

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Cambridge Philological Society.

LENT TERM, 1905.

FIRST MEETING¹.

At the Annual Meeting of the Society held in Dr Jackson's rooms in Trinity College on Thursday, January 26, 1905, at 4.15 p.m., the President (Mr BURKITT) in the Chair:

I. The following Officers were elected for 1905:

President: Mr Burkitt (re-elected).

New Vice-President: Dr Postgate.

Members of Council: The Master of St John's, Mr Nixon (re-elected), Dr Sandys (re-elected).

Treasurer: Prof. Bendall (re-elected).

Secretaries: Mr Quiggin, Mr Harrison (both re-elected).

Auditors: Mr Nixon, Mr Wardale (both re-elected).

II. The Treasurer's accounts² for 1904 were submitted and passed.

III. C. F. Angus, B.A., Fellow of Trinity Hall, was elected a member of the Society.

IV. Miss HARRISON read a paper *περὶ τοῦ Ε τοῦ ἐν Δελφοῖς*.

The explanations of the Ε at Delphi suggested in the dialogue of Plutarch bearing this title were not examined, as, if the theory

¹ Reported in the *Cambridge University Reporter*, February 7, 1905.

² The accounts are printed on page 24.

to be propounded be correct, they necessarily fall to the ground. All these explanations are based on one or other of two suppositions: first, that the E is the letter Epsilon used as a number, i.e. as 5; or, second, that it stood for the name of the letter, i.e. for epsilon iota, and that it therefore meant either 'if' or 'thou art.' Coins of the 2nd century A.D. show that something shaped like an E was set up in the front of the temple of Apollo. It remains to ask, was this object originally the letter E, or was it some old sacred object shaped like an E, the meaning of which in the lapse of time had been forgotten, and which was therefore open to any and every mystical interpretation?

The explanation (unpublished) proposed by Mr A. H. Smith was noted, also that by Mr A. B. Cook (*Folk-Lore* xiv. p. 287). Mr Cook suggests that the E was originally the head of a trident lying horizontal. The theory now propounded is that the E was originally three betyl stones or pillars placed on a basis and representing the three Charites. Arguments in support of this view are as follows: First, the earliest images of the Charites, dedicated at Orchomenos by Eteokles, were merely stones, supposed meteorites. Pausanias (ix. 38. 1) says τὰς μὲν δὴ πέτρας σέβονσί τε μάλιστα, καὶ τῷ Ἐτεοκλεῖ αὐτὰς πεσεῖν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ φασιν. Place three of these on a basis and you have an image oddly like an E turned on its back. An instance was shown of a votive Phœnician stele recently discovered in Sardinia, where three betyls on a basis take the shape of a recumbent E. Second, we know that the two archaic artists Tektaios and Angelion made for Delos a statue of Apollo holding in his right hand the bow, in his left the Charites (Plut. *de Mus.* 14 ἔχει ἐν μὲν τῇ δεξιᾷ τόξον ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀριστερᾷ Χάριτας) and from the scholiast on Pindar (*ad Ol.* xiv. 16) that there was a similar statue at Delphi. Fortunately a copy of this famous statue is preserved on Imperial coins of Athens; the Charites, rude figures but human-shaped, stand on the god's outstretched right-hand. It is well known that figures of divinities often hold on the hand symbols either of their own outgrown animal form or of some cult that they have displaced. Third, it can be shown that primitive betyl cultus-images might easily be mistaken for Greek letters. On a votive relief to the Dioscuri now in the Museo Lapidario at Venice appear two objects exactly like the Greek letter Eta or the English H. They are the primitive images called by Plutarch (*De Frat. Amor. sub inūt.*) δόκανα, two beams joined by one or two cross-beams: τὰ παλαιὰ τῶν Διοσκούρων ἀφιδρῦματα οἱ Σπαρτιᾶται δόκανα καλοῦσι· ἔστι δὲ δύο ξύλα παράλληλα δυσὶ πλαγίσις ἐπεζευγμένα. The artist of the relief has half lost the meaning of the symbols and puts two, obviously a superfluous duplication.

If the apparent Etas of the relief represent the Dioscuri, may not the Epsilon represent the Χάριτες τρίζυγοι? The new worship of Apollo threw the old cult of Gaia into the shade: may not the god also have eclipsed the three ancient Charites, and, for com-

pendent, set their human figures on his hand and turned their betyl symbols into the Pythagorean E?

V. Professor SKEAT read a paper "On the testimony of English to the pronunciation of Latin."

In the *Summary of Pronunciation of Latin*, printed by the Cambridge Philological Society in 1887, it is briefly stated that "the great difference between the English and Latin pronunciation of the same vowel symbols is due to the fact that the pronunciation of English has changed, while the spelling has not changed with it." I hope the Society will bear with me whilst I endeavour to enlarge somewhat upon this statement. My object is to supply a few considerations and facts that tend to support it.

I cannot but believe that a very large percentage of Englishmen are firmly persuaded, or have been brought up to believe, that the modern English pronunciation of Latin is quite correct, or at any rate as good as anything that can be ascertained. I suppose that there is some foundation for so general a belief; and that it has, indeed, arisen from imagining that we have always pronounced Latin in the English way from the first, and that our way is therefore as good as any other. And I am persuaded that, whenever such an argument is advanced, it is always tacitly assumed that to pronounce Latin in the English way, and to pronounce it in the *modern* English way, is all one and the same thing; an assumption which practically precludes any discussion of the subject.

The only way to meet and to defeat this argument is to point out the antecedent absurdity of any such assumption, by reminding any possible antagonist of the extraordinary changes that—thanks to modern scholarship—can irrefragably be proved to have taken place in the pronunciation of English itself. Let it be granted, for the purpose of argument, that Latin has always been pronounced like English. It must follow from this, that, in the time of Elizabeth, Latin must have been pronounced in a very different way from that now in vogue, solely because the same is true of English. And it must further follow from this, that it must have been pronounced yet a third way in the time of Chaucer, and a fourth way in the time of Alfred, because the same is true of English.

It has been my experience that the simple statement of the fact, that the pronunciation of English has suffered great and startling changes, of a very fundamental character as regards the vowels in particular, is usually received with unbounded surprise and suspicion. And this is very natural, for nothing is ever taught in our schools (as far as I am aware) to prepare the mind of an Englishman for such an undoubted shock. It is well to recall how very recent, after all, is our knowledge of the essential facts. The advances made towards a better understanding of the

question have all been made within my own experience. Dr Alexander J. Ellis, who was the pioneer in this enquiry, did not publish his work on *Early English Pronunciation* till 1869; and, in England at least, it was then the almost universal belief that English sounds had never altered. A few Anglo-Saxon scholars may have suspected that, at any rate, Anglo-Saxon differed from modern English, because Rask's *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, which gives most of the Anglo-Saxon sounds with sufficient correctness, was published in Danish in 1817, translated into English by Thorpe in 1830, and rendered still more accessible in 1850, when Vernon printed his *Guide to the Anglo-Saxon Tongue*. But no one, at least in England, seems to have examined the testimony of the scribes of Chaucer's time previously to Dr Ellis; so that we may practically date our knowledge of the fuller history of English sounds from 1870.

Since that time much good work has been done, notably by Dr Sweet in England, and by Ten Brink and others in Germany; and now the *New English Dictionary* is affording abundant material for the study of even comparatively minute points. The *English Dialect Dictionary* will also contribute most valuable and indubitable facts¹.

A very little reflection ought to suffice to show us how widely the Chaucerian pronunciation must have differed from our own. Those who have never studied Middle English MSS. cannot form any sure judgement as to this matter; for they have never been in a position to realise how careful and truthful some of the scribes of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries really were in their conscientious attempts to write phonetically, so as to show the true sounds. The experience of most readers, as to the appearance of Middle English, is commonly taken from old black-letter editions of the fifteenth century, which are often ill spelt and ill printed, and naturally suggest unfavourable ideas as to our earlier spellings. But any one who will study Chaucer's use of rhymes in the *Canterbury Tales* or in *Troilus* will discover that he was a past master in a nice discrimination of vowel-sounds as well as in the art of versification, and that it is altogether impossible that he can have pronounced English as we do at present.

But to come to the facts. We have first to learn and understand that our modern spelling is of Norman origin, and is the outcome of the work of Norman scribes. They used certain symbols to denote the sounds of Latin and French, and they used the same symbols, as far as they would serve, for denoting the sounds of English. In the thirteenth century a vast number of French words were introduced into English, with their French spellings. An honest and attentive consideration of four such words as *fame*, *degree*, *vice*, and *doubt*, ought to teach us much.

¹ Since this paper was read, Dr Wright's *English Dialect Grammar* has appeared, in which the phonetics of our dialects are admirably treated.

It cannot surely be doubted that the Old French words *dame* and *fame*, which were certainly at that period dissyllabic, were pronounced as (daa·mə), (faa·mə)¹, and the mere introduction of them into English could not have altered their sound, as we find no trace whatever of any such alteration. It must be remembered, moreover, that they were really introduced into the *spoken* language, so that any such violent change of sound as that from (daa·mə) to the modern English *dame* (deim) would have been wholly impossible; and they were, of course, just as dissyllabic in English as they were in Norman. The loss of the final syllable took place after 1400.

A like argument applies to the word *degree*. It was pronounced (degree·) in Norman, according to its French spelling; and must, accordingly, have been pronounced (degree·) in English. The final *e* is not always doubled; it is obvious that the doubling of it was meant to show that it was strongly sounded and received the accent. We learn from Chaucer that this *ee* was close, as in the modern French *degré*.

Let us now consider the third word, viz. *vice*. This was likewise dissyllabic in Norman, and was spelt just as it now is in modern English and in modern French. It was certainly pronounced at first (viit·sə) and then (vii·sə) in Old French and Norman, and must have been pronounced in English in the same way. It is perfectly true that the sound of this (ii) has suffered startling changes, and has passed through the Elizabethan sound (ei), which I have myself heard in Ireland, till it has reached its modern diphthongal sound, which it is easier to pronounce than to write phonetically. No Cambridge man will assert that the sound of this vowel can never have varied and will never vary; because he may hear it pronounced (oi) whenever he makes any effort to listen. Few words are, to my ear, so familiar as (boi·sikl) and (toim).

Lastly, I take the word *doubt*. The *b* is a pedantic or pseudo-learned insertion, and first appears in Caxton. The late M. E. spelling was *doute*, with final *e*, and it was once dissyllabic, like the words above. In early M. E. it was spelt *dute*, and it is well known that *ou* was a French symbol of the thirteenth century, invented in order to distinguish long *u* from short *u*. The origin of this symbol was that the symbol *uu* was indistinguishable, in writing, from *nn*, and was further liable to confusion with *im*, *mi*, *nu*, and *un*; for which reasons it was undesirable. Hence *ou* was substituted for it, by writing *o* for the former *u*. The sound of *doute* (duu·tə) was precisely the

¹ Symbols within a parenthesis are phonetic. The symbols (aa), (ee), (ii), (uu) mean the sounds of Ital. long *a*, *e*, *i*, *u*. The symbol (ə) means the *a* in *china*, and (ei) the *ei* in *vein*. M. E., O. F., and O. H. G. mean Middle English, Old French, and Old High German respectively. The dot in (daa·mə) shows the position of the stress.

same as that of the earlier *dute* (duu·te), in which the *u* was, of course, long, like the *ou* in the modern French *soupe*.

We thus see good reason for believing, from the testimony of English MSS., that in the thirteenth century the symbol *a* represented the long *a* of the L. *fāma*; the symbol *ee* or *e* (if long), the long close *e* of L. *tēla*; the symbol *i* (if long), the long *i* of the L. *trītus*, and the symbol *u* (if long), the long *u* of the L. *ūmor*. I omit the vowel *o*, because the examples are less clear. But we have enough to show that, even in England, as late as 1400, the Latin long vowels were mostly pronounced as in English, and at the same time pronounced in the old Roman way.

The testimony of Anglo-Saxon is, of course, yet clearer. The A.-S. *āc*, with L. *ā*, was certainly pronounced (aak), though it is now pronounced as we pronounce *oak*. The L. *ē* appears in such common words as A.-S. *hē*, he, *wē*, we, *fēt*, feet; and was pronounced as in Middle English. The L. *ī* occurs in A.-S. *mīl*, representing the word which we now pronounce *mile*; and was pronounced as in Middle English; cf. O. F. *cri*, mod. E. *cry*. The L. *ō* occurs in *dōm*; and the mod. E. *doom* shows that the *o* was close. The L. *ū* occurs in *thū*; and the mod. E. *thou*, with the same vowel as in *doubt*, testifies to its correctness.

I do not propose to say anything as to the short vowels, because I do not think that any one who is convinced as to the sounds of the long vowels will feel inclined to raise difficulties about them.

But it is well worth saying that even English bears most important testimony as to the sound of the L. *v*, or rather of the *u* consonant. It is a remarkable fact that, amidst all its corruptions, English has preserved intact, to the present day, the primitive Teutonic *th* and *w*, as we call them. More than that, the *w* is more than primitive Teutonic; it is, so far as we know, also primitive Indo-European; and thus the most venerable of sounds.

Now we have in English three words, viz. *wick*, in the sense of 'town,' *wall*, and *wine*, which were borrowed from Latin at so early a date that the *w* had not yet passed into *v*. As *wick* is chiefly used in place-names, I will pass it over. But *wine*, A.-S. *wīn*, was borrowed from the L. *wīn-um* directly, and is common in many languages; but they all have the *v*-sound except English. It is still spelt with *w* in Dutch and German, because the Du. *wijn* and G. *wein*, O. H. G. *wīn* (as in A.-S.), go back ultimately to that early time. The Scandinavian languages now use a phonetic spelling with *v*, but it is most interesting to find that they have preserved the original vowel. The vowel of the Icel., Dan., and Swedish *vin* is the same as in the Ital. and Span. *vino* and the Port. *vinho*.

The E. *wall* is a most interesting word. It is non-Teutonic, and simply represents the famous L. *uallum*, one of the very first

Roman things with which the Teutonic races came, literally, into contact. The point is fully proved by the occurrence, in Welsh, of the word *gwâl*, with the senses of 'wall' and 'rampart.' It is clear that *gw* cannot have resulted from *v*, but resulted from an initial *w*, which could only be readily pronounced by Celts when they prefixed a *g* to it; just as the Celts of France turned the O. H. G. *Waltheri* into *Gualtier*, in which the *u* was once sounded as *w*, though now ignored in the modern *Gautier*. The Normans, who rather liked the sound of *w* so long as it did not precede the vowel *u*, called it *Walter*, keeping the original O. H. G. sound of *w*.

As to the L. *qu*, English has it right, as in the word *quick*. Even Norman had the same sound, though other French-speaking tribes turned it into *k*. This is shown by the E. adj. *quit*, from the Norman *quite*, free. I once had the honour of pointing out to Paul Meyer the interesting fact that the Norman word is spelt *cwite* in the Ancren Riwele (ab. 1225).

English has preserved another primitive sound of untold antiquity, in the *y*-sound which commences the words *young* and *youth*. The forms of both words are very various, but the initial sound has never altered. In the very old Vespasian Psalter, we find the L. spelling *iungra*, younger, in Ps. 118 (119), v. 141; and the L. spelling *iuguð*, youth, in Ps. 42 (43), v. 4. These are clearly Latin spellings, though they are unusual; and show that the L. *i* (consonant) was pronounced as *y*. Similarly, we find the very rare spelling *ioc* for A.-S. *geoc*, E. *yoke*, in a charter dated 811; see Sweet, *O. E. Texts*.

Lastly, I beg leave to offer a note on the pronunciation of *c*.

The A.-S. symbol *c* was borrowed from Latin, and was originally pronounced like *k* before all vowels. That it was pronounced as *k* before *e* is shown by the extremely common form *Cent*, which is pronounced *Kent* even at the present day. This is almost the sole example, because the A.-S. *c* was usually palatalised, and became *ch*, as in Italian. The Modern English habit of pronouncing L. *ce*, *ci*, with *c* as *s*, is of course of F. origin, and cannot have been in use before the Conquest. We can hardly doubt that the *ch* in *child* (A.-S. *cild*) goes back to an original *k*; for the Welsh alphabet also has *c* with the sound of *k*, as in *ci*, a dog. Besides, we find a few cases in which the *c* in *ci* was certainly a *k*. It so happens that the A.-S. *c* was never palatalised before *y*, which had the sound of the G. *ü*. Hence A.-S. *cyning*, sometimes shortened to *cyng*, is now called *king*. But the sounds of *y* and *i* were sometimes confused, so that the spellings *cining* and *cing* are not uncommon. The spelling *cing* occurs in the Blickling Homilies, written in 971.

The famous word *church* proves the same point. The A.-S. form is *cirice*, but both of the *c*'s were originally pronounced as *k*, as representing (most likely) the Gk. *κυριακά*, a neuter plural taken as a fem. sing., which explains why the A.-S. word is

feminine. In any case, it is still pronounced *kirk* in the North of England, and appears as *kerk* in Dutch, and as *kirkja* in Icelandic. Hence this one word suffices to show that the symbol *c* was pronounced as *k* before both *i* and *e*.

We may therefore conclude that, in Anglo-Saxon times, Latin was pronounced like Anglo-Saxon, and nearly in the old Roman manner; and that through succeeding ages, the Latin and English pronunciations changed from time to time, many people pronouncing them almost alike. From which it follows that, in modern times, it has seemed natural to many of us to pronounce Latin as if it were modern English. But we must not forget that, before the Conquest, Latin could not have been pronounced like modern English, because the Anglo-Saxons of that period had no conception of what modern English would be like. No one can employ a pronunciation before it is invented. We cannot even predict how English will be pronounced in the twenty-first century.

SECOND MEETING¹.

At the Meeting of the Society held in Prof. Bevan's rooms in Trinity College on Thursday, February 16, 1905, at 4.15 p.m., the President (Mr BURKITT) in the Chair:

I. Miss PAUES read a paper "On the name of the letter ζ ."

The Irish-Anglo-Saxon form of the Roman letter *g* was ζ . By the discovery of the M.E. name it is possible to infer the Anglo-Saxon name and to connect it with the name of one of the runes.

II. Mr QUIGGIN read a paper on "The state of the Irish language in Donegal."

In 1811 the number of people in Ireland who could speak Irish was estimated at considerably over 3,000,000. In 1901 the number had fallen to 681,000. This rapid decline is to be attributed in large measure to the attitude of the Catholic clergy and the schoolmasters. But another serious factor was the tide of emigration which set in after the great famine of 1847 and which has drained the purely Irish-speaking districts more than any others. None of the societies for the preservation of the language met with any conspicuous success until the Gaelic League was founded in 1893. The League attempts to reach the Irish-speaking districts, and has met with most success in Waterford and Kerry. Donegal has so far been little touched by the movement, partly because the bulk of the League litera-

¹ Reported in the *Cambridge University Reporter*, February 28, 1905.