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'Her that kept the Door.'

By Lady W. M. Ramsay, Edinburgh.

To students of history the domestic customs of an ancient people must be a matter of great interest. To ordinary readers, like myself, they are certainly not the least interesting part of history. When, therefore, a short time ago, struck by the phrase quoted above (Jn 18^{16}), I began to seek for further information on the subject, it was both disappointing and surprising to discover that in none of the commentaries on the Gospels to which I have access is to be found any reference to the fact that the doorkeeper of the high priest's palace in Jerusalem was a woman. Even Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* proved disappointing. Under the heading 'Door, doorkeeper' the reader is told 'see House.' But in the long article on 'House' the only reference to the doorkeeper is a brief statement that a bench was provided inside the door for the doorkeeper and servants.

Was it customary among the Jews in the time of Christ for women to be doorkeepers? In the incident related by John—in which he himself was the person who 'spoke to her that kept the door,'—the reference is so casual as to imply that there was nothing unusual in the doorkeeper's being a woman. It may be taken for granted, however, that she was not a young woman, but one of mature age. The usages of society at the time make this quite certain. No girl or young woman could have mingled and talked freely, as this doorkeeper did, with the soldiers, officials, and general public that thronged the palace court. Besides, her position seems to have been one of responsibility, requiring judgment and considerable experience of life. She evidently had to use her own discretion as to who was to be admitted and who to be denied entrance to the palace. When John and Peter arrived together, having followed Jesus, the former, 'who was known to the high priest' and doubtless also to the doorkeeper, entered at once, while Peter, a fisher-lad, whose appearance may have marked him as a person more or less insignificant, and who was, at any rate, unknown, remained outside.

The word 'maid' used in the narrative is somewhat misleading to English readers, connected as it generally is with the idea of youth—except when qualified by the addition of the adjective 'old.' In the Greek of the New Testament the word παιδίσκη, which is so translated, carries with it no implication of youth, although originally, no doubt, it did so, derived as it is from the word παῖς, 'a child.' The original meaning, however, had by that time disappeared, and the word had come to signify 'a domestic female slave,' and in the New Testament, where it occurs frequently, that is the only sense in which it is used. We have an analogous usage in our time of the word 'boy,' a name one meaning of which is, according to Webster's *International Dictionary*, 'a male servant, labourer, or slave of a native or inferior race; also any man of such a race.'

In the Epistle to the Galatians ($4^{22\text{-}31}$), this same word παιδίσκη is translated 'bondwoman.' In this passage an emphatic distinction is drawn between the 'freewoman' and παιδίσκη, the 'bondwoman.' The son of Hagar, the 'bondwoman,' is not to inherit with the son of Sarah, the 'freewoman.' This is in the Authorized Version. In the Revised Version I note that παιδίσκη is translated 'handmaid,' which seems to me to weaken the emphasis of the statement that the writer of the Epistle makes, although the meaning remains unaltered.

In the story of the raising of the little daughter of Jairus as told by Luke ($8^{40\text{-}56}$), the word 'maid' is used (R.V. 'maiden')—'But he, taking her by the hand, called, saying, Maid, arise'—but here the Greek word is not παιδίσκη, but ἡ παῖς, 'child.'[1] In Mk 5^{41} the Aramaic is given, 'Talitha-cumi,' 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.' In Matthew's account the word 'damsel' (Greek κοράσιον) is used. John does not relate the incident.

Wherever in the New Testament the idea 'young woman' occurs, the word used is not παιδίσκη; and wherever παιδίσκη is used the meaning is, as already stated, 'a domestic female slave.'

It is highly probable that the female slaves in Jewish households were not usually of Jewish race. They are much more likely to have been foreigners. The narrative of Peter's miraculous escape from prison (Ac 12) seems to corroborate this. When Peter reached the house of his friends and knocked at the door, 'a damsel came to hearken, named

[1] The awkward form of the address (v.[54]) shows that the Greek is a translation.

Rhoda' (R.V. 'a maid came to answer'). Rhoda is a Greek name, and the bearer of it may very probably have belonged to a Greek-speaking country. Here, again, the Greek word translated 'maid' or 'damsel' is παιδίσκη. Although, as already said, there is nothing in the word implying youth, yet Rhoda's action in leaving Peter standing outside the closed door while she ran back to tell that he was there seems to indicate that she was a young girl, as she is usually represented by writers on this most interesting story.

What is known of slavery among ancient peoples, including the Jews, seems to prove that the household slaves were generally treated with kindness. Such slaves, both male and female, were regarded as members of the family. They shared the family life, and they had the interest of the family and household at heart in a way that hired servants had not and were not expected to have. The most confidential business was entrusted by a master to his slaves. This friendly relation was specially the case in the Greek-speaking society of Western Asia. With the other aspects of such slavery I am not at present concerned. My object is to show that those two slave-women—the doorkeeper of the high priest's palace in Jerusalem, and Rhoda, who came to answer when Peter knocked at the door of his friends' house—were trusted members of the household to which they belonged.

Domestic slavery is still customary among Mohammedans, and many instances of it have come under my own observation. I have never known one in which the slaves were not well treated. The following incident is interesting as recalling in a way the distinction made in Galatians (quoted above) between the 'bond' and the 'free.' My husband and I had been staying for the night in the house of a wealthy peasant-landowner at a village in the interior of Asia Minor. Among the women of the household were two girls of about sixteen and eighteen respectively. The elder was particularly kind and attentive to me, doing everything possible for my comfort, and on leaving I presented her with a little ornamental box I happened to have with me, suitable for holding pins or small trinkets. As she received it the younger girl sprang forward, snatched it from her and shrieked out something which her haste and agitation prevented me from understanding. While she clutched the little box with both hands to her bosom, and the other girl stood unprotesting and making no attempt to recover her property, the mistress of the house intervened, explaining that, if a present were made, it was the right of 'the daughter of the house,' the younger girl, to have it, the elder girl being, not a daughter, but a slave. Nothing we had seen during our stay had given us any reason to suppose that one of the girls was 'free,' the other only a 'bond-woman.'

Although slavery has been abolished by modern Turkish law and the public sale of slaves abandoned many years ago, the traffic in domestic slaves, both male and female, is carried on privately, undiminished and unchecked, both in Constantinople and elsewhere.

In the Study.

Father Payne.

THE anonymous author of *Father Payne* (Smith, Elder & Co.; 7s. 6d. net) must be amused to find the reviewers identifying him with Mr. A. C. Benson. Mr. Benson must also be amused. As if there were no other in the land who could write theologico-ethical essays in a free English style! We do not believe that this is Mr. Benson. The theology is not his. And the theology is the test. A man can never, for literary ends, divest himself of his idea of God.

Father Payne was no 'religious,' but simply a country gentleman who kept his house open for literary learners and taught them how to write. Our anonymous author adopts the device of throwing his ideas into Father Payne's mouth, and investing them with the interest of his personality. But the ideas are the author's own. Let us test him by one of the shortest of the essays, the essay on 'Beauty': —

Father Payne had been away on one of his rare journeys. He always maintained that a journey was one of the most enlivening things in the world, if it was not too often indulged in. 'It intoxicates me,' he said, 'to see new places, houses, people.'