

against me. As soon, accordingly, as I had the opportunity, I turned in despair for consolation (though with an uncanny feeling that consolation might, possibly, be denied me) to Dr. Smith's famous *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*. For the first time during my wild-goose chase, I found my statement confirmed by the following paragraph in the article on *Gladiators*: "When a gladiator was wounded, the people called out, *Habet*, or *Hoc habet*; and the one who was vanquished lowered his arms in token of submission. His fate, however, depended on the people, *who pressed down their thumbs if they wished him to be saved, but turned them up if they wished him to be killed*." Anxious to discover whether other Cyclopædias agreed with Chambers', I then consulted Appleton's *New American Cyclopædia*, edited by Ripley and Dana, and in Vol. VIII., p. 272, found the following passage: "If a combatant was vanquished but not killed, his fate depended on the people, *who turned down their thumbs, if they wished him to be spared*." Evidently, this compiler did not draw his information from the same misleading source as Professors Ramsay and Wilkins.

I am, at present, unable to name the treacherous guide who deluded these gentlemen, and many other writers on the same subject. The error that they have committed seems extraordinary to any one acquainted with Latin literature. For the benefit of non-classical readers it may now be mentioned that the motto of M. Gérôme's painting is borrowed from the third satire of Juvenal, vv. 36-7:

"*Munera nunc edunt, et verso pollice vulgi
Quemlibet occidunt populariter.*"

These verses are thus translated by Gifford, who understood correctly the meaning of the phrase, *verso pollice*.

"Now they give shows themselves, and at the will
Of the base rabble, raise the sign—to kill."

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There are some lines by Prudentius, a Christian poet of the fourth century, which may also be here quoted in illustration of the custom described. The writer is describing the conduct of a Vestal Virgin at one of the gladiatorial contests:

"*O tenerum mitemque animum ! Consurgit
ad ictus ;
Et quoties victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa
Delicias ait esse suas ! pectusque jacentis
Virgo modesta jubet converso pollice rumpi.*"

These lines may be roughly translated thus :

O tender soul ! She rises to each blow,
And, when the victor stabs his bleeding foe,
The modest Virgin calls him her "delight."
And, with her thumb uplifted, bids him
smite !

It is clear from the sentence I quoted from Pliny that *premere pollicem* is the phrase used to denote approbation ; it is equally clear from Juvenal that *vertere pollicem* denotes the opposite ; and, although I cannot now call to mind any passage in the classics where *pollice presso* is applied to the events of the arena, the phrase, with the meaning that I attach to it, may be found in Propertius, 3, 8, 14 :

"*Et nitidas presso pollice finge comas.*"

In a note on a line in Horace (I Epist. 18, 66):

"*Fantor utroque tuum laudabit pollice
ludum.*"

The Rev. A. J. Maclean, one of the best editors of the *Bibliotheca Classica* thus writes : "In the fights of gladiators the people expressed their approbation by turning their thumbs down, and the reverse by uplifting them." He notes also, the suggestion of Rupert in his edition of Juvenal, that the thumb was pointed upwards, and inwards to the heart, as a sign that the fallen man was to be run through there.

Maclean and Rupert, however,