

are scholars who possess little interest for the general reader. He will probably be better pleased when I make reference to Whyte-Melville's tale of *The Gladiators*, a tale which, no doubt, involved careful research in order to ensure accuracy of description. In Chapter XIX, entitled "The Arena," we read: "Occasionally, indeed, some vanquished champion, of more than common beauty, or who had displayed more than common address and courage, so wins on the favour of the spectators, that *they sign for his life to be spared. Hands are turned outwards, with the thumb pointing to the earth*, and the victor sheaths his sword and retires with his worsted antagonist from the contest; but more generally the fallen man's signal for mercy is neglected; ere the shout 'a hit' has died upon his ears, *his despairing eye marks the thumbs of his judges pointing upwards, and he disposes himself to welcome the steel*, with a calm courage worthy of a better cause." So also in the chapter of "The Trident and the Net." "Then with a numerous party of friends and clients, Licinius made a strong demonstration in favour of mercy. *Such an array of hands turned outwards, and pointing to the earth, met the Tribune's eye that he could not but forbear his cruel purpose.*"

As the late Lord Lytton had anticipated Major Whyte-Melville in describing a fight between a *mirmillo* and a *retarius* (such as Gérôme has painted), we turn to the pages of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, which was published in 1834. From the

"conspicuous absence" of detail in alluding to the two important signals, it almost seems as if the author had been doubtful about the mode of displaying them. In the chapter on "The Amphitheatre," the following are the only expressions he uses: "Not a hand—not even a woman's hand—gave the signal of charity and life!" Again: "The people gave the signal of death." Once more: "With one accord the editor and assembly made the sign of mercy." This is all. Had they been masonic signs, more reticence could not have been observed about them. The question of *pollice verso*, or *pollice presso* is, singularly enough, left untouched, though the lines of Juvenal were probably as familiar to the novelist as they are to every classical scholar. It is by these same lines of the Roman Satirist that we are enabled to convict the French painter of error. If we may judge from the expression of the faces throughout the assembly in his picture, M. Gérôme intended to foreshadow the death of the *retarius*. His motto, therefore, is correct; but the conventional signal for death is misrepresented.

In conclusion, if any reader of this magazine considers that my brief inquiry into an ancient custom is "Much ado about Nothing," let me respectfully remind him that the distinction between "Thumbs Up," and "Thumbs Down," though a matter of indifference to him, was, unhappily, a question of life or death to the prostrate gladiator in the Roman amphitheatre.

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A WRITER in the *National Journal of Education* advocates what he calls the Indicative Method in teaching Arithmetic. By this he means that pupils who are thoroughly grounded in the simple rules should only be asked to *express* on their slates the form that given problems ought to take.

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MR. SAMUEL S. GREEN, public librarian, Worcester, Mass., has printed an admirable pamphlet containing two discourses on "Sensational Fiction in Public Libraries," and "Personal Relations between Librarians and Readers," which should be read by every teacher in the country.—*National Journal of Education*.