

"GO TO CAMERTON" (A DAY-DREAM)

By Tom Cleworth.

I found a postcard on my table one morning with just these words on it, "Go to Camerton". What could it mean? I had often had rude postcards before telling me to "Go to ---" but this was somehow different; anyway where was Camerton?

I wandered down by the Old Bridge and suddenly saw a bus labelled "Camerton". I rushed after it and caused no end of a stir by leaping on to it just as it swung round the corner under the railway arches. The conductor looked at me as if he was sorry for me, and when I tried to look pleasant and unconcerned, he looked more sorry than before. He had a nice kind face, and when he came to collect my fare, seemed quite ready to treat me like a lost puppy. Where did I want to get off? Would I give him time to stop the bus? I vaguely murmured "Camerton" and he asked whereabouts in Camerton. I said I did not know. I tried to say something about not wanting to give him any trouble, and must have looked even more confused than I felt. For a moment he just goggled at me, then a light came into his eyes, his beaside manner returned and he said quietly, "I know where you want to go; I'll put you off at the right place".

There is certainly something funny about all this I thought, but it is no use worrying, and I sat back and closed my eyes. When I woke up, I found the conductor looking at me with a sympathetic stare, "Here's your place," he said, "through that gate and across the field". Out I jumped, and the bus went on its way.

What a place! A long straight road, some fields and stone walls. No one in sight.

I crossed the road and found the gate, and away in the field saw some people apparently digging. How very odd! How on earth did he know that this was where I had to get out? I climbed the gate and walked towards them. They were a queer looking lot, and believe it or not, were out in the middle of an ordinary field, with cows grazing in it, digging. "Am I mad?" I began to wonder, "or are they mad?" but I went towards them. One or two of them looked up and smiled in quite a friendly way, and none of them seemed in any way surprised to see me. Then I saw a big man with a round face fixing up two red and white poles, followed by two girls with a long tape measure. He had a good look at me, finished his measuring and with a most friendly grin, said, "This will just be right for you. Here's a pick to get started with, and I will follow you with a spade.

I looked at the space he had measured off, and a cold sweat broke out all over me.

"Great heavens," I thought, "it's a grave, and obviously meant for me. They must be lunatics out for the afternoon, and that wretched bus conductor thought I was one of them."

I looked round in panic and saw that they were all working in twos and threes, digging similar graves. Then the big man, "Bill" they called him, came back with a heavy spade. I got going with the pick, realising that I must appear unaware of anything out of the ordinary. I could see his plan. As soon as the grave was deep enough, he would attack me with his spade, and bury me, dead or alive. But I must keep him in good humour, so I worked away with my pick and he hustled me on shovelling out the loose earth. We were getting on famously, but far too quickly for my liking. I looked round to watch the other diggers. They seemed to have come to some kind of rock, and were wasting time, brushing it, and sifting over the earth they had dug. Then one of them called Bill over to show him something.

"Cunning devils," I said to myself, "they are making their work last longer than mine, and when mine is ready, they will all come and attack me at once. What am I to do?"

Bill came back, looking very satisfied with himself, "Now we are getting on, there is no telling what may turn up in the next few minutes."

I was planning how to deal with the situation, and keeping my eyes skinned so that I could be ready with my pick when he attacked. Suddenly I tapped

something that did not feel like a stone or rock, and Bill rushed round to see what it was. I thought the moment of attack had come, and was quite ready to defend myself, but he just stooped down and began to search in the grave. Somehow I missed hitting him on the head by inches, but brought the pick down with a crash on to some buried pottery.

"Stop, you idiot," cried Bill, in agonised tones, "Look what you have found." To me it seemed to be some broken bits of pots that someone had tried to hide, but by this time all the crowd had gathered round, getting more and more excited.

"Didn't I tell you to look out?" said Bill, "Its New Forset Ware, and if you hadn't been such a lunatic bashing about with that pick, we should have had a perfect specimen. What do you think you are doing? Digging a grave? Thats not the way we do things in the Camerton Excavation Club."

"Excavation Club," I gasped, the light beginning to dawn, "What a lucky escape! You must all be even madder than I thought ..... Goodbye."

CONVERSATION PIECE - A.D. 160 (circa).

By G.E. Rook.

Scene.

Atrium of villa in Ancient Rome.

Time.

Early afternoon.

(A young Roman matron sits spinning - two small children play marbles at her feet - a slave announces the arrival of a visitor)

- Flavia (rising) Greetings, Claudia, my dear, how nice to see you!
- Claudia (stepping over the children) I simply had to call, darling, to find out if its true that your Silvanus is being sent to Britannia.
- Flavia Well, I can't think who can have told you unless its that cat Hermia - she's always putting two and two together and making five. Yes, its true enough, he's having his medical today.
- Claudia You might have told me. After all I am your best friend.
- Flavia Well, its not settled and we intended telling no-one, but I met Hermia in the baths yesterday and she wormed it out of me before you could say "Julius Caesar".
- Claudia I suppose you will follow him with the children. I'm so sorry for you, my dear. By all accounts its a dreadful dump. Shrouded in mists and fog and when its not its raining. So damp underfoot.
- Flavia (Fingering her curls) I didn't say it would be Britannia. Silvanus is a senior man and is much more likely to be drafted to Hispania, where there is also a vacancy. If anyone goes to Britannia it will probably be young Septimus Valerius he's not much good at the office, Silvanus says, and just the type to be sent off to the most remote and backward of our colonies. You know what the Civil Service is these days.
- Claudia Well, I hope you're right dear. You don't mind do you? (helping herself to a pomegranate). The women there are rather intriguing, Hermia's brother says.
- Flavia I don't know what you mean, darling, but the British women are hardly likely to attract a Roman, let alone Silvanus. They're practically palaeolithic and covered in woad or something.
- Claudia Well, I shouldn't care for my Vespasian to go there. Hermia's brother was stationed in Aquae Sulis and apparently