

## I.

### A NOTE RESPECTING THE SCULPTURED CROSS AT ST VIGEANS, NEAR ARBROATH; OF WHICH CASTS BY MR HENRY LAING, SEAL ENGRAVER, WERE EXHIBITED.

The original stone crosses from which the casts now exhibited were taken, are situated in the churchyard of St Vigeans, near Arbroath. The principal one (No. 1) is an upright shaft,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, 2 feet wide, and 7 inches thick; it is entirely covered with sculpture in low relief. On the front are figures of various animals: as a bear, a fawn and its dam, a bird preying on a fish, a unicorn (?), and a man with a cross-bow shooting a boar. On the upper part is that singular Z-shaped figure, or ornament, found almost constantly on this class of monuments; and here also is the mirror and comb. The opposite side of the stone is sculptured with the rich interlaced design to which the term *Guilloche* has been applied, running down the centre between two rows of nondescript animals.

The same beautiful interlaced design is sculptured on the other side to within about eight inches of the bottom, which is filled with an inscription, the latter lines of which are unfortunately quite obliterated. On the opposite side is a very elegant running foliage.

The cast (No. 2) is a slab about 5 feet high, and 3 feet wide, sculptured only on one side with similar design of interlaced work, forming a cross, on one side of which are two figures of monks forming a procession; and above are two others with a naked figure between them, the head downwards, over a square vessel, supposed to represent a font, thus presenting the ordinance of baptism; or it may be, as some have supposed, a representation of the interment of the dead. On the other side of the cross are two figures seated holding a globe, or circular figure, between them, and below is a man slaying a cow.

No. 3 is a cast from a slab about 4 feet high,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  wide. It is much defaced, but the same intricate lacework is sculptured down the centre; and at the sides are, a bird, and a simpler form of the peculiar Z-shaped figure, entwined with a serpent; here also appears the comb and mirror.

No. 4 is from a stone built into the wall of the church of St Vigeans, when it was repaired the latter part of the last century. It is 5 feet long, 8 inches high, sculptured with figures of a stag, dogs, and a bird. The style in which this is executed is decidedly different to the former, and may perhaps belong to a different period.

These casts are exhibited with the view of ultimately obtaining casts from some, at least, if not all, of the numerous similar monuments still existing in the north of Scotland. They are well known to the Antiquary, but have hitherto failed to secure that attention the historical interest they possess, independent of their beauty of design and execution, most deservedly merit. The consequence of this is, that ravages of time, and other causes, are making rapid progress in obliterating these fine remains of native art. It is, therefore, very desirable that casts should be taken before further mischief befall them. Another important object would be gained, by having casts placed in a public museum; they would thus be within the reach, and materially assist many engaged in Archæological researches, to whom the originals are almost inaccessible.

In submitting this notice to the Meeting, Mr Laing, F.S.A. Scot., stated, that his object was, not merely to propose that the Society should purchase the casts now exhibited, but also to pass a resolution in favour of his ingenious namesake, that might be of service in recommending him to the attention of some of the English Societies, for completing similar casts of other ancient monuments in various parts of Scotland. In the Great Dublin Exhibition, last year, he remarked, that along with two of the Ancient Stone Crosses, there were casts of other large Irish Crosses and Monuments, and that these formed a conspicuous group among the very interesting "Relics of Ancient Art" which were

exhibited. There was some reason, therefore, to hope, that the Directors of the Sydenham Palace might, if such a proposal were sanctioned by the Society, be induced to encourage the scheme of procuring a selection of casts of the best preserved and most interesting specimens of such sculptured remains in Scotland.

It was stated by Mr John Stuart, who was himself engaged in completing a volume for the Spalding Club, to contain Lithographic Drawings of those Ancient monuments, that their number amounted to nearly 150, although many of them, from exposure to the weather and other circumstances, were sadly defaced. As the plan of obtaining casts of the whole was altogether out of the question, the Secretary suggested the propriety of obtaining a series of photographic facsimiles.

The Meeting having heard these remarks, unanimously resolved, that a set of casts from the St Vigean's Stones be purchased for the Society's Museum; and the Secretary was instructed to enter in the minutes the feeling entertained by the Members, that it was most desirable, if some encouragement could be held out to Mr Henry Laing, to prepare casts from the most remarkable and best preserved sculptured stones and crosses. Likewise, that a former earnest recommendation or appeal be renewed to the proprietors of the soil on which these Monuments exist, that all possible care be bestowed in preserving from injury such interesting reliques of a remote antiquity; as they are the persons who ought more especially to take an interest in their preservation.