

**LATIN PRONUNCIATION:  
A SHORT EXPOSITION OF  
THE ROMAN METHOD**

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Latin Pronunciation: A Short Exposition of the Roman Method by Harry Thurston Peck

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TEACHERS' HANDBOOKS

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# LATIN PRONUNCIATION

*A SHORT EXPOSITION OF THE  
ROMAN METHOD*

BY

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## LATIN PRONUNCIATION.

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### 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 acceptance. 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."

## 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,