

(*c*) All the vowels readily interchange after *g* in the same root, which would hardly be the case if *g* had had more than one sound. Thus we have *maligenus* and *malignus*; *lego*, *legis*, *legit*; *gigeno* and *gigno*; *tegimen* and *tegmen*.

(*d*) Latin *g* is invariably represented by Greek *γ*, and the Greek *γ* is invariably represented by Latin *g*. St. Augustine remarks: "When I say *lege*, a Greek understands one thing and a Roman another in these two syllables." This shows that Latin *lege* and Greek *λέγε* had precisely the same sound.

[About the fifth century A.D., *g* began to have the soft sound before *e* and *i* that is now found in the modern languages. The first change from the old hard sound was to a *y* sound like that given to *g* by those who speak the *Berliner Dialekt* in Germany to-day, and said to be found also in Lowland Scotch. Such variations as *magestas* for *maiestas*, and in Greek *βειένττι* for *viginti*, occur.]

8. H: had the sound of English *h*.

(*a*) H is described as a simple breathing by Marius Victorinus, p. 34 (Keil); Terentianus Maurus, p. 331; and Martianus Capella, III. 261. It is represented in Greek by the rough breathing, and in turn it represents that breathing.

(*b*) There seems to have existed among the uneducated Romans that irregularity in the use of *h* which marks the language of the English cockney to-day. Nigidius Figulus, the grammarian, said: "Your speech becomes boorish if you aspirate wrongly." Catullus in one of his epigrams ridicules the cockneyism of a person who said *chommoda* for *commoda*, and *hinsidiae* for *insidiae*.[3] In later Latin, the varying spelling shows the growing irregularity of usage. *H* seems to have been omitted or inserted almost at pleasure; thus *hauctoritas*, *hii*, and *hinventio*, stand beside *inospita*, *omini* (*homini*), and *abitat* (*habitat*). The reason for this irregularity seems to have been the gradual weakening of the sound until *h* became a silent letter, as it is in modern Spanish and Italian. [4]

9. I consonant (J): had the sound of English *y*.

(*a*) That *i* had a consonant sound as distinct from its vowel sound is clear from the statement of Priscian (I. p. 13, Keil). Before a vowel and not preceded by an accented syllable with final consonant, he says that *i* "passes over to the force of a consonant." That it differs from *i* the vowel, is also clear from the fact that in prosody it lengthens the preceding vowel.

(*b*) That it was not like English *j* is clear from the fact that it readily passes into *i*, which proves the two sounds to have been closely akin; and in Greek transliterations it is always represented by ι. Thus *Julius* = *Ιούλιος*.

(*c*) Nigidius Figulus cautioned his readers that the *i* (*j*) in such words as *iam*, *iecur*, *iocus* is not a vowel,—a caution that would have been absurdly unnecessary if *i* had had any such sound as that of English *j*.

(*d*) The true sound of the letter is seen in the alternative spelling *Eanus* for *Janus* proposed by some of the ancients, who derived the name from *eo*, *ire*. About 300 A.D. the letter got the sound of *z* or *gi*.

10. I (vowel): *ī* as in English "machine"; *ĭ* as in English "din".

(*a*) Martianus Capella says: "I is a breathing with the teeth nearly closed."

(*b*) It is represented in Greek by ι.

(*c*) All the derived modern languages give *i* this sound.

[In the vulgar language and the *sermo rusticus*, *ī* seems to have varied with *ĕ* and to have been confused with it. So Augustus Caesar said *heri* for *here*; and we find *sibe* for *sibi*. Cf. Cic. de Orat. III. 12. 46.; Quint, I. 7.; Aulus Gellius, X. 24. Also a confusion appears between *ĭ* and *ŭ*, as in the forms *optumus* and *optimus*; *lubet* and *libet*. But we are only concerned with the normal sound of

the letter, which is that given above.]

11. L: had the sound of English *l*.

It is always represented in Greek by λ. The position of the vocal organs in uttering it is described by Marius Victorinus, p. 34. Martianus Capella (III. 261) says: "L grows soft upon the tongue and palate."

[For *l* as a corruption of *r*, see 17. *b*.]

12. M: had the sound of English *m*, but was much weakened at the end of words.

The fact that *m* was weakly sounded at the end of words is shown by the elision of a final *m* before an initial vowel in poetry (synaloepha); by the fact that in the early inscriptions it is often omitted in writing; and by the positive statements of the Roman writers themselves.[5] Because at the end of a word before a following vowel it was practically a silent letter, Verrius Flaccus wished to represent it in that position by a different character, .[6]

Quintilian (XII. 10, 31) says: "We close many of our words with the letter *m*, which has a sound something like the lowing of an ox, and in which no Greek word terminates." Priscian remarks, "M sounds obscurely at the end of words."

13. N: usually had the sound of the English *n*, "but before *c*, *q*, *g*, or *x* the sound of the English *ng* in "linger".

This *n* before a guttural, and technically known as a "guttural nasal," was called "*n adulterinum*;" so, according to Varro, the early Roman writers in such cases wrote it as a *g*; thus, *agceps* for *anceps*; *agyulus* for *angulus*; and so on, after the fashion of the Greeks.

14. O: *ō* practically had the sound of *o* in English "note"; *ŏ* like *o* in English "not".

The *ō* is regularly represented in Greek by ω, and the *ŏ* by Greek *o*. Marius Victorinus (p. 33, Keil) says that *o* is produced with the lips extended and the tongue quiescent in the middle of the mouth. Martianus Capella (III. 261) says: "O is produced by breathing through the mouth made round." The character O is, in fact, believed to have been originally a pictorial representation of a rounded mouth.

15. P: always had the sound of English *p*.

The position of the vocal organs in uttering *p* is described by Martianus Capella (III. 261). It is always represented in Greek by π.

16. Q: is always followed by *u*, and had the sound of *qu* in English "queen".

(*a*) *Qu* is represented in Greek by κου, κυ, or κο. Thus, *Quintus* = *Κοίντος*; *Quintilius* = *Κυιντίλιος*; *Quintilianus* = *Κουιντιλίανος*.

(*b*) Q represents the old Greek letter *koppa* and is a sharp guttural mute. Colloquially *qu* may have been carelessly sounded like *k*, or like *qu* in modern French. A candidate for office whose father had been a cook, once approached Cicero and asked a bystander for his vote; whereupon Cicero, who was an inveterate punster, said: "Ego quoque tibi iure favebo," pronouncing *quoque* "*koké*" so as to suggest *coque*, the vocative of *coquus*, a cook. (Quint, VI. 3. 47.)

17. R: in general had the sound of the English *r* with a slight trill; i.e. that of the Italian *r*.

(*a*) Because of its snarling sound it is called by the satirist Persius "the dog's letter" (*littera canina*).

(*b*) The Romans seem not to have liked a too frequent repetition of this letter, for it is omitted often when a following syllable contains it; as *pejero* for *perjero*; and grammarians have noticed that the genitive plural of the future participle is of rare occurrence. In the colloquial and provincial Latin, *r* is often dulled into *l*. Thus on one of the walls at Pompeii a part of the first line of the Aeneid was found written, "ALMA VILVMQVE CANO TLO"—a rendering which might have been produced by a modern Chinese. Cf. the playful use of *Hillus* for *Hirrus* in one of Cicero's letters (ad Fam. ii. 10. 1.)

18. S: had regularly the sound of the English initial *s* sharp as in "sip"; at the end of words it was barely audible.

(*a*) That s was a sharp hiss is clear from the fact that it maintains its place before the sharp consonants, as in *sto*, *spes*, *squama*, *scelus*; and does *not* maintain its place before flat consonants, as in *cano* (*casno*), *iudex* (*iusdex*), *dilabor* (*dislabor*), *diripio* (*disripio*), *trado* (*transdo*), *viden* (*videsne*); while it regularly changes a preceding flat consonant to a sharp, as *scripsi* (*scribsi*), and *rexi* (*regsi*).

(*b*) That it was very lightly sounded at the end of words is clear from the fact that until after Cicero's time it was neglected in scanning when the next word began with a consonant; that in the early inscriptions it is frequently omitted in writing, as *Cornelio* for *Cornelios*; and that in a great number of words it fell away altogether at all periods of the language; as in *ipse* for *ipsus*, *pote* for *potis*, *vigil* for *vigilis*, *puer* for *puerus*; and compare such forms as *poeta*, *nauta* and *luxuria* with *ποιητής*, *ναύτης*, *luxuries*: and so in modern Italian.

[The neglect of final *s* in scanning is extremely frequent. Cf. such a line as this hexameter from Ennius, where the *s* is suppressed three times:

"Tum laterali(s) dolor certissimu(s) nuntiu(s) mortis."]

19. T: had the sound of English *t*, always hard.

(*a*) The English system of pronouncing Latin gives to *ti* the sound of *sh* before a vowel, as in the words *militia*, *oratio*. An assibilation was undoubtedly a characteristic of the Umbrian and Oscan dialects at an early period, and fastened itself upon the Latin after the sixth century A.D.; for Isidores states that *tia* should be sounded *zia*: and in Greek transliterations of the sixth century we find such forms as δωναζιόνεμ for donationem, and *ἄκτζιο* for actio. Pompeius says that whensoever a vowel follows *ti* or *di*, the *ti* or *di* becomes sibilant. So again on Christian epitaphs we find *Constantso* for *Constantio*, etc. But in the classical period of the language, there is no reason for thinking that this assibilation existed, for the Greek transliterations of that period invariably denote Latin *ti* by τι, as *Οὐαλεντία* for *Valentia*. It is this classical tradition which Servius retains, when he lays it down as a rule that in all cases *di* and *ti* are to be pronounced exactly as written.[7]

(*b*) At the end of a word the letter *t* seems to have been less strongly sounded, for we find such forms as *ama*, *apu*, for *amat*, *aput*. This was a characteristic of the Umbrian and Volscian and affects the forms of the modern Italian.

20. V vowel (U): *ū* sounded like *oo* in English "fool"; *ŭ* like *u* in English "full".

(*a*) Latin *u* is frequently represented in Greek by *ου* whether it be long or short; thus, *Ποστούμιος* = *Postŭmius*; *Βελλούτου* = *Bellūti*.

(*b*) Plautus represents the hoot of an owl by *tutu* in the *Menaechmi*, 654; and in the *Carm. Philom.* 41, the onomatopoetic verb *tutubo* is used of the same bird. Cf. *cuculo*, "to cry cuckoo" (*Carm. Philom.* 35).

(*c*) In early Latin *ū* is sometimes written *ou*; thus, *ious*, *ioudex*, *douco*, for *ius*, *iudex*, *duco*.

21. V (consonant): had the sound of English *w*.

That the character *V* had both a consonantal and a vowel sound is clear from the unanimous statements of the Roman grammarians, who say that frequently when before a vowel it becomes consonantal.[8] Also as stated above in Chap. III., the Emperor Claudius invented a new character to represent the consonantal sound of *v* as distinguished from the vowel sound.

That the consonant sound of *v* was practically that of the English *w* may be inferred from the following facts:

(*a*) The consonant sound and the vowel sound were closely akin. This is seen by the fact that the consonant *v* often melts into vowel *v* and is so scanned, as in such words as *silva*, [9] (scanned *silüa*), and its absorption in such words as *fautor* for *favitor*, *cautum* for *cavitum*. (See Plaut. *Menaechmi*, 155). Cicero says that when Marcus Crassus was at Brundisium, about to cross over to Greece, a vendor of figs began crying out "*Cauneas!*" (the name of a kind of figs.)[10] This, Cicero says, was taken as an omen; for it sounded like "*Cave ne eas*," which must therefore have been pronounced *Cau' n' eas*. Conversely, in poetry, the vowel *v* sometimes strengthens into consonant *v*. Thus in Plautus, Lucretius, and even in Vergil and Statius, this happens in such words as *puella*, *suo*, *genua*, *larua*, and *tenuis*. Finally, the fact that both sounds of *v* are represented by the same character, is evidence that those sounds must have been nearly alike. But the consonant sound that is nearest to the vowel sound of *u*, is the sound of the English *w*. (Cf. Consent, p. 395 K).

(*b*) Nigidius Figulus[11] says that when we pronounce the word *vos* we gradually thrust out the ends of our lips. This remark describes perfectly the position of the mouth in pronouncing *vos* if we assume that v had the sound of English *w*.

(*c*) The Greek writers in transliterating Latin names generally represent consonantal *v* by *ου*; thus, *Οὐαλήριος* for *Valerius*; *Οὐόλσκι* for *Volsci*; *Ιουουενάλια* for *Iuvenalia*; *Οὐᾶρος* for Varus. Sometimes, to be sure, *v* is represented by *β*, but this is chiefly in Plutarch, who is a Boeotian and confesses his own ignorance of Latin[12]; or else it is done in proper names in which by using *β* the word becomes in appearance more like a Greek one; that is, its form becomes Hellenized: as for instance, *Λίβιος*, *Φούλβιος* etc., for *Livius* and *Fulvius*,—the termination –βιος being common in Greek.

22. X: had the sound of *x* in English.

The grammarians say that the character a*x*is a monogram representing *cs* or *gs*. Quintilian remarks that *x* is not an indispensable letter in Latin, implying that *cs* and *gs* could take its place. In early Latin, *cs* was often written for *x*. (Max. Victor, p. 1945 P).

23. Y: had the sound of French *u* or German *ü*.

See III, supra.

24. Z: had the sound of English *z* and modern Greek *ζ*. See p. 12.

Z was a letter used by the Umbrians and Oscans, but it appears first in ordinary Latin about Cicero's time in the transliteration of Greek words. Before this time, ζ had been imperfectly represented in the Latin by *s* or *ss*, as *sona* for *ζώνη*, and *badisso* for *βαδίζω*. It was, in classical times, always regarded by the Romans as a Greek letter. Marius Victorinus remarks: "If *z* were essential to the Latin language, we should represent it by *ds*."

[1] Seelmann, *Die Aussprache des Latein*, p. 175 sqq.

[2] Quint. I. 4, 14.

[3] Carm. LXXXIV.

> '*Chommoda*' dicebat, si quando '*commoda*' vellet
> Dicere et '*insidias*' Arrius '*hinsidias*'.
> Et tum mirifice sperabat se esse locutum,
> Cum, quantum poterat, dixerat '*hinsidias*'.
> * * * * * *
> Hoc misso in Syriam, requierant omnibus aures,
> Audibant eadem haec leniter et leviter.
> Nec sibi postilla metuebant talia verba;
> Cum subito adfertur nuntius horribilis:
> Ionios fluctus, postquam illuc Arrius isset,
> Iam non '*Ionios*' esse sed '*Hionios*'!

Which Martin has very cleverly translated:

> "Whenever Arrius wished to name
> 'Commodious,' out 'chommodious' came:
> And when of his intrigues he blabbed,
> With his 'hintrigues' our ears he stabbed;
> And thought moreover, he displayed
> A rare refinement when he made
> His h's thus at random fall
> With emphasis most guttural.
> When suddenly came news one day
> Which smote the city with dismay,
> That the Ionian seas a change
> Had undergone, most sad and strange;
> For since by Arrius crossed, the wild
> 'Hionian Hocean' they were styled!"

[4] Gellius (II. 3) gives a number of words formerly written with *h* but in his time no longer aspirated. Between two vowels, *h* was silent. Hence *nil* for *nihil*, etc.

[5] Quint, ix. 4, 40; Prise. 1, p. 29 (Keil).

[6] Velius Lougus, p. 80 (Keil).

[7] Don. in Serv. p. 445.

[8] Cf. for instance Quint. 1, 7, 26; Marius Victorinus, p. 13 (Keil); Velius Longus, pp. 50, 58, 67 (Keil); Consentius, p. 395 (Keil). The position of the vocal organs in pronouncing *v* is described by Terentianus Maurus, p. 319 (Keil); Marius Victorinus, p. 33 (Keil); and Martianus Capella, III. 261.

[9] Cf. Horace, Odes, I. 23, 4.

[10] *De Div.* II. 40. 84.

[11] Quoted by Gellius, X. 44.

[12] The statistics on this point will be found in the introduction to Roby's Latin Grammar, pp.

XXXVII-XLI. Plutarch, who oftenest uses *β* for *v*, expressly states in his life of Demosthenes his own deficiency as a Latin scholar, and this fact impairs the value of his testimony in general except as corroborating better witnesses. Prof. F. D. Allen (*Class. Review*, Feb. 1891) regards the use of *β* as characteristic only of the later Greeks.

V.

SOUNDS OF THE DIPTHONGS.—SUMMARY.

IT must be remembered that the Latin diphthongs Æ, AU, EI, EU, Œ), were originally true *diphthongs* (double sounds), in the full sense of the word. That is, in pronouncing a diphthong the sound of each of its elements was distinctly heard, though pronounced in the time of one syllable. (Terent. Maur. p. 2392 P; Prisc, p. 561 P.) Knowing, then, the true sounds of the individual letters which compose the diphthongs, it is a simple matter to determine the general pronunciation of the diphthongs themselves. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true that in the latter part of the classical period, a tendency to give only one elemental sound to the combination finally made its way from the pronunciation of the vulgar into that of the cultivated.

With this preliminary observation we may proceed to the discussion of the several diphthongs.

Æ had originally the double sound *ah-ê* pronounced quickly; later, the simple sound of Latin E, i.e. of English *a* in "fate".

(*a*) *Ae* represents an early *ai* which appears in the oldest Latin. Thus, *praifecius*, *quaistor*, *aulai*; and so Vergil to give an antique coloring to his language has *pictai*, *vestis*, *aquai*, *aulai*, etc. (Quint. I. 7.18). About the year B.C. 175, the *ai* sound began to give way to the *ae* sound, as can be shown from the testimony of inscriptions. The *ai* sound of the diphthong (that of the English affirmative *ay*) may have lingered in the pronunciation of purists, for at the time when the Emperor Claudius instituted his reforms, we find a temporary revival of the spelling *ai*.

(*b*) As early as the beginning of the classical period *ae* ceased to be sounded as a diphthong by the rustics and by the provincials generally. This is expressly stated by Varro in his treatise on the Latin language (iv. 9, and vii. 96 and 97), in which he gives *Mesius* and *hedus* as rustic sounds for *Maesius* and *haedus*.

(*c*) This rustic neglect of the first element of the diphthong gradually prevailed until at last *ae* had only the force of a long *e* and is very generally so written, e.g. *seculum* for *saeculum*, *femine* for *feminae*, and even *que* for *quae*. But this is as late as the third and fourth centuries A.D. The classical sound was undoubtedly *ăé*.

AU had the sound of *ow* in English "now".

(*a*) *Au* remained a true diphthong down through the classical period at least in the pronunciation of the educated. The Greeks represent it by *αυ*, as in *Κλαύδιος* for Claudius.

(*b*) In vulgar and provincial circles, *au* had sometimes the sound of *u*, the first element of the diphthong being neglected as was the case with *ae*. Hence we find occasionally in inscriptions such forms as *frudavi* for *fraudavi*, *cludo* for *claudo*, etc. But the vulgar generally gave to *au* the sound of *ō*, as in modern French. Thus, some branches of the Claudian family called themselves *Clodii*, and we find in provincial inscriptions even at an early period *Pola* for *Paulla*, *Plotus* for *Plautus*, etc. Suetonius in his life of the Emperor Vespasian tells a story bearing on this, which has been often repeated and is important as showing that even in the Silver Age, *au* was still pronounced as a diphthong. The anecdote runs as follows: "Having been admonished by one Mestrius Floras, a man of consular rank, that he ought to say '*plaustra*' rather than '*plostra*,' he greeted Floras the next day as '*Flaurus*'"--the point of which is that *Flaurus* suggests the Greek *φλαῦρος*, "good for nothing."

EI had the sound of *ei* in English "feint".

Ei remained a true diphthong in keeping the sound of both its elements; but the combination *ei* is often found merely as an equivalent for *ī*. Gorssen remarks that in the root-syllables of the words *deiva*, *leiber*, *deicere*, *ceivis*; in locative forms; and in the dative and ablative plural of *-a* stems and *-o* stems, *ei* is a true diphthong, but is elsewhere a transition vowel between *ī* and *ē*. Cf. *Aussprache*, I. 719, 788; Ritschl, *Opuscula*, II. 626; Roby, §§ 267, 268.

EU had (nearly) the sound of *eu* in English "feud".

Eu remained a true diphthong with more stress upon the second element than upon the first. This is seen by the fact that (rarely) it has passed into *ū*[1] but never into *ē*. The combination *eu* is not often found in Latin except in transliterating Greek words, and in the exclamations *heu*, *heus*, and *eheu*, and in the contractions *neu* (*neve*), *seu* (*sive*), and *neuter* (*ne* + *uter*). In *neutiquam* the antepenult is short.

OE had the sound of *oi* in English "toil" (nearly), or of *ōē*.

Oe represents an original *oi* and remained a diphthong in those words in which it continued to be written. When the first element predominates over the second, *oe* passes into *u*, as in *plura* for *ploera*, *punio* from the root of *poena*, *cura* for *coera*. When the second element predominates, *oe* passes into *ae* (by a confusion) and *ē*, as in *obscaonus* and *obscenus* for *obscaenus*. But in words where *oe* is regularly written, it is to be pronounced as a true diphthong.

UI as a diphthong occurs only in a few interjections, as *hui*, *fui*, and in *huic* and *cui*. In both *huic* and *cui* it represents an earlier *oi* (*hoic*, *quoi*). In other words (e.g. *exercitui*, *gradui*, etc.) *ui* is not a diphthong, but each vowel is pronounced separately.

The Romans were the first people to call the letters of the alphabet by their *sounds* rather than by *names*, as was done in Greek and in the Semitic languages. Thus the Latin vowels were named by simply uttering their sounds; the mute consonants and *h* by uttering a vowel after them, and the so-called nasal and fricative consonants by uttering a vowel before them. This vowel was *e* except in the case of *k*, *h*, *q*, and *x*. Hence, a Roman boy saying over his alphabet, would have given it thus:

ah, bé, ké, dé, ê, ef, ghé, ha, î (*ee*)**, ka, el, em, en, ô, pé, qu** (*coo*)**, er, es, té, oo, ix, (ü, zeta)**. (Prise, p. 540 P.)

In pronouncing Latin words, too much care can not be taken in distinguishing between long vowels and those that are short. Cicero says: *Omnium longitudinum et brevitatum in sonis sicut acutarum graviumque vocum indicium, natura in auribus nostris collocavit*; and student and teacher alike will find that if from the outset a correct and careful pronunciation of Latin be required, those bugbears of the learner--the rules of prosody--will almost teach themselves, because they will have a consistency and meaning that can never be obvious to the unfortunate victim of the "English system." Professor Richardson, who deserves honor as being one of the first American scholars to advocate and adopt the true method of pronouncing Latin, has well summed up the whole matter in a single paragraph:

"To teach the student, from his first entrance upon the study of Latin, the English system of pronunciation; to get him thoroughly habituated to this false method, and then by lodging in his brain some verbal rules of quantity and prosody, at war often with each other and commonly with his pronunciation, to attempt to make him appreciate and observe the rhythm of Latin poetry, is like keeping a child in a rude society where all the laws of a pure and finished language are habitually violated, and then expecting him, by virtue of committing to memory the common rules of grammar and rhetoric, to talk at once with grammatical and rhetorical correctness and elegance."

And this little treatise may be closed by citing the most obvious of the *reasons for adopting the Roman System*.

(1) Because it is approximately the system used by the Romans themselves.

(2) Because it is more musical and harmonious in sound, and makes the structure of Latin verse clear even to the beginner.

(3) Because it is simpler than the English system, giving as it does but one sound to each alphabetical character, and thus always distinguishing words of different orthography and meaning by their sounds, while the English system often confuses them; e.g. *census* and *sensus*; *caedo*, *cedo*, and *sedo*; *circulus* and *surculus*; *cervus* and *servus*; *amici* and *amisi*.

(4) Because it makes the connection of Latin words with their Greek cognates plain at once, and renders easier the study of Greek, of the modern Romance language, and of the science of Comparative Philology.[2]

[1] In the *Carmen Saliare* we find *Leucesie*, a vocative of the later *Lucelius* from the root of *lux*. Cf. Paull. ex Fest. p. 114 (Müller).

[2] See Richardson's *Roman Orthoëpy*, pp. 83-106. This little book, which is unfortunately out of print, contains some exceedingly good points very cleverly put, though the view that it takes of certain phonetic questions is one that more recent scholarship does not accept.

VI.

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[See also articles by Prof. Max Müller and Mr. Munro in the *Academy*, Feb. 15, 1871; Dec. 15, 1871; and Jan. 11, 1872; and by Prof. J. C. Jones in the *Classical Review*, Feb. 1893.]

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