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## [G. B. Bowersock, Greek sophists in the Roman Empire - suite]

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Marcus and Commodus in 176 he could point to visible manifestations of his intimacy with the mighty. It is hard to believe that the emperor derived much pleasure from Aristides' company; but evidently he was prepared to attend promptly to Aristides' requests, and that, after all, was what really mattered.

For many sophists whose advice was sought, and whose company was congenial, emperors found official posts in the court at Rome and in the entourage in provinces. In the second and early third centuries the office of *ab epistulis* for Greek correspondence is found to have been monopolized by eastern Greek sophists and rhetors. Between the reigns of Hadrian and Caracalla twelve oriental litterati can be distinguished as *ab epistulis*, and that is a substantial number.<sup>1</sup> In most instances the precise designation of the post is *ab epistulis graecis*, although not all the sources (notably allusions in Philostratus) are so explicit. One scholar has argued that the post of *ab epistulis* was not split into Latin and Greek divisions under Hadrian, as previously thought, but under Marcus.<sup>2</sup> This may be so; the evidence is inadequate. And it is a fact, however it has to be explained, that the title of Valerius Eudaemon under Hadrian was incontrovertibly *ab epistulis graecis*.<sup>3</sup>

In some instances the post *ab epistulis* constituted the first step in an equestrian or ultimately senatorial career for a cultivated Greek. In other cases it was quite clearly no more than a way to retain a man at the court without guarantee of advancement in the civil service. It is remarkable, however, that of the two Greek *ab epistulis* known from the reign of Hadrian both became prefect of Egypt and both are reported to have incurred at some point the emperor's wrath. They are C. Avidius Heliodorus and Valerius Eudaemon.

Heliodorus was a Syrian rhetor, father of the rebel Avidius Cassius and friend to Aelius Aristides.<sup>4</sup> It is known from Cassius Dio that he was *ab epistulis* under Hadrian, and he is

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H.-G. Pflaum, *Les Carrières procuratoriennes équestres* (1960), ii, 684, n. 1; G. B. Townend, 'The Post of *Ab Epistulis* in the second century', *Historia* 10 (1961), 375-81, with a list on pp. 380-1. Cf. F. Millar, *JRS* 57 (1967), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Townend, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *ILS* 1449. Cf. Pflaum, *op. cit.*, i, no. 110, pp. 264-71.

<sup>4</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, A 1405.





