

## THE CORRECT PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN.

The following query and answer is from the *American Ecclesiastical Review* of December, '97. It may be interesting to note that it is the Roman pronunciation that is followed at St. Francis Xavier's College.

*Qu.* My assistant and I have all along maintained a slight difference in the pronunciation of Latin; one of us having been accustomed to the manner of the Roman Seminary, the other retaining the ordinary Continental pronunciation taught in most of our colleges. Recently there seems to have been some reform in this matter, and as a consequence we have had to submit to some criticism, not only from a college professor in a neighbouring institution, but from various half-fledged blue-stockings who devote themselves to a revival of antique letters and who advance clever reasons for saying *Kikero* instead of the old fashioned *Cicero*. They are particularly incensed against the Italian pronunciation, calling it absurd, artificial and justifiable only for Italians who find it convenient because of their own language. No Roman of the Augustan age, they say, ever pronounced *tshivitas* for *civitas*.

Now, whilst I do not want to be behindhand in proper culture, I dislike the idea of introducing in the public service the chant "Qui es in koelis; sanctifiketur nomen tuum, etc.," which would certainly arrest the attention of the congregation, and suggest the idea of affectation or the like. What are really the merits of the case? And is there any right reason for our adopting this Augustan pronunciation, which, if done, should, it seems to me, be done by all the clergy together?

*Resp.* There is just a trifle of arrogant ignorance in the attempt to render the Italian pronunciation of Latin absurd or to substitute for it any other. No doubt, the new pronunciation, is either that of the Augustan age or comes near to it, and very likely the friends of Cicero called him Kikero after the fashion of the Greeks. But that is a matter which concerns the Latin grammarian or the archeologist.

The Latin language, as far as it is to-day a living, that is to say a *spoken* language, is the language of the Catholic Church, of her clergy and of her international institutions. Now the pronunciation of a living language is not regulated by reference to any literary standard of the past. We consider Shakespeare and