



Saxon *Situla* found at the Fairford Cemetery, Gloucestershire, about 1855.

Height 4 inches ; diameter $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

In the collection of Professor James Buckman, F.G.S., F.L.S., &c.

SAXON SITULA FOUND AT FAIRFORD, GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

By Professor JAMES BUCKMAN, F.G.S., F.L.S., &c.

THIS well preserved example of the *Situla*, which was exhibited at the Dorchester meeting of the Archæological Institute in 1865, was obtained about ten years since from the Fairford Graves, and seems to be very much like another figured by Mr. Wylie, in his work on that Saxon Burial place, in 1852. The specimen here represented was dug up by one of the cottagers near the site of Mr. Wylie's excavations, and doubtless in a part of the same cemetery.

As usual the bands (of which there are four), the handle and fittings, are of "bronze"—probably a tolerably pure oxydised copper. The delicately formed handle and the upright shafts to which it is affixed are ornamented with rows of impressed dots. This metal-work serves to band together eight staves of wood, all of which are, as it is believed, of some material resembling cedar, and still in a fine state of preservation.

This example is four inches in height. Its diameter is four and a quarter inches. The thinness of the metal-work and of the staves seems to point to the conclusion that the *Situla* was much lighter in its construction than is generally supposed, so much so that we are led to conclude that the example under consideration could in its perfect state scarcely weigh so much as four ounces.

There has been much discussion as to the use of these small buckets, the general conclusion perhaps being that they were drinking cups for ale or mead.

Akerman, however, in his "Remains of Pagan Saxondom" comes to the conclusion that these buckets "were intended to hold food and not drink," and he points to the fact that the Abbe Cochet found a bucket containing a glass cup at Envermeu,¹ in Normandy, and that in the Frank graves at Selzen glass drinking cups were found in a similar position. At Fairford was found a glass cup of most exquisite form,

¹ Figured in "La Normandie Souterraine," by the Abbe Cochet; and in Mr.

Wright's Essays on Archæological Subjects, vol. i., p. 156.

and Akerman, in the work already cited, has figured some beautifully formed glasses from Reculver and Coombe, in Kent; these, as is usual with the Saxon cups, were not made with feet. The fashion of the base was such, that the glass could scarcely, if in any instance, be placed erect. Amongst ourselves there have been occasions when no "heel-taps" were allowed; doubtless this custom may have descended from our Saxon forefathers.

We conclude, then, that these elegant glass drinking-cups must have been so costly as necessarily to have been used by the more refined people, who, however dry they may drain their cups, would hardly like the cloth on the board to be stained from the inverted cup.

We have seen that at least our bucket is light and elegant in structure, made, too, of a scented wood, in both of which points we are inclined to think that most of these buckets agree. We cannot therefore view the bucket as having been intended for use as a drinking cup, and still less, as suggested by our friend Akerman, that they "were used for spoon meat, and are, in fact, porringers."²

We believe that these buckets were employed simply to receive the inverted drinking-cup, and the finding them together, as above stated, may favour our conjecture. If they were themselves drinking-cups it would have been impossible to have lifted them by the handle, as this part is simply made of the thinnest possible band of metal. The like objection will weigh against the porringer theory.

Still the mere bucket could have been supported by its handle, and probably with the glass cup in it, but we have a notion that these buckets may have been placed on the table much in the same manner as our modern glass wine-coolers, and the drinking-glass therein inverted. We often hear that "there is nothing new under the sun," and we have sat down to dinner where the elegantly cut sherry glasses had no stands, and were inverted in the wine-cooler, much as we suppose was the case with the bucket and glass of a refined Saxon.³

² Pagan Saxondom, p. 56.

³ Examples of the very curious Saxon vessels noticed above have been figured in this Journal, in a memoir by the late Mr. Deck, on Remains found at Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire; Arch. Journ., vol. vii., and in the late Lord Bray-

brooke's Account of a cemetery on Linton Heath, vol. xi. See also his "Saxon Obsequies;" the "Inventorium Sepulchrale," by Mr. Roach Smith; Archaeological Essays, by Mr. Thomas Wright, vol. i., pp. 138, and 153—157.