

CORRESPONDENCE

To the EDITORS, *Greece and Rome*

Dear Sirs,

Mr. Stanier deduces from the fact that 'the obvious connexion between two such sentences as *aqua mihi bibenda est* and *mihi eundum est* is the idea of necessity' the conclusion that 'necessity' was the original meaning of the gerundive (or gerund). He fails to notice that the other component parts of his two phrases are a dative case and the verb 'to be', *in the absence of which the gerundive (or gerund) does not have the meaning of necessity*; hence this meaning is to be assigned rather to this combination than to the gerundive (or gerund) itself.

It is incredible to me that if *currendum est mihi* originally meant 'I must run', *currendo* could have come to mean, not 'because of the necessity for running', but simply 'by running'; nor could 'blind habit' have produced *initium fugae faciendae*, flight being a thing not to be done, if the idea of necessity was inherent in the gerundive; *volvenda dies* is also against the ascription of such an idea to the primitive *-ndo* termination.

Mr. Stanier remarks: 'the gerundive is passive', presumably because the grammars print it along with the passive half of the verb forms; but in *labor epistulae scribendae*, meaning 'the task of writing a letter', the gerundive is active; so that here the gerundive, which *ex hypothesi* started by being a passive verbal adjective with the meaning of 'necessity', has shed both its passive meaning and its idea of necessity: semantic attrition could hardly go farther.

I was not so much concerned, in avowing my heresy, to trace the history of the *-ndo* forms in Latin, though I am quite willing to meet Mr. Stanier on that ground: I should ask him to produce an instance of a Greek neuter adjective becoming an abstract *verbal* noun: I rather wished to arrive at a simpler method of presenting the facts of the Latin language to learners. From the standpoint of simplicity, then, compare Mr. Stanier's—the established—explanation of *pugnandum est nobis*, 'it is meet-to-be-fought by us', involving a maddeningly intangible 'it' and a glib transition from the dative to the instrumental, with my rendering, 'there is fighting for us'.

In conclusion, let me disavow any claim to originality in the view which I put forward; I am merely repeating what I was taught forty years ago.

Yours very truly,

W. F. WITTON.

We have received the following reply from Mr. Stanier.

'Obviously there are difficulties both in Mr. Witton's explanation of the gerundive and in mine (I mean, of course, the one espoused, not invented, by me), but I still feel that in his the difficulties are greater. May I reply to some of his criticisms?

'(1) He says that without a dative and a verb "to be", the gerund and

gerundive had not the idea of necessity. Surely in the following two examples (both containing gerundives to my mind) there is an idea of necessity without a dative, and in the second without even a verb "to be"

(a) *currendum est*.

(b) *exercitus, mox trans Alpes mittendus, in Gallia erat*.

'(2) I take it that his next argument is that in *initium fugae faciendae* the idea of necessity is inconceivable, as flight is something that ought not to be done. Am I being too metaphysical if I suggest that the idea of predestination or "necessity" in the philosophical sense adequately explains the necessity in this and similar phrases? No hard and fast line can be drawn between doing something and having to do it.

'(3) Mr. Witton complains that in *labor epistulae scribendae* the gerundive (passive adjective expressing necessity) has been so bullied that it has lost its passivity and its idea of necessity. The "necessity" I explain as in the foregoing paragraph: I simply fail to see why he denies that it is passive, unless he is arguing in a circle from his own explanation of the phrase as a corruption of *epistolam scribendi*.

'(4) As to the ease with which the theories can be taught, I have not noticed that boys who have had to understand such phrases as *sic itur ad astra* find the "it" in "it is meet to be gone" "maddeningly intangible", while the transition from dative to instrumental is, as Mr. Witton says, "glib", and therefore easy: easier, I should say, than the long apologia for the grammatical inaccuracies of the Romans which Mr. Witton's theory involves. Incidentally, I have nearly always found that when a new boy got wrong over the gerundive, he reveals the source of his errors by some such remark as "but, surely, it means 'there is a running for me', doesn't it, Sir?"

'Finally, may I apologize for the amount of your space and Mr. Witton's time I have occupied over rather a trivial difference?'

CLASSICAL EXHIBITION AT LIVERPOOL

AN exhibition of Greek and Etruscan art is to be held in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, from February 3rd to March 3rd, 1933. Among the works of art on view there will be small pieces of sculpture, a painted portrait, bronze and terra-cotta statuettes and animal figurines, Attic black and red figure and white-ground vases, bronze mirrors, lamps, and a small quantity of jewellery.

Through the great kindness of private owners, there will be a considerable number of exhibits which will be new even to those who are already familiar with the public collections; on the other hand, the whole exhibition will not be so large as to discourage or bewilder those who have never before looked at any ancient work of art. Two works will be shown which are, strictly, outside the limits generally observed by the exhibition. These are a sixteenth-century painting of the battle of Lepanto, done on vellum by a monk of S. Athanasius, and a ninth-century mosaic head of Christ.