

**THE PRONUNCIATION OF
GREEK: ACCENT
AND QUANTITY; A
PHILOLOGICAL INQUIRY**

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The pronunciation of Greek: accent and quantity; A philological inquiry by John Stuart Blackie

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JOHN STUART BLACKIE

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THE
PRONUNCIATION OF GREEK;
ACCENT AND QUANTITY.

A PHILOLOGICAL INQUIRY.

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M DCCCLII.

304. a. 4.

"*Sit omnibus rebus suum senium, sua juvenus; et ut verba verbis, sic etiam sonis sonos succedere permittamus.*"—BISHOP GARDINER.

"*This new pronunciation hath since prevailed, whereby we Englishmen speak Greek, and are able to understand one another, which nobody else can.*"—THOMAS FULLER.

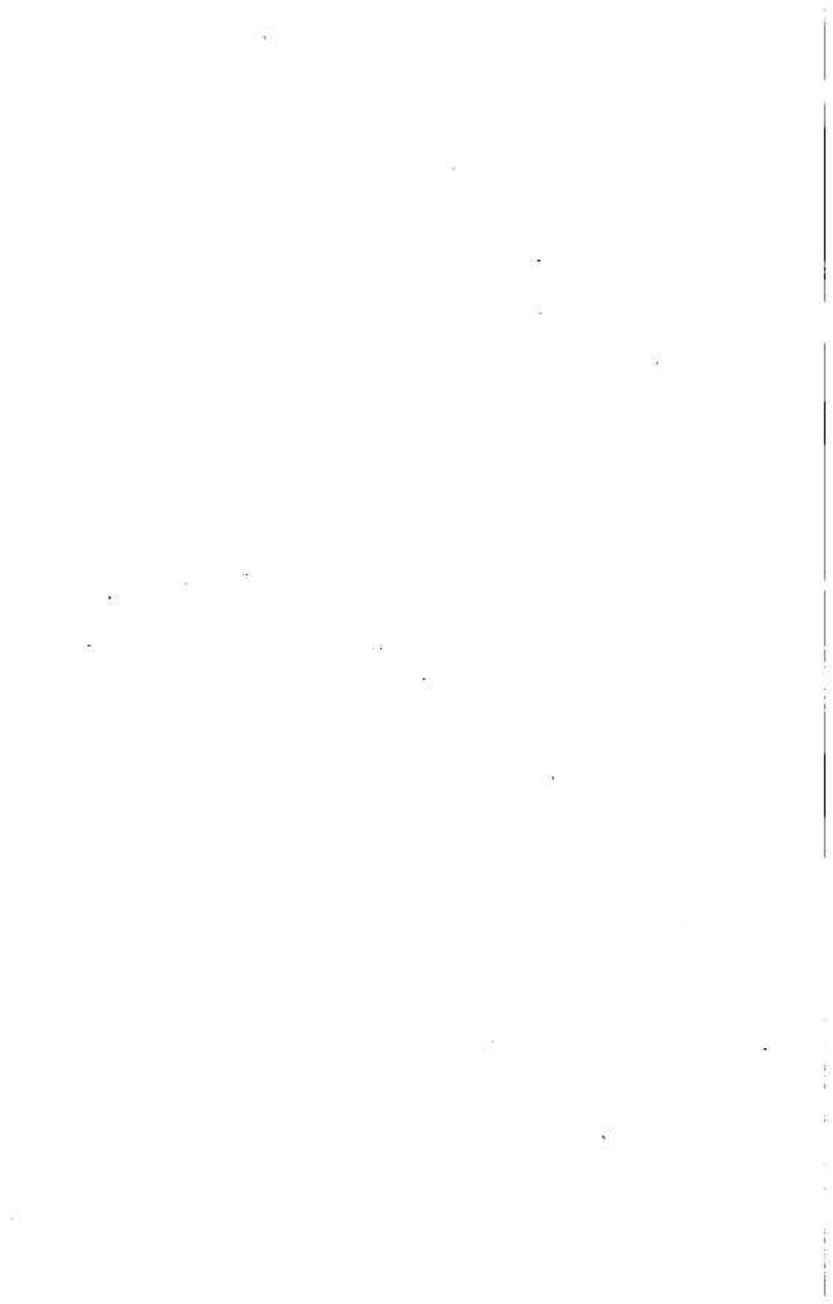
"*Maxime cupio ut in omnibus Academiis nostris hodierna Græcorum pronuntiatio recipiatur.*"—BOISSONADE.

"*Neque dubitamus quin ERASMUS, si in tantam Græcæ pronuntiationis discrepantiam incidisset, vulgarem usum intactum et salvum reliquisset.*"—SEYFFARTH.

"*Ich gebe der neugriechischen Aus-sprache im Ganzen bei weitem den Vorzug.*"—THEIBSCH.

"*Neque enim de caelo dilapsa ad nos pervenit Græcorum lingua, sed e patria sua una cum omnibus quæ habemus subsidiis, suo vestita cultu prodit, quem tollere aut immutare velle esset imperium in linguam liberam exercere.*"—WETSTEN.

"*Die sogenannte Erasmische Aus-sprache, wie es in Deutschland erscheint, ist völlig grundlos, ein Gebilde man weiss nicht von wannen es kam, ein Gemische welches jeder sich zusetzt nach eigener Lust und Willkühr.*"—LISCOV.



THE PRONUNCIATION OF GREEK, &c.

IT is purely as a practical man, and with a direct practical result in view, that I venture to put forth a few words on the vexed question of the PRONUNCIATION OF GREEK. He were a frigid pedant, indeed, who, with the whole glorious literature of Hellas before him, and the rich vein of Hellenic Archæology, scarcely yet opened in Scotland, should, for the mere gratification of a subtle speculative restlessness, walk direct into this region of philological thorns. So far as my personal curiosity was concerned, Sir John Cheke, wrapt in his many folded mantle of Ciceronian verbosity, and the Right Reverend Stephen Gardiner's prætorian edicts in favour of Greek sounds,¹ and the βή βή of the old comedian's Attic sheep, might have been allowed to sleep undisturbed on the

¹ *Ego suorum curam tunc ex edicto prætoris, et ut prætor, interdixi de possessione.*

library shelves. I had settled the question long ago in my own mind on broad grounds of common sense, rather than on any nice results that seemed obtainable from the investigations of the learned ; but the nature of the public duties now imposed on me does not allow me to take my own course in such matters, merely because I think it right. I must shew to the satisfaction of my fellow-teachers and of my students, that I am not seeking after an ephemeral notoriety by the public galvanisation of a dead crotchet ; that any innovations which I may propose are in reality, as so often happens in the political world also, and in the ecclesiastical, a mere recurrence to the ancient and established practice of centuries, and that whatever opinions I may entertain on points confessedly open to debate, I entertain not for myself alone, but in company with some of the ripest scholars and profoundest philologists of modern times. I have reason also for thinking with a recent writer, that the present time is peculiarly favourable for the reconsideration of the question ;¹ for, although Sir

¹ An Essay on the Pronunciation of the Greek Language. By G. T. PARNIXOTOS, M.A., late Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. London: Murray. 1844. This is the work that I recommend to the English student who wishes to understand the subject in detail, without wading through the confounding mass of pertinent and impertinent matter that the learned eloquence of more than three centuries has heaped up.

John Cheke might have said with some show of truth in his day, "*Græca jam lingua nemini patria est,*"¹ none but a prophetic partisan of universal Russian domination in the Mediterranean will now assert, that the living Greeks are not a nation and a people who have a right to be heard on the question, how their own language is to be pronounced. Taking the Greek language as it appears in the works of the learned commentator Corais, in the poetry of the Soutzos and Rangabe, in the history of Perræbus, so highly spoken of by Niebuhr, and in the publications of the daily press at Athens; and taking the new kingdom for no greater thing than the intrigues of meddling diplomatists, its own wretched cabals, and the guns of Admiral Parker will allow it to be; it is plain that to disregard the witness of such a speaking fact, standing as it does upon the unbroken tradition and catholic philological succession of eighteen centuries, would be, much more manifestly now than in the days of the learned WETSTEN, to "exercise a despotism over a free language," such as no man has a right to claim.² Besides, in Scotland we have

¹ *Sylloge scriptorum qui de lingua Græcæ recte et recta pronuntiatione Commentarios reliquerunt; edidit HAVERCAMPUS. Ludy. Bat., 1740. Vol. II. p. 220.*

² *JOH. RUDOLFI WETSTENII: pro Græca et genuina lingua Græcæ pronuntiatione Orationes Apologeticæ. Basil; 1686, p. 27.* The whole passage is quoted in the prefixed mottoes.

already had our orthodox hereditary routine in this matter disturbed by the invasion of English teachers of the Greek language ; an invasion, no doubt, which our strong national feeling may look on with jealousy, but which we brought on ourselves by the shameful condition of prostration in which we allowed the philological classes in our higher schools and colleges to lie for two centuries ; and it was not to be expected that these English teachers, being placed in a position which enabled them to give the law within a certain influential circle, should sacrifice their own traditional pronunciation of the Greek language, however arbitrary, to ours, in favour of which, in some points, there was little but the mere conservatism of an equally arbitrary usage to plead. Finding matters in this condition, I feel it impossible for me to waive the discussion of a matter already fermenting with all the elements of uncertainty. I have therefore taken the trouble of working my way through Havercamp's two volumes, and comparing the arguments used in the famous old Cantabrigian controversy with those advanced by a well-informed modern member of the same learned corporation. I have taken the learned Germans, too, as in duty bound, on such a question, into my counsels ; I have devoted not a little time and attention to the lan-
