

IV.

NOTE ON NO. VII. OF MR PETRIE'S COPY OF THE MAESHOW RUNES. BY RALPH CARR, Esq, F.S.A. Scot.

In June 1866 I received a letter from Mr George Petrie, dated the 11th of that month, in which, after notifying the reception of a copy of my late paper on some of the runes in Maeshow, which I had transmitted, and adverting to some interesting terms in the popular speech of the Orkneys, which had been noted down by him, Mr Petrie goes on to say—

“I have repeatedly visited Maeshow, and copied and re-copied, at long intervals, the inscription No. VII., and, with a view to get the copy as correct as possible, I did not look before proceeding to my task at any of the previous copies. The result was always the same, with one or two trifling exceptions, such as doubtful scratches; these, however, I specially noted. I got a person to assist me in holding the tapers at different angles, until I got the best possible light. I now beg to enclose the inscription as I read it, after many hours laborious poring over it. The runes are mostly so faint that the casts could not possibly take them; but they are still there to speak for themselves. Several runes at the beginning of the line are wholly illegible. I am sorry that I cannot to-

night send you a copy of the runes referred to, so carefully transcribed as I would desire. Meanwhile, the enclosed will give you an idea of the difference between my copy and those already published."

On receiving this first sketch of the characters, as Mr Petrie had so heedfully transcribed them after repeated and prolonged examination of the original lines, I clearly saw that it must supersede the hitherto received exhibition of the runes, which had been followed by the Scandinavian investigators and by Dr Charleton, and which I had also myself followed.

An excursion into Sutherland, which it was hoped might extend to the Orkneys, and possibly the Shetlands, being just then in contemplation in my family, Mr Petrie was made aware of it, and he accordingly reserved further discussion of the matter until we might meet at Kirkwall—a meeting which was happily effected by our reaching that very interesting old seat of the Norsemen on the 14th of July. On the day for which a party, consisting of Sir Henry Dryden, Mr Farrer, and myself, was fixed for visiting Maeshow, Mr Petrie unfortunately could not be with us. My own attention was so much absorbed by the general features of the How, and by the larger and more conspicuous runic inscriptions, which I was anxious to verify, that I had little time left for the study of No. VII.; but, on bringing our lights to bear upon it, I was struck by the smallness and faintness of its characters, and the extreme difficulty of arriving at any definite perception of them without far more daylight from above than the aperture at the summit of Maeshow now admits, or torches or tapers much more effective than the candles brought by our guides. Nor were my own powers of vision so reliable as they formerly had been.

On another occasion, as we were passing from Kirkwall to Stromness, I made a second visit to Maeshow, accompanied by younger eyes to help my own, and desirous to give a more careful examination to runes No. VII.; but, alas! the whole interior walls were streaming with moisture condensed from the atmosphere, and the glare the surface of the stones reflected from our lights was most unfavourable to all the smaller inscriptions. At whatever angle the lights were held I found runes No. VII. utterly illegible; and, unfortunately, the simple expedient of applying a handkerchief to absorb the gloss of moisture from them never occurred

to me, which, I was subsequently assured by Mr Petrie, would have made their lines perceptible.

These circumstances are recorded only to explain how it is, that though no stranger to this celebrated barrow, I am yet entirely indebted to Mr Petrie for the copy of the runes of inscription No. VII. (of Mr Farrer), now presented to the Society.

Being solicitous that no copy or interpretation of mine should tend to mislead any one, I have, ever since visiting Maeshow, wished to read a recantation before the Society, as to this little line of runes; and, in December 1867, I wrote to ask Mr Petrie's leave to let me get the transcript contained in his letter of June 11, 1866, lithographed for production before the Society at some meeting of that Session.



"Inscription from Walls of Maeshow, marked No. VII. in Mr Farrer's book on Maeshow. Copied anew from the original inscription, on 24th December 1867, by George Petrie."

(The runes in the second line are alternative readings of those immediately above.)

In reply I have received the following observations, accompanied by a larger and more distinct transcript, but not differing from the former, except that it supplies some additional alternative forms in the lower line. This transcript is now before the Society (and is carefully copied in the preceding woodcut).

The letter runs thus:—

"KIRK WALL, 2d January 1867.

"MY DEAR SIR,—Since receiving your letter of 18th ult., I have revisited Maeshow and copied anew, *without previously looking* at my former copy, the inscription No. VII. of Mr Farrer's book. The walls were thoroughly wet, the wate. streaming down them, and I had more

than usual difficulty in deciphering the faint runes in No. VII. On coming home I compared them with the copies formerly made, and found I just had a duplicate of them, with the exception of one or two doubtful lines which I had formerly marked, but did not give them, as I thought they might be natural markings on the stone. As I find I have got the same marks again, independently of the former occasion, I have marked them on the copy of the inscription now enclosed, which you can compare with your former copy.

"You are quite welcome to make any use of them you please, and of my comments formerly sent you.—I remain, yours very sincerely,

"GEO. PETRIE.

"RALPH CARR, Esq., Hedgeley, Alnwick."

It is almost superfluous to add, that these runes, so carefully followed out by Mr Petrie's well-exercised eye, and copied by his impartial hand, go far to upset my own attempted division and reading of the syllables in this inscription No. VII., based as it was on the characters which had been brought under the notice of various predecessors in the inquiry. I fear it must now be admitted that those characters, even with the aid of the cast preserved at Edinburgh, were too hastily assumed to be true to the original tracings on the stone.

These tracings themselves are so exceedingly slight and indeterminate, that nothing but the original can fully represent them. They are too faintly scratched to be transferable with fidelity on a cast in plaster or any other substance.

Though I have not abstained from endeavours to penetrate the meaning of Mr Petrie's elaborate, and, I believe, faithful copy of the characters of this very indistinct legend, yet I have not so far succeeded as to justify the production of any, even provisional, reading before the Society.

MONDAY, 10th May 1869.

WILLIAM F. SKENE, Esq., LL.D., Vice-President, in the Chair.

The following gentlemen were elected Fellows of the Society :—

JOHN CHALMERS, Esq., Castle Bank, Merchiston.

GILBERT GOUDIE, Esq., National Bank.

The following Donations to the Museum and Library were laid on the table, and thanks voted to the Donors :—

(1.) By Sir HENRY DRYDEN, Bart., Hon. Mem. S.A. Scot.

Collection of Drawings and Plans of Buildings, chiefly in Orkney and Shetland, contained in five portfolios :—

1. Orkney and Shetland—Circles, Broughs, &c.; Plans by H. Dryden, large size; Stennis, Birsay, &c. Twenty Drawings, copied by W. Galloway.
2. The same, smaller size—Mousa and Burrasland. Twenty-one leaves; also seven leaves Ground Plans of Chapels.
3. The same—Churches in Orkney and Shetland. Forty-one leaves, including two of St Margaret's Chapel, Edinburgh.
4. The same—Circles, Broughs, &c., in Shetland. Sixteen leaves, smallest size.
5. The same—Churches in Orkney and Shetland. Eight leaves, smallest size.

(2.) By THOMAS DICK, Esq., Kinghorn.

Sepulchral Urn, of coarse yellowish clay, $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height and 5 inches in diameter, at the top, which is partly broken; it is ornamented with straight and zig-zag lines, and was found in a field west from Grangehill Farm, in the parish of Kinghorn, Fife.

(3.) By JOHN ALEXANDER SMITH, M.D., Sec. S.A. Scot.

Third Brass of Romulus, son of Maxentius, and five other coins, found at Pæstum in 1868. (See Communication, p. 170.)

(4.) By MR A. BAXTER, Smith, Dean Street.

Iron Key, found in digging the foundation of a house at the foot of Dunbar's Close, High Street.

(5.) By J. J. MUIRHEAD, Esq., 54 Princes Street.

Nest of Brass Weights, of the sixth year of Queen Anne's reign, and dated 1707; they reach from 4 to 128 oz., those below 4 oz. being wanting, and are inscribed—

PRIMO (A Crown) MAII
 AN^o A : R DONI
 17 07
 A^o REGNI VI^o.

(6.) By WILLIAM ELDER, Esq.

Small Jar, from Egypt, of reddish earthenware, shaped like an amphora, with perforated handle on each side; it measures 4 inches in height by 2½ inches in greatest diameter.

Ornamented Tripod Stand for the Jar, also of reddish earthenware, 2½ inches in height.

The Jar and Tripod resemble much in character a bronze cruet and stand brought from Egypt by Mr C. D. E. Fortnum, figured in the *Archæological Journal*, No. 99, 1868, p. 245; and described as being a cruet for holding the wine to be consecrated at the celebration of the Eucharist in the Coptic Church.

Two Small Lamps, from Egypt, of reddish clay, one measures 3½ inches, the other 2 inches in greatest length; one is ornamented with a human figure, and the other with raised patterns.

(7.) By ROBERT COX, Esq., F.S.A. Scot., one of the Editors.

Select Writings of the late Charles McLaren. 2 vols. Edin. 1869. small 8vo.

(8.) By the ROYAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, London.

Archæological Journal, No. 98. Lond. 1869. 8vo.

(9.) By the CAMBRIAN ARCHÆOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION.

Archæological Cambrensis, No. 18. Lond. 1869. 8vo.

(10.) By the PROVOST AND SENIOR FELLOWS OF TRINITY COLLEGE, Dublin.

Catalogue of Graduates who have proceeded to Degrees in the University of Dublin. Dublin, 1869. 8vo.

(11.) By the IMPERIAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL COMMISSION OF RUSSIA.

Compte-Rendu de la Commission Impériale Archéologique pour l'années 1863-64-65-66; avec un Atlas. St Petersburg, 1863-66. 4to.

The following Communications were read :—