The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Fennell's *Indo-European Vowel-System Indo-European Vowel-System*, by C. A. M. Fennell, D. Litt. 33 pp.

H. D. Darbishire

The Classical Review / Volume 6 / Issue 1-2 / February 1892, pp 56 - 58

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00184665, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00184665

How to cite this article:

H. D. Darbishire (1892). The Classical Review, 6, pp 56-58 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00184665

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

flections the results reached are, we think, in the main such as are likely to meet with general approval, as is also the genuine spirit of independence which has dictated them. Hoffmann's regard for the inviolability of phonetic laws is however by no means so profound as is demanded in certain quarters of Germany. In his eagerness to defend a theory or to furnish an explanation of a difficult phenomenon, he permits himself to ignore principles which are well recognized. Thus, p. 212, in commenting upon the relation of *κυβερνάω* to *κυμῆρῆναι*, he explains the former as resulting from the contamination of the strong and weak forms of the root, viz. *κυμῆρ-* and *κυμρ-*, which Hoffmann assumes might also appear as *κυβρ-*. No such form is conceivable. The *β*, if present, could only result as a parasitic sound in conjunction with *μ*, **κυμβρ-*, which of course would fail to explain *κυβερνάω*. So also *πλήστος*, No. 147, is explained as the regular resultant of *πλήιστος*, without any mention of the accepted law that primitive *η* regularly develops as *εισ*.

On p. 205 the law for the assimilation of final *ς* is too general. Such assimilation is not to be credited for final *ς* before initial *π*, as *κἄ(π) πῶθι* for *κᾶς πῶθι*, even granting it in case of *ῥέπο(μ) μέγα* for *ῥέπος μέγα*.

Analogy seldom seems to figure with Hoffman as a factor in linguistic changes. Such forms as *δέκο*, *δέκοτος*, *είκοσι*, *έκοτόν*, are thought by him to have *ο* (instead of the normal *α*, representing *nasalis sonans*), in consequence of some subtle influence of the adjacent *κ*. No allusion to any other theory of explaining these forms is thought

necessary—much less apparently a refutation.

In connexion with the reference to *μ* for *μ*ε, *me*, p. 162, no allusion is made to the very probable theory that *μ* is for *μ(ν)*—a theory rendered the more plausible by the fact that *μ* occurs only before consonants, so that the ante-consonantal form *μ(ν)* would bear the same relation to the ante-vocalic form *μεν*, as the ante-consonantal form of the preposition *iv* to the ante-vocalic form *ἐν*.

The treatment of the sounds and inflections is followed by a handy summary of the syntax and an excellent index. The proof-reading has been commendably accurate for a work so trying and full of detail. On p. 149, § 22, three lines from the end, *ἔναι* should stand for *εἶναι*, and on p. 37, under III. 2, the last example should read in the syllabic text *e·se·ta·se·* (not *e·sa·ta·se·*), thus conforming with usage as well as illustrating the principle under discussion.

These few criticisms are in no wise intended to detract from the value of a book which gives fresh proof of scholarly qualities and is indispensable to every student of Greek dialects. Special praise is moreover due to the author for the thoroughly dignified manner in which, under great provocation, he has passed criticism on the views of his opponents—particularly, of course, Meister.

The second volume, on the North Achaean, is promised for the latter part of the present year.

CHARLES E. BENNETT.

BROWN UNIVERSITY,
Providence, R.I.

FENNELL'S INDO-EUROPEAN VOWEL-SYSTEM.

Indo-European Vowel-System, by C. A. M. FENNELL, D. Litt. 33 pp.

THIS is one of the most striking contributions to classical philology which has appeared for some time. The originality of Dr. Fennell's views and the freshness of his ideas are only equalled by the pertinence of his attacks on the weak points of his opponents, among whom he is disposed to reckon all Germans. This is scarcely surprising. Dr. Fennell's services to philology have not received proper recognition; the famous sonant-nasal theory was to a great extent anticipated by him, and as early as

1873 he published a refutation of Curtius' then reigning principle of 'phonetic case.' He is therefore naturally indignant at these being hailed as new discoveries by foreign scholars, and thus the 'Neugrammatiker' find small favour in his eyes. We fear that some readers trained in the methods and phraseology of his opponents will be disposed to look down on this work as belonging to an exploded state of the science, but they will be wrong. Where Dr. Fennell rejects the discoveries or the methods of the new school he does so with his eyes open. His antagonism is of knowledge and not of ignorance.

The pamphlet before us begins with an explanation of those exceptions to Grimm's law which have hitherto been associated with the name of Verner. Dr. Fennell rejects the theory that accent is the disturbing influence and substitutes for it syllabism. The coincidence between the observed facts and the accentuation in Sanskrit he proceeds to account for by the hypothesis that accented syllables in Indo-European contained as little 'consonantal sound' as possible. Thus, taking two well-known examples *bhrāter-* and *māter-*, in the former case the accentuation is *bhrāter-*, therefore the syllabism is *bhrā-ter-*, therefore Teutonic has *p*: in the latter case the accentuation is *māter-*, therefore the syllabism is *māt-ér-*, therefore Teutonic has *d*. It is obvious that this hypothesis gives us a canon by which to determine I.E. syllabism and this Dr. Fennell next proceeds to do, setting out the general rule and the exceptions which are to be made. From this he passes to the main topic of his paper, the vowel-system in Indo-European. Here he propounds a new explanation of the 'light' diphthongs (*ei*, *eu*), that they were developed from *i*, *u*, by accent, and proceeds to construct a classification of vowel-sounds consisting of four 'keys' (corresponding to what are called 'scales') each containing four major, further analysed into ten minor, subdivisions (roughly corresponding to 'stages'), and the paper concludes with a discussion of some exceptions and difficulties.

The proposed alternative for Verner's law is a brilliant hypothesis and certainly deserves thorough investigation. The statement in its present form is too brief to be satisfactory. As regards the vowel-system we fear that Dr. Fennell is not sufficiently clear to escape misconception. After his own system he proceeds to print Brugmann's 'Ablautsreihen,' as if they were to be contrasted. The two systems really supplement each other. Dr. Fennell's 'keys,' resting as they do almost entirely on pitch-accent, are in fact an elaboration of the little-worked hypothesis that the *e*:*o* variation &c. resulted from variations of pitch. As a tentative expansion of this hypothesis (which it can very well bear) his work will be found valuable and in no way conflicting with that of his enemies. His error lies in claiming too much for his own client, pitch-accent, and in not recognizing sufficiently the effects of stress. Thus the accent which could cause to vanish the vowel of the preceding syllable *must* have been stress: on the other hand we do not think there is the slightest ground for

maintaining, as he does (p. 26), that stress could lengthen a vowel. In point of fact however many controversial topics suggest themselves which it would have been impossible to treat in his limited space. As it is, his work suffers greatly from compression and we hope soon to see this pamphlet made the basis of a thorough-going examination into all the evidence both positive and negative. He has himself given us in the last number of the *Classical Review* (vol. v. p. 451) a fuller statement of his views on the sonant nasal, which are here merely referred to in a foot-note.

We fear that we differ entirely with Dr. Fennell's conception of fundamental principles. Such sentences as: 'It is obvious that a vowel is more liable to change in a syllable which ends in a consonant than in a syllable which does not end in a consonant' (p. 6). 'The change of aspirates in Greek in (*sic*) *mediae* or *tenues*, as in *λαμβάνω*, *σπρόμβος*, is more explicable at the end than at the beginning of a syllable' (p. 11). 'Sanskrit *k*, *g*, *gh*, were respectively changed to *ch*, *j*, *h*, owing to lax pronunciation of the consonantal part of an accented syllable' (p. 13). 'ἐπλε is clearly poetic and also optional' (p. 17)—all seem to rest on the individualistic hypothesis that language is the property of the speaker, which he can modify and change at will. If this were so, so were it uttered, but 'tis not so, and 'twas not so, and God forbid it should be so, for the sake of the science of language.

The following are clearly slips: 'The syllabism...*ai-i*' (p. 3); 'the syllabism...*im-f*' (p. 5); 'primary diphthongs are never found in the last syllable of a word' (p. 18) [what of the dat. sing. in *-ai*, the nom. pl. masc. of the stem *to- &c.*?]; and we cannot consider that Dr. Fennell has overthrown dentalism of gutturals in Greek until he has disposed of *τέλλω* and *πόλος*. The issue as regards accent is so all-important that we must re-state it at length. Dr. Fennell's own words are: 'I have to defend my assumption that stress is to be regarded as distinct from accent' (p. 26). This is not the point. The distinction between stress and (pitch) accent is quite recognized and there is no confusion in thought, however the words are used. What must be defended is the assumption that the Greek accentual system, which was undoubtedly pitch, and which reaches us only from Alexandrian grammarians, can be taken as faithfully representing the Indo-European accent-system, although it conflicts with the testimony of every known language of the family. The remark

on p. 32 'The terms *προσῳδία* and *accentus* clearly referred to the pitch of the voice' is obviously only intended to defend the use of the word, and not to prove the fact in issue.

On the other hand Dr. Fennell is distinctly in the right as against 'the German school' when he denies that diphthongal forms were 'prior to those containing *I* and *U* alone' (p. 18). This might appear fairly obvious; but as the contrary has been asserted quite recently by so distinguished an exponent of modern views as Dr. Wilh. Streitberg, a few words of refutation are advisable.

Dr. Streitberg's own words are: 'herrscht doch darüber meines Wissens allgemeine Uebereinstimmung, dass die Vokale *e/a/á/o* und die ihnen entsprechenden Längen—die sog. Vollstufenvokale also—die einzigen Sonanten oder silbischen Vokale des Indogermanischen waren zu einer Zeit, als die Schwundstufe sich noch nicht ausgebildet hatte,' and again, 'Wir haben also prinzipiell für alle Silben, haupttonige wie nichthaupttonige ursprünglich einen der vier Vollstufenvokale anzusetzen.' —*Indog. Forsch.* I. p. 84. This illustrates the danger of working philology on algebraic methods, and studying symbols until principles are lost sight of. The assumption of a still more primeval epoch than any reached by logical inference, of which it can merely be predicated that stress-accent did not exist—for we defy Dr. Streitberg to point to any other distinctive characteristic of this period—is not only unnecessary but even harmful. It is unnecessary, for the sole test of merit in a hypothesis is the number of facts it explains, and this explains none. It is harmful, because it obscures the important fact that there is a priority but it is logical priority not chronological. It is quite correct to speak of a root *leiq* and of a suffix *es*, of a root *uel* and of a suffix **qe*, of a root *uer* and of a suffix *eu*, because whenever any one of these roots or suffixes was presented vividly to the consciousness it would assume that form. But it is not correct to speak of **leiqes*, *uelqe*- or *ueruq*- as bases, or, as Dr. Streitberg does (on p. 89), of **esent(i)*¹ for this reason. It agrees with all that we know of stress

¹ And even by his own showing, this ought to be *esent(ei)*!

to suppose that it in Indo-European as elsewhere coincided with emphasis; but the conditions under which two consecutive syllables are emphasized are rare indeed. Either then the emphasis and therefore the stress is on the root, or it is on the suffix, but not on both. Presumably it is because Dr. Streitberg perceives this that he is compelled to throw his **esenti* back into a time anterior to stress, but then other considerations arise. Was there an intervening period of pitch-accent influence or did pitch and stress simultaneously dawn upon a hitherto accentless people? In either case we ultimately arrive at something dangerously similar to the exploded *Lautspaltung*, simply because we insist that sound-analysis shall have its historical analogue. There is no need to assume any succession of epochs for the changes in question; when, and as soon as, a complex was formed from any two of the above simplicia, the mental act at once subordinated one or other of them, and produced *leiq-s* or *liq-es*, *uel-q*- or *uĭ-qe-*, *uer-u*- or *ur-eu-* (to say nothing of the more subtle modifications of pitch). These forms have absolutely no priority over one another; they would all exist, potentially at least, at the same time, although not *in the same mind at the same time*. It is rather late in the day to have to assert that language does not reflect the mental growth of the individual, but this is what it really comes to. We repeat then that we are not justified in assuming any period prior to the I.-E. period—meaning thereby that in which stress-accent produced its changes—except the root-period, and our knowledge does not yet justify us in assuming that.

We conclude this paper with the hope that Dr. Fennell will not consider us presumptuous in congratulating a scholar of his name on his most stimulating and refreshing pamphlet. We trust it will be widely read and have the desired effect of calling attention to the exact evidence on which our conclusions rest. *Νᾶφε καὶ μέμνασ' ἀπιστεῖν* is still a good rule, and neglect by German 'authorities' of the first injunction does not justify their English followers in losing sight of the second.

H. D. DARBISHIRE.