

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

had a whale of a time. He got in with some very poor types attached to some sort of housing estate, a few leagues outside - Camerton - or something or other.

- Flavia Never heard of it.
- Claudia Its built along the Fosse Way, I believe, - you know the road Ceaser constructed over some prehistoric track that ran from Lindum to the South Coast. Hermia's brother says, if in a thousand years' time some enthusiastic band of archaeologists ever start excavating in that area, they'll come across some awful rubbish which will be most misleading.
- Flavia For Jupiter's sake stop harping on Britannia. They'll never send Silvanus there. It will probably be Hispania or at the worst Germania and as soon as I can I shall follow him with little Marcia (Where is the child - gone out without her palla I'll be bound? How tiresome she is!) Perhaps you could look after my Samian ware dear, until I return.
- Claudia (tantalisingly) Of course, I will, with pleasure. You know, Silvanus might bring you back a native lad as a slave. They're fair-haired you know and awfully cute.
- Flavia I've told you, he won't be sent there. Besides, it will be bad for his chest after our soft climate. Still a fair-haired slave would be rather a pet.
- Claudia (Looking at the water-clock) Well, I must be going - goodbye darling. Oh! here is Silvanus.
- Silvanus Greetings, Claudia, must you really go?
- Claudia I'm so sorry, just as you've arrived, but I must see that my slave has done the ironing before Vespasian comes home. He needs a clean toga (Exit)
- Silvanus Thanks be to Minerva! I can't think why you have that women here. By the way, my love, I'm not going to the Colonies after all. The Civil Service Physician says I'm too thin to stand a foreign climate and the Government won't spend hundreds of sesterces for nothing. They're sending Septimus Valerius - on promotion.

NOTE: While it is true that the dictum of the important official mentioned by Silvanus in the pen-ultimate sentence of his closing utterance did, in fact, prevent a long exile in some unmentionable far-off spot for our revered Director of Excavations, uncharitable readers who have the temerity to link Mr. Wedlake's name with any of Miss Rook's characters are hereby sternly rebuked. In any case, the medical evidence cited is manifestly inapplicable. ED.

#### EDITORIAL MISCELLANEA.

The Editor has been compelled to exercise considerable patience in obtaining "copy" for this first issue of Camertononia. He believes, however, that the journal now in your hands, will bring you considerable pleasure. In the confidence that "Camertononia" can safely be left to speak for itself, he declines to make further comment.

Esme Murray (nee Rawkins), our first Hon. Treasurer, now pursues her new calling as a busy housewife in Sutton, Surrey. Her enthusiasm, competence and sound judgement played a great part in setting the C.E.C. firmly on its feet in the early days. Our grateful thanks, Esme, and our very best wishes.

Our friends of the Downside Archaeological Society have kindly sent us a copy of their "Proceedings". Though small in numbers, they always succeed in imparting the real professional touch to their publications, and are to be