

TRUST in God, and remember that when He brings you to the swelling of Jordan—not necessarily death, but some awful flood of sorrow—that then, for the first time perhaps, you will meet the ark, and the Priest whose feet, when they dip in the margin of the river, will cause it to part, and you will go over dry-shod. When Jordan overflows its banks, God brings His chosen people to the brink, and it is then that He cleaves the path through the heart of the river, so that they are not touched by its descending torrent.—MEYER'S *Jeremiah*, p. 65.

The Jordan.—And now we have reached the Jordan, the most remarkable river on the face of the globe. It has been my good fortune to visit and see some of the great and historic rivers of the world. I have crossed and recrossed the Seine at Paris, and have walked by the side of the Arno at Florence. I have gazed upon the Tiber at Rome, and have seen the Hudson River of America. I have visited the Niagara in Canada, and have sailed on the noble St. Lawrence River. I have glided over the surface of the ancient Nile in Egypt, and have sat by the banks of the beautiful Abana at Damascus. But not any nor all of these gave such pleasure, nor awakened such gratitude and feeling of devotion, as my first sight of the Jordan. The Christian who for the first time stands by its banks, or walks into its waters, has kindled within him such emotions as the sight of no other river in the universe can awaken. How is this?

It is not remarkable for its greatness. In this it is far excelled by our own Old Father Thames. For beauty it is not to be compared to the Abana. No great cities adorn its banks, nor is it made attractive by the beautiful residences of the rich. The commerce of nations is not carried on its bosom, as on our own muddy Mersey or Humber. Its sanctity lies in the fact that its waters have been made for ever sacred by the feet of Him who was by John declared to be the Lamb of God, and who was proclaimed by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God.—LEACH'S *Old Yet Ever New*, p. 179.

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The White Stone and the 'Gladiatorial' Tessera.

BY PROFESSOR W. M. RAMSAY, D.C.L., LL.D., LITT.D.

VARIOUS commentators on Rev 2¹⁷ have sought to explain the 'white stone,' or tessera, with a new name written upon it, which is there promised to the victorious Christian, by comparing it with the tessera which was given, according to the current and accepted theory, to gladiators who had received their honourable dismissal from service after a victorious career. When one thinks of the nature of the gladiatorial service, and the rude, brutal kind of career that a gladiator of long and successful service had gone through, the comparison seems unsavoury. But still, if it suited in other important respects, we should have to accept it, and to understand that familiarity had dulled the mind even of a Jewish Christian like the composer of the Seven Letters to the unpleasant and repellent character of the illustration which he was using. The writers who advocated this explanation of the white tessera given to the Christian victor pointed out that a title *Spectatus*, i.e. 'approved,' was engraved, according to a theory held by some scholars,

upon the gladiator's tessera, and might fairly be regarded as 'a new name.' If this were correct, the analogy would certainly be a remarkably strong one.

In my *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 302 f., I have tried to show that the comparison and explanation must be rejected, on the ground that the gladiatorial tesserae and the letters SP engraved upon them are interpreted in a different way by Mommsen, who eliminated entirely the title from them. On Mommsen's interpretation these tesserae are deprived of the most striking point of analogy to the 'white stone.'

It was therefore a case of balancing rival theories of interpretation of those tesserae, no theory being as yet proved to be correct and accepted by the world of scholars; and there the question had to rest. But I also sought to corroborate my rejection of the gladiatorial comparison by pointing out that gladiatorial exhibitions and the gladiatorial profession were an importation from Rome into the East, and not very common there, nor much

admired by the Hellenes. Now it is essential, in any illustrative comparison between the ideas of the Seven Letters and the social facts of the period, that it should be drawn from a phase of life familiar to the readers of the letters. But there is no reason to think that ordinary Hellenic society in a city like Smyrna was used to gladiators, or likely to admire them or be blind to their distasteful character. The comparison, if the author of the Seven Letters had used it, would be far from setting his readers on a higher moral plane than educated Greek society. Many Greeks disapproved of, and very few really loved, gladiatorial exhibitions, which were out of harmony with Hellenic ideals and ideas, and which, though introduced from Rome, were always exotic in the Greek lands and cities.

Still, it must be granted that the question was left in an unsatisfactory condition. The gladiatorial comparison was shown to be as yet unproved and improbable. But, if the theory on which the advocates of the comparison rely were hereafter proved to be correct and found general acceptance, then the comparison would have much stronger and firmer ground to stand upon. It is therefore very convenient for those who are interested in this question, that a study of certain classes of Roman tesserae, with an introductory account of the chief kinds of tesserae, has been published during the present summer by one of the most acute and illuminative of modern scholars, M. Rostowzew. I have pointed out in the article on 'Roads and Travel in New Testament Times,' in Dr. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, v. p. 394 ff., that Rostowzew, by a single article, has placed on a new basis the whole subject of the levying of customs-dues and the collection of taxes under the Roman Empire; and that all that had previously been written about this subject in connexion with the Gospels and Jewish history must be thrown aside and a new beginning made. The same will be found to be the case, I think, with the gladiatorial tesserae. His views on this subject have a peculiarly important bearing on the passage of Revelation which we are discussing. To show wherein this importance lies, the conclusion at which I arrived in the already quoted passage must be briefly stated.

The one really illuminative parallel which I could find in ancient social facts to the white stone with the new name was drawn from the life of Aelius Aristides, the most famous rhetorician in the province of Asia during the second century (born

probably in 117 A.D.). Aristides always carried with him a Symbol (Synthêma). This Synthêma was a pledge of Divine aid, giving him courage to carry into effect the bold plan of life which the god had suggested and ordered him to follow. In every crisis of his life, and especially on the trying occasion when he had to give a display of his oratorical powers before the Emperor and the ladies of his family and the whole Court, the Synthêma was with him encouraging him. It reminded him that the god had revealed himself to his own chosen orator and favoured servant, and had given him a new name, Theodorus, 'Gift of God.'

Aristides does not explain the nature of the Synthêma. He does not say even that he received it from the god during the revelation vouchsafed to him. I assumed wrongly in the above quoted passage, p. 313, that Aristides actually received it from the god; but I was at the time puzzled and disappointed to be unable to find any statement to that effect. Aristides only says that the god appeared to him, gave him advice, promised him aid in executing the advice, and bestowed on him a new name; and that he carried about with him always a Synthêma, which reminded him of the Divine vision, and thus encouraged him. Rostowzew's views have now made it clear that Aristides gives a complete account of the events: the god appeared, gave advice and name: the servant of the god (made for himself and) carried about with him the Synthêma as an ever-present symbol and reminder.

The so-called gladiatorial or consular tesserae are small, elongated, rectangular, parallelepipeds of ivory or bone, which, as is shown by a hole at one end, were intended to be hung up (whether round the neck of the bearer, or otherwise), inscribed with a name (generally a slave's name, very rarely a free citizen's name) and a date, and the word SPECTAT, or SPECTAVIT, or (as is usual) abbreviated SP. These tesserae were not gifts or dedications to a god, for tesserae of that class would bear some indication of their purpose, such as *dedit*, *donavit*, *dedicavit*, or the god's name in the dative. They are memorials, just as several other classes of tesserae were intended to be memorials of some action.¹

¹ *Erinnerungstesserae*: such were e.g. *tesserae hospitales*, and *tesserae paganæ* or *paganicæ*, memorials of the relationship of hospitality and of worthy magistrates and patrons of the *pagus*.

A specially interesting class of memorial tesseræ are the soldiers' tesseræ; Rostowzew points out that the oft-quoted Latin military tesseræ (*tessera militaris*, called in Greek Symbol or Synthēma, σύμβολον, σύνθημα) must have been small wooden tablets or bars with square edges, having words inscribed on them used for the purpose of distinguishing friends from enemies; this is, of course, self-evident and universally admitted.

The 'gladiatorial tesseræ,' then, were intended as memorials of a certain act; and this act is described by the verb *spectavit* or *spectat*, inscribed on them. The opinion of scholars has been almost universally determined by the expression of Horace about an old and well-tried gladiator, now retired from service, *spectatum satis*, which seemed to be illustrated also by the letters SP attached to some names in a list of gladiators.¹ But the parallel fails. The dates on the 'gladiatorial tesseræ' do not correspond to probable dates for such contests: almost all are dated on Kalends, Nones, or Ides of a month, and the commonest date inscribed on them is 1 January. The action *spectavit* cannot be explained of the supposed gladiator, whose name is the nominative to it; no reasonable theory has ever been advanced to account for the action 'he beheld': the gladiator was beheld by the spectators, and when he had been 'sufficiently gazed at,' he was permitted to retire honourably, and was presented with a wooden sword or foil.

According to Rostowzew, the right interpretation was suggested by the French scholar Fröhner: he argues from the tessera found at Arles, with the legend *spectat num . . .* (which he completes as *num[en]*), that these tesseræ were memorials of a vision or revelation of a god to the bearer. The person to whom had been vouchsafed such a vision, made the tessera as a memorial (and hung it round his neck as a perpetual companion and reminder; so we may complete the explanation, quoting the action of Aristides).

¹ It has been usually accepted as axiomatic that SP in such a list must be intended for either *spectatus* or *spectator*. In *C.I.L.* vi. 631 the veteran gladiators are enumerated first with VET after the names, and then the tirones with TIR. In the midst of the tirones appears one name with SP instead of TIR; and at the end, after other classes, the final name is marked SP. This order does not suit Horace's *spectatum satis*, the old successful veteran, retired from service; and Rostowzew throws doubt on the hitherto generally accepted interpretation of SP in these lists.

The practice of sleeping in a temple, in the hope of seeing the god in a vision (*incubatio*), was common in Rome, and was practised chiefly by the lowest classes — slaves, freedmen, and the ignorant among free citizens. This class of tesseræ belongs to the period 75 B.C. to 75 A.D., when incubation was practised most by the poor of Rome. Various religious symbols, such as lightning, caduceus, trident, are found alongside of the inscription on the tesseræ. The month and day on which the action took place, almost always the Kalends, Ides, or Nones, was inscribed on them. It may reasonably and with great probability be supposed that these days had a religious significance; the Kalends especially were always sacred; incubation may probably, almost certainly, have been recommended on certain days as more favoured by the gods than other days. Moreover, incubation was practised in Rome most of all in the temple of Aesculapius, on the island in the Tiber, whose festival was on the first of January; and that is a commoner day than any other on these tesseræ. Other temples also were suitable for incubation, which was practised on the Capitol, and probably also in the temple of Juturna and the Dioscuri, while many other gods did not permit it.

There are certainly some difficulties besetting this interpretation of the tesseræ. Mommsen, who at first felt very doubtful about the gladiatorial interpretation, finally declared his confidence in it, mainly for the reason that the names inscribed on the tesseræ are mainly of slaves, but occasionally of free Roman citizens. The tesseræ, therefore, were used by a class of persons who were mostly slaves, but occasionally free. Such a class were the gladiators. But the rite of incubation was practised by the same uneducated class, and no difficulty is caused by the practical limitation of the tesseræ to persons of that class.

Another difficulty of more serious nature is the verb. *Videre* and *visere*, not *spectare*, are usual. It is usual to say *videre* (or *visere*), *visu*, *ex viso*, and not *spectare*, in literature, when the act of beholding the god in a vision is described. But the difficulty is lessened when we remember that the language of common life and vulgar conversation often differed much from the language of literature in such matters at Rome. The tesseræ give the language of common life. The word *spectare* was perhaps used, as being a more vivid term, in

the conversational Latin of common life; and its natural sense is not unfavourable, for *spectio* was the technical term used of augurs looking at signs of the Divine will revealed by the god. High class Latin, however, preferred a different word.

A third difficulty lies in the rarity of allusions in literature to the custom of making and keeping memorials of such visions. But it is precisely about matters of this kind that ancient literature always fails us: it took little note of common life and vulgar practices, such as this. One example, however, is recorded, namely, the case of Aristides, who always carried about his tessera or Synthêma on his person. It is a reasonable conjecture from

what he tells us, though from its very nature incapable of verification unless the actual tessera be found, that on his Synthêma he engraved his new name, Theodorus, and the date when he saw the god. Many public memorials, both in the West and still more in the Eastern Provinces, erected 'at the command of the god,' attest the frequency of such visions. The private and secret memorials are less evident, because they were naturally more allusive and less explanatory. Neither kind can be traced easily in literature.

Rostowzew does not quote either the passage of *Revelation* or the incident in the life of Aristides; but these are likely to be quoted in future as a strong confirmation of his views.

At the Literary Table.

HEREDITY.

THE PRINCIPLES OF HEREDITY. By G. Archdall Reid, M.B., F.R.S.E. (*Chapman & Hall*. 12s. 6d. net.)

DR. ARCHDALL REID has written this book for medical men. 'The evidence relied on is drawn largely from medical sources; medical men form the largest body of scientific workers; they deal constantly with questions of Heredity, a knowledge of which is of great importance to them; but in a measure they have neglected the systematic study of the subject.'

But Dr. Archdall Reid hopes that 'the professional biologist and the general reader will not find the work devoid of interest.' The 'general reader' is likely to be a preacher. And perhaps some knowledge of Heredity is as necessary to the work of the preacher as to the medical man; probably it has been as cruelly neglected in his education. A few, a very few, preachers are now alive to its importance. They will be among the general readers of this great book.

It is a text-book. Unfortunately for the general reader there are theories and counter-theories in the doctrine of Heredity, and they go to its very roots. Do acquired characters go down to posterity, or do they not? That is fundamental. Dr. Archdall Reid says they do not. He is one of the most distinguished advocates of 'that theory of Heredity

which excludes all inheritance of characters acquired in the lifetime of the individual.' But probably the interest of the subject is not made less by these fundamental differences.

As for Dr. Archdall Reid, the doctrine to which he gives his strength is the doctrine of Recapitulation. By that, if it is established, his fame will stand. The doctrine of Recapitulation is in these words: 'The development of the individual is a recapitulation of the life-history of the race.' What that means, it takes Dr. Archdall Reid a long chapter of his book to explain, and no unnecessary words are used. So it cannot be condensed into a paragraph.

And there is so much else in the book to attend to. Dr. Archdall Reid is a fiery temperance reformer, who abhors teetotalism. His cure for drunkenness is perfect freedom to every man and woman on earth to drink as much as he pleases. The Israelite was a drunkard until he entered Canaan and sat down under his own vine and could drink to his soul's satiety. The great majority of Englishmen are now temperate, because they have so many opportunities of getting drunk.

And this also has to do with Heredity.

Altogether it is a fascinating volume, admirably written, and fiercely believed.