

OLD CAMBERWELL AND A WATER-BOTTLE OF DISPUTED DATE.

BY

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THE Editor of these "Transactions" submitted to me a proof of Mr. Francis W. Reader's *communication* before it appeared in print. I only regret that the time allowed me for a concurrent reply was too short, and that my answer to Mr. Reader's criticisms has had to be deferred to the present part of the "Transactions."

As to the water-bottle which Mr. Reader objects to my claiming a Roman date for, it is obvious on his own showing that this type of clay vessel with handles and a strainer has been made continuously for many centuries, and that its true home is the North Coast of Africa or the shores of the Mediterranean, where it would be exported aboard ship in all directions. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to date such objects of common use, or to put a limit to their antiquity. The same type of vessel, with slight variations in shape and pattern, has admittedly been found in many countries and sometimes in close contiguity to unquestioned Roman sites and remains. Why should it not therefore go back to the period of the Roman Conquest of Britain? I have not claimed for it that it was made by the Romans in Italy, but why should it not have been made, for instance, in their African colonies and used by the legions as a drinking-vessel? If the positive evidence be slight, it still remains for Mr. Reader to prove a negative. The Roman

*See p. 85; also the preceding vol. of these Transactions, N.S. III, 334.

legionary must have carried a water-bottle in his military equipment, and such bottle, it is almost certain, must in those days have been a fictile and not a metal one. Can anybody produce the Roman soldier's "regulation water-vessel"? I ask, not for the mere sake of controversy, but for information.

Meanwhile I submit that, if one has to imagine the sort of thing the Roman soldier used, the vessel in dispute is as likely as any other, and I cannot see why Mr. Reader should dub this suggestion as "preposterous."

Is Mr. Reader quite sure that "this type of vessel has never been found in true association with Roman remains"? It seems a very tall statement—equally difficult of proof or of disproof.

The remainder of Mr. Reader's note is interesting so far as it traces the history and provenance of these vessels, and I suppose amusing in so far as the latter part is a skit upon my paper, but I cannot help questioning the suitability of his concluding remarks to their environment.

The suggestion that Boadicea made her last stand in the marshes south of London is no new one. I am no more responsible for it than is Mr. Reader. Perhaps we can never in this sublunary state know for a certainty where that great tragedy was enacted; but so far as actual evidence, documentary or otherwise, goes, it is a toss-up whether north or south of Thames saw the final epic of the British Queen. Meanwhile I am quite content that the Quadriga should remain on the Middlesex side.