

## II.

### ON RUNE-INSCRIBED RELICS OF THE NORSEMEN IN SHETLAND.

By GILBERT GOUDIE, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The history of the Shetland Islands (in common with that of the Orkneys) divides itself naturally into three distinct periods, viz.—(I.) The Pictish period, ending about A.D. 870; (II.) the Norse period, from A.D. 870 to A.D. 1468; and (III.) the Scoto-Norse period, from A.D. 1468. It has been my privilege, owing to incidental discoveries which have come under my eye, to be able to place before the Society on former occasions contemporaneous relics illustrating interesting features of the first and third of these periods.<sup>1</sup> The rune-inscribed stone now presented furnishes occasion for the illustration of the second.

It is obvious, from the results of archaeological investigation, that the native inhabitants of Orkney and Shetland had attained to no mean position in the scale of ancient civilisation. In particular, the Brochs

<sup>1</sup> The Pictish period—(a) Notice of Excavations in a Broch and Adjacent Tumuli near Levenwick, in the parish of Dunrossness, Zetland (“Proceedings,” vol. ix. p. 212; (b) On Two Monumental Stones with Ogham Inscriptions, recently discovered in Shetland (“Proceedings,” vol. xii. p. 20). The Scoto-Norse period—Notice of two Charters in the Norse Language, found among the Papers of the Sheriff Court of Shetland (“Proceedings,” vol. xii. p. 472).

or towers of strength, erected by them with a prodigious expenditure of by no means unskilful labour, evince a concentration of energy for purposes of defence which must excite wonder and admiration even at the present day. The study, too, of ecclesiastical relics, such as sculptured and Ogham-inscribed monumental stones, which have been brought to light in recent years, furnishes evidence of their culture having been toned, if not altogether altered, in its character by the influence of Christianity, introduced by the followers of St Columba. Specimens of



Fig. 1. St Ninian's Stone (edge).

those early Christian monuments are here figured, for the purpose of exhibiting the distinction between them, as Celtic relics with Oghamic inscriptions, and the rune-inscribed relics of the Norsemen, which are afterwards to be described, and with which they are in no case to be confounded.<sup>1</sup> The languages and the kind of characters used in the two cases are as radically distinct as are the two races which the two classes of monuments separately represent.

In the year 872 A.D., Harald Haarfagr accomplished the unification of Norway at the decisive battle of Hafursfiord, and a few years later the irruption of the Norsemen under his leadership overthrew, with fire and sword, the fugitive Vikings who defied his authority in the Western Isles.<sup>2</sup> The result of this conquest was the subjugation and absorption of the Picts, and not their extinction.<sup>3</sup> The Christian religion, as

<sup>1</sup> Both these stones, now in the Museum, were found in Shetland in 1876, and were submitted to the Society, and described in my paper in vol. xii. of the "Proceedings," p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> See the account in the Orkneyinga Saga, and in the Saga of Harald Haarfagr.

<sup>3</sup> It has been pointed out that the overwhelming preponderance in the Hebrides of place-names of Scandinavian origin, and still more strikingly in Orkney and Shetland, where Celtic place-names are unknown, leads to the inference that the Picts were probably extirpated, as their local nomenclature has been, from the face of the country. But it is not strange that in thinly-peopled districts like these islands,



Fig. 2. Lunnasting Stone (face.)

already indicated, had previously gained a footing among them; and there is ground for believing that it was not altogether destroyed, but that it lingered in the memories of the people, through their Pictish affinities, until, by a rude retribution, it again reared its head over the ruins of vanquished Odinism.

Apart, however, from the probabilities of the case, there is evidence—scant, it is true, but still significant—of the survival of a Pictish

original names should be lost sight of—overlaid by those conferred by a later dominant race, even though a residue of the earlier race remained. We know, for instance, how quickly in the North American States the map is covered with Anglo-Saxon names, as the white man pushes the Red Indian westward; but more particularly is this the case in the States of Southern America, where the aboriginal races remain to a large extent coexistent or commixed with the descendants of their conquerors, while most places known to us bear names of unmistakably European complexion. Indeed, in Shetland, at the present day, the ancient Scandinavian names are fast perishing, not so much by any change of race as by the gradual influence of the English language, and the natural movements of the mere individuals of the population. We must bear in mind, too, that there were no written titles to land, or other documents preserved to us from the remote ages, to stereotype such names, as has been the case in later times.

remnant. Among others, it may be mentioned that on the spot where the rune-inscribed Norse memorial stones—to be afterwards described—were found, several unmistakable relics of the Pictish age have been brought to light, including fragments of sculptured and Ogham-inscribed stones, undoubtedly Celtic and Christian. The inference from these is—a continuity of occupation, a continuity of resort for the purpose of interment, and the continuity of a recognised religious site from Pictish times, on through the invasion and permanent settlement of the Norsemen, to our own day. It is scarcely possible to conceive such a survival of sacred sites and traditions among people of another race, language, and religion, coincident with the total extinction of the preceding race to which those sites and traditions belonged.<sup>1</sup> Several instances are expressly mentioned in the Sagas of intermarriages between the Norsemen and native Celtic families in the North of Scotland and elsewhere, and there is every reason to believe that the same took place in Shetland and Orkney.

#### THE NORSE PERIOD.

It is almost exclusively to the evidence furnished by the remains of the early ages that we are indebted for the limited knowledge we possess of the Pictish times to which I have referred. But the age of the Norsemen in the islands, embracing a period of six hundred years, from A.D. 872 to 1468, is not without a literature independent, in a manner, of archæology. The story of the Conquest, the lives of the island Jarls, the bloody raids of the Vikings, and the home-life of the Odalmen, were transmitted orally in songs and narrative for ages, until, in the hands of the later saga-men, these assumed the literary form of the *Saga* (history or story), as we now have them. The *Orkneyinga Saga*,

<sup>1</sup> The late Professor Munch seems to have thought that the Picts were “wholly absorbed” by the Norse settlers in Orkney and perhaps in Shetland (“Chronicle of Man,” p. xviii.). Sir George W. Dasent gives it as his opinion that “the original inhabitants were not expelled, but held in bondage as thralls” (“Burnt Njal,” p. clxxxiv. vol. i.).

or History of the Earls of Orkney and Shetland, and the *Saga of Earl Magnus the Saint*, compiled at an early date in the Old-Northern tongue, contain a vivid portrayal of life and manners in those rude ages. It is to be remembered that in these island regions the language and civilisation of the Latins never penetrated except in the service and formularies of the Church; and this is the boast of the whole Gothic North—that its literature and civilisation are of purely native growth, independent of the classical influences which elsewhere were paramount in Europe. Consequently, Saga literature is characterised by a ruggedness and a simplicity in entire harmony with the prevailing aspect of nature around, but most unlike to the polish and complexity of the classic.

While these Sagas are valuable historically, their importance is shown to be greatly enhanced, and their pictures of life illustrated by the material remains of those ages which have from time to time been disinterred.<sup>1</sup> Few as these are, compared with the multitude of such remains which have been found in Scandinavia, they aid us most materially in understanding the Sagas, and the most typical aspect of ancient northern life with which the Sagas abound—roving expeditions and the use of the sword.

That vigorous native life in the North has left other traces in the islands in the shape of *inscribed relics*, all too scanty as yet known, but likely to be multiplied as circumstances may bring them to light hereafter. It is only seventeen years since the opening of the chambered mound of Maeshowe in Orkney revealed the first-known Runic inscriptions in the islands, and perhaps the largest single collection of the kind in the world;<sup>2</sup> the work, it is to be observed, not of the con-

<sup>1</sup> A recent paper in the "Proceedings" of the Society on the Relics of the Viking Period of the Northmen in Scotland, by Mr Anderson, deals with the arms and personal ornaments of the old warriors, and other objects, recovered from their tombs "Proceedings," vol. x. p. 536).

<sup>2</sup> (I.) "Notice of Runic Inscriptions discovered during the Recent Excavations in the Orkneys," made by James Farrer, M.P. (Privately printed, 1862). (II.) "Notice of Excavations in the Chambered Mound of Maeshowe, in Orkney, and of the Runic Inscriptions on the Walls of its Central Chamber," by John Stuart, Sec. S. A. Scot.

structors of the mound itself, but apparently, for the most part, of the Jerusalem-farers (*Jorsalafarar*) who accompanied the Earl Rognald to the Holy Places in the year 1152, and scratched their jottings upon its walls. The object of the present paper is to describe the other rune-inscribed relics which have been brought to light in the islands (all in Shetland), especially the stone last discovered, and now before the Society.

The importance of these recent discoveries may be inferred from the extreme scantiness in this country of this interesting class of relics. We have the Hunterston Brooch,<sup>1</sup> and there may perhaps be some other portable objects with runic lettering preserved; but we have not a single specimen of a rune-inscribed stone in the National Museum apart from these Shetland fragments. Indeed, with the exception of these and the Maeshowe inscriptions in Orkney, only *three* rune carvings on stones have, so far as I am aware, been found in all Scotland up to this time. These are—*first*, the Ruthwell Cross, in Dumfriesshire, inscribed in Anglo-Saxon runes;<sup>2</sup> *second*, the lettering in St Molaise Cave in Holy Island, Arran;<sup>3</sup> and *third*, the stone at Knoekando in Morayshire.<sup>4</sup> The scarcity of these relics seems surprising, in view of the extent and nature of the Scandinavian dominion in the Hebrides and on the mainland of Scotland, as well as in the northern isles. But in Ireland, in the same way, the once-powerful kingdom of the *Dubh-Gaill*, or *Ostmen* (black strangers, or East-men), as they were indifferently termed,

(“Proceedings” of the Society, vol. v. p. 247). (III.) “Maeshowe: Illustrations of the Runic Literature of Scandinavia,” by J. M. Mitchell, F.S.A. Scot., &c. (Privately printed, 1863.)

<sup>1</sup> See the “Proceedings,” vol. vii. p. 462.

<sup>2</sup> This most precious relic is figured in the “Sculptured Stones of Scotland,” vol. i. p. 43, plate cxxxviii.

<sup>3</sup> The Holy Island inscription reads—

NIKULOS : AENE : REIST

Nicholas            of Hæn            carved (these runes).

It has been attributed to the twelfth or thirteenth century.

<sup>4</sup> Sculptured Stones of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 61, plate cv. It seems to read  
 ʀ ʀ ʀ ʀ ʀ, SIKNIK.

appears to have left only one inscribed relic behind it. In the little Scandinavian state of the Isle of Man, the Runic remains are numerous ;<sup>1</sup> but the Danish sovereignty in England, of which King Knut (Canute) the Great was the central representative figure, and which occupies so important a place in the history of Southern Britain, has only a few relics of this description now known to exist.

Since, then, so few Runic monuments remain in extensive districts where Scandinavian influence so long prevailed, it would not have been wonderful had the island principality of Orkney and Shetland, intensely Scandinavian as it was, been also comparatively barren of such remains. The inquirer who studies the great work of Professor Stephens ("Old Northern Runic Monuments, of Scandinavia and England") will observe how vastly rich Scandinavia, especially the kingdom of Sweden, is in monuments of this description, and Orkney and Shetland have recently been able to contribute most interesting additions to this great collection.

Maeshowe, in Orkney, was opened in 1861, with the results to which reference has been made ; but Shetland continued to exhibit an absence of authenticated Runic remains. This assumed absence in the northern isles of inscribed relics was observed and commented on by Mr Burton in his notice of the "Unrecorded Ages,"<sup>2</sup> and Dr Hunt, in a communication to the Anthropological Society about the year 1864, remarks— "It is somewhat singular that out of the hundred islands composing the Shetland group, the island of Bressay should be the only one in which any form of inscribed stones should have been found."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a number of these inscriptions we appear to be indebted to one zealous stone-carver named Gaut (Gautr or Gauti) Bjarnarson. This is expressly stated on the stone at Kirk Michael as follows :—

ᚠᚠᚠᚠ	: ᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠ	: ᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠ	: ᚠᚠᚠᚠ	: ᚠᚠᚠᚠ	: ᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠᚠ
GAUT	GIRTHI	THANA	AUK	ALA	IMAUN
Gaut	made	this	and	all	in Man.

Had it not been for his diligence the number might therefore have been much smaller.

<sup>2</sup> History of Scotland, vol. i. p. 151 (2d edition).

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs of the Anthropological Society, vol. ii. p. 379.

This reference to Bressay, as an exception, points to the Ogham-inscribed sculptured stone presented to the Museum in 1864, the precursor of the various inscribed monuments which have since been brought to light;<sup>1</sup> and as the subject of runes has so very rarely had occasion to come before the Society, I purpose treating these discoveries somewhat more in detail than I should otherwise have done.

#### I. STONE AT CROSS-KIRK, PARISH OF NORTHMAVINE.

This stone is noticed and figured by Dr Hibbert,<sup>2</sup> following the MSS. of the Rev. Mr Low, who found it on the occasion of his visiting Shetland more than a century ago.<sup>3</sup> It is a sepulchral slab, inscribed along the border of the flat surface in characters which are undoubtedly Runic, and which must be accepted as genuine, because it is scarcely possible to suspect them of having been simulated by Mr Low, whose integrity has never been questioned. At the same time, the stone does not appear now to be known; or, if it is known, a century of exposure has so obliterated the characters as to make them unrecognisable. Inquiries which I recently made through the Rev. Mr Russell, Ollaberry, have not resulted in any satisfactory information being obtained, and there is no one more favourably situated for knowing the facts than he. Letters forming the following words have been identified by Professor Munch:—

BIFI FIRIR 401  
 BITHI      FIRIR      SOL  
 Pray      for      the soul.

The remainder is unintelligible.

<sup>1</sup> Two of these, bearing Ogham inscriptions, I have already described to the Society (see before, figs. 1 and 2). These, and two other Oghamic fragments, and a richly sculptured stone which recently came under my eye in one of the lesser islands, being, as I believe, of Celtic workmanship and Celtic art, do not come under notice here. But three rune-inscribed relics of undoubted Scandinavian origin have recently been discovered, in addition to one of somewhat dubious character, but evidently Runic, formerly existing.

<sup>2</sup> Description of the Shetland Islands, 1822, p. 531.

<sup>3</sup> Low's "Tour," MSS. 1774 (in course of publication).



Another Runic stone, so-called, is figured by Hibbert,<sup>1</sup> and reproduced in the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland."<sup>2</sup> It is described as fixed in the wall of the parish Church of Sandness, and conceived to be of a date not later than the tenth or eleventh century. But it is in reality no runic stone at all, but a carved slab, with mirror, comb(?), and crescent symbols, so well known on the sculptured stones of Eastern Pictland. This stone also, it appears, is not now known to exist. Dr Stuart observes that it was not found when looked for some time ago.

## II. STONE FOUND IN CUNNINGSBURGH PARISH IN 1872.

The stone here figured was found by Mr Robert Cogle, a zealous native inquirer, at the depth of 3 feet beneath the bed of a stream.

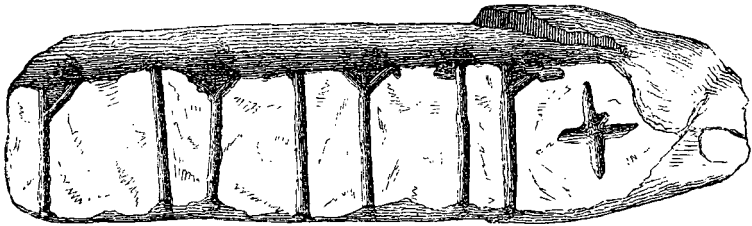


Fig. 3.

A drawing of the stone forwarded by Mr Anderson to Professor Stephens, Copenhagen, enabled the professor to read it

YNIYIP  
K V I M I K

which he regards as [HA]KVI MJK=[HE]WED ME, or carved me (the stone), it being evidently a fragment of a memorial tablet. Professor

<sup>1</sup> Description of the Shetland Islands, p. 547.

<sup>2</sup> Sculptured Stones of Scotland, by John Stuart, LL.D., vol. ii. p. 44, plate cxxxviii.

Stephens's letter is printed in vol. x. of the "Proceedings" of the Society, p. 425, and the stone is now in the Museum.

### III. STONE FOUND IN CUNNINGSBURGH PARISH, IN 1875.

This is a still smaller fragment, brought to light by Mr Cogle in the same parish, at a very short distance from the former, and close to the old burying-ground, where the following and most important stone was found. Its remaining staves are

\* Y1 + 1Y \*  
\* KT + TK \*

the last two characters of one word, and the two opening ones of another. It also is now in the Museum.

### IV. STONE FOUND IN CUNNINGSBURGH, IN 1877.

This is the third Runic inscription discovered in this neighbourhood within a period of about five years, these being, with the exception of the Northmavine stone (No. I.) before referred to, the only Runic stones ever known to have been found in Shetland. The same spot has also yielded two Ogham-inscribed fragments, relics of the Celtic race which preceded the Norse rune-carvers.

The first intimation of the discovery of this stone reached me in the month of June 1877, in a letter from my friend the Rev. George Clark, Free Church minister of Cunningsburgh. Tracings were sent to me, and in the following month I visited the spot and examined the stone, where it remained undisturbed. On applying to John Bruce, Esq. of Sumburgh, the principal heritor of the district, he at once most kindly consented to the stone being removed, and authorised its presentation to the Society. I have therefore to ask your acceptance of it, as a donation from that gentleman, with the hearty concurrence of Mr Clark, the finder, to both of whom we are much indebted for their extreme courtesy in the matter.

Various indications previously noticed had led to the conclusion that

the spot in question, adjacent to the church and manse at Maill, was the site of an early settlement. The Rev. Frederick Souter, Mr Clark's predecessor, had some years previously pointed out to me, on a slight disturbance of the exposed face of the sandbank facing the sea, fragments of charred bones, of molluscs, and other remains, which seemed to indicate refuse heaps and human interments. Since then Mr Clark has made occasional diggings, resulting in the discovery of a large, deeply hollowed stone of the kind regarded as grain rubbers, represented in the Museum by the specimen from the island of Barra, of various forms of rough stone implements of the kind found at Safester and Houlland, in the parish of Sandsting, and at Braefield, in the parish of Dunrossness, so amply illustrated by specimens in the Museum, and described by Dr Arthur Mitchell in the Society's "Proceedings," vol. vii. p. 118; also a quantity of charred grain, and a small deep cup or vessel of steatite so thin and so carefully scooped out as rather to resemble a piece of pottery.

These results of his own diggings, together with the previous discoveries of inscribed fragments in the near neighbourhood, induced Mr Clark to make a careful examination of the adjoining burying-ground which surrounded the ancient church of Cunningburgh, of which scarcely a trace now remains. His examination did not meet the disappointment so commonly experienced by ardent inquirers; the rune-carved monument now before us caught his eye. It was placed, with the inscription upside down, on the outside of the western enclosing wall of the churchyard. Covered as it then was literally with the "moss of ages," its detection required no ordinary keenness of eye, and is a remarkable instance for the encouragement of patient inquirers in all time to come. It is most fortunate that the inscription was on the exposed face of the stone; had it been otherwise, the discovery must have been impossible; and the whole circumstances are an illustration of the immense injury that must have been done in the course of ages by the use, in ignorance, of precious relics as building material. How many more of the same kind may have perished in the same wall, which is built out of the church and of the lapidary remains of the churchyard, no one can now tell.

The stone is a piece of hewn sandstone, 4 feet 3 inches long, 6 inches broad at one end, narrowing to 5 inches at the other, with a uniform thickness of about 6 inches. Unfortunately, it has sustained a fracture at the end where the inscription begins. A portion of the lettering is gone, and several of the characters first in order are a good deal defaced. They are all distinctly, but not deeply incised, forming a line of staves of slightly irregular breadth (averaging  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches) without longitudinal scores or other markings, except the divisional dots between certain of the words.

Runic characters, it has been well remarked, "are of the nature that does not yield an immediate harvest to the bold guesser, but must be extracted by toilsome inductive criticism. These inscriptions are a literature in stone devised by the northern nations before they were Christian, . . . an original achievement of the genius of the people, unaided from that classical source whence the later alphabets of all the European nations were derived."<sup>1</sup> It is in this light, as a purely native relic, of a kind not known beyond the limits of Scandinavia, and places directly under Scandinavian influence, that the present monument is to be viewed. It comes to us as a voice from the long forgotten past, from the days of Scandinavian supremacy, not only in Shetland where it was found, but in almost all Northern Europe. It is therefore desirable, fragmentary as it is, that its meaning should be ascertained with all possible precision. Much injury has been done elsewhere by crude and unscientific attempts at deciphering, regardless of the diversities of language and of written character during a period of nearly a thousand years, in which rune carving is known to have prevailed, as well as the variations of dialect which must have existed, even at one and the same time, in the different regions of the Scandinavian north in which these palæographic forms were common.

Accordingly, having brought the stone to Edinburgh, I delayed submitting it to the Society until I should have an opportunity of consulting Professor Stephens, of Copenhagen, the learned author of the "Old

<sup>1</sup> Burton, "History of Scotland," vol. i. p. 150 (2d edition).

Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England," and the most eminent living authority on this class of remains. I am indebted to Mr Anderson for removing the thick covering of lichens, which permitted a careful drawing to be made, and the following is the result:—

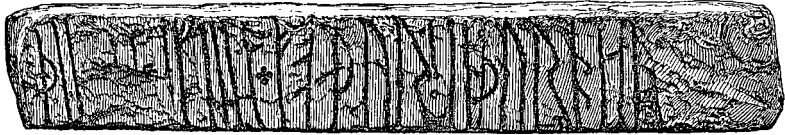


Fig. 4.

This drawing I forwarded to Professor Stephens, whose prompt and obliging reply I print without abbreviation, in so far as it relates to this matter:—

CHEAPINGHAVEN, DENMARK, Jan. 27, 1879.

MY DEAR SIR,—I need not say how glad I was to receive your communication of the 22d, which reached me yesterday. I lose no time in my reply. Pray make what use you please of my answer.

By the help of your excellent enclosure we can now certainly read what is left of the valuable Kunningsburgh stone. The beginning is broken away; three following staves have suffered, but can be replaced. One letter, þ (N), wants at the end, but is undoubted. Whether aught else followed, of course I cannot say. The third stave is the usual short t (s), here running lower down by a flaw. Then follow traces of three letters, doubtless 11þ, TIN. The þ in the last word is = B, the interesting type for B so rare in Scandinavia, so often found on the Manx stones.

The whole, then, has been—

(* * * * ris)	þI	11þ	1þ1IR	+	þAþNR:	11þ	þNRþIR(N)
(* * * * rais)	ED	this	STONE	AFTER	FATHER	SIN (his)	THURBAIR(n)
(* * * * ris)	THI	STIN	IFTIR	FOTHUR	SIN	THURBAIR(n)	

The grave pillar may be from the earliest Christian times. . . . .

I remain, &c.,

GEORGE STEPHENS.

With such a clear report from Professor Stephens, it is perhaps unnecessary to adduce any further testimony. I may mention, however, that Dr Hjalmar Kempff, of Gefle, in Sweden, formerly of the university of Upsala, an accomplished scholar, well versed in all that relates to the ancient monuments of his country, has taken an interest in this latest Runic discovery, from having examined the stone in the Museum when he visited Scotland last summer. He explained to me his views at the time; and I have just received from him a letter, in which he refers to the inscription as follows, in English:—

GEFLE, *January 31, 1879.*

The reading and interpretation are such as I can make out from the not very clear annotation I made in the Museum at my short inspection of the inscription.

What I have found to be read there is following:—

\* \* ÞI \* \* \* IFTIR + FATHUR'ITHURBIARN \* \*

which I transliterate so—

\* THI \* \* \* IFTIR + FATHUR SIN THURBIAU \* \*

I suppose that the imperfect Runic sign immediately before ÞI (THI) is the latter half part of R<sub>(R)</sub>, and, together with the following Þ and I, the latter part of a word (YDRÞI *gerthi* (made). The precedent subject is missing. The following signs, that may have composed a word denoting the object and telling us what was made, I cannot make out.

The three following words are easy:—

IFTIR, *iftir, after*; FATHUR, *father*; ITH, *sin, his*.

The now following runes, of which the first four are easily read as ÞURÞ, *thurb*, are no doubt meant to be ÞURÞIARNÞ, *Thurbiaurn, Isl. Thurbiörn*. At first I could not but read them as ÞURÞUR \* \* *Thurbyr(n)*, a certainly not impossible writing of the name of Thorbiörn. Nevertheless, at nearer inspection, and after comparison with the inscription of the cast of a stone cross at Kirkbraddan, Isle of Man (Catalogue of Antiquities, G. 113), where I also read the name of Thorbiörn there written, if I have noted it rightly, ÞURÞIARNÞ, I soon

clearly saw that there was to be read **ÞORÞIARNR**, that is, *Thurbiaurn*, *Thurbiörn*. The **Þ** that I first had taken for a **Y** dissolved itself into an **I** (I) and an **A** (A); the following **R** (R) became a **U** (U); and now there was no doubt that the following **I** was to be completed to **R** (R), and that an **I** found at a just distance from it once had the transversal line of the **X** (X). The whole of the inscription should then be interpreted—

(Somebody *na*) DE (something) AFTER HIS FATHER THURBIÖRN.

Who that somebody was may perhaps never be known, unless the missing piece of the stone inscribed with the name be recovered, which may not be quite impossible. . . . I am, &c.,

HJALMAR KEMPF.

It will be observed that the points upon which Professor Stephens and Dr Kempff differ are only two, and they are very trifling. The latter thinks that the partly-defaced rune at the beginning may be **R** (R), hence —**RÞHI**, the termination of the word *GERTHI*, *made*. Dr Stephens sees only **ÞI**, **ÞHI**, which he assumes to be part of the word *RISTHI*, *raised*. Consequently, while he reads the next word as probably **STIN**, *stone*, Dr Kempff supposes a word representing something that was “made” (*gerthi*), and in the conclusion of his letter he suggests *bru*, a bridge, *kumbl*, a cairn, *merki*, a monument, or *haug*, a barrow. The last word of the inscription Drs Stephens and Kempff both read as the equivalent of *THORBIÖRN*; they only differ as to the vowel characters in the second syllable of the name.

To my own mind the distinct portion of the inscription was clear from the beginning, but the word upon which the two doctors disagree, **STIN** (*STIN?*), is so utterly defaced that I do not express an opinion upon it, though rather inclined to Professor Stephens’s view. The other word, *THORBIÖRN*, seems also to present some difficulty, from the dubious character of some of the rune staves composing the latter part of it.

With the concurrence of opinion indicated above, I think we need not now scruple to regard this precious relic as a tribute of filial respect to the memory of a deceased parent, named apparently *Thorbiörn*. Who he may

have been it is vain to conjecture. Several persons of the name are mentioned in the "Orkneyinga Saga," in particular, Thorbiorn, "a famous man," who was slain in Borgarfird (Burrafirth), in Shetland, by the earls Magnus and Hakon, early in the twelfth century,<sup>1</sup> and Thorbiorn Svarti<sup>2</sup> (swarthy). We cannot identify either of these Thorbiorns with the Thorbiorn of Cummingsburgh, though his monument is in all probability of about the same age (twelfth century), and they seem both to have been connected with the islands. The name was a common one, the original probably of our modern Thorburn. The name of the son who raised the stone has perished by the accidents of time, the portion containing it having been broken off, and he, like his father, has left no other trace behind him.

According to Professor Stephens, the date of the monument may be assigned to the earliest period of Norse Christianity in the islands, that is to say, not earlier than the year 1000, when the people were compelled by

<sup>1</sup> Orkneyinga Saga, Translation, p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> This Thorbiorn was one of Earl Rognvald's companions on the expedition from Orkney to the Holy Land in the year 1152, and died at Akursborg (Acre). He was a scald, and as the earl and his men, on their way to Jerusalem, landed there "with great pomp and splendour, such as seldom had been seen before," he composed this lay—

" Oft have I with comrades hardy,  
 Been in battle, in the Orkneys,  
 When the feeder of the people  
 Led his forces to the combat.  
 Now our trusty Earl we follow,  
 As we carry up our bucklers,  
 Gaily to the gates of Acre,  
 On this joyful Friday morning."

A few days later his dirge was sung by Oddi the Little, a Shetlander, son of Glúm, in the following stanza :—

" Bravely bore the baron's vassals,  
 Thorbiorn Svarti, scald and comrade,  
 As he trod the sea-king's highway,  
 Round by Thrasness, south to Acre.  
 There I saw them heap the grave-mould  
 Of the high church o'er the king's friend.  
 Earth and stones now lies he under  
 In that southern land of sunshine."

—*Orkneyinga Saga*, Trans. p. 147.



King Olaf Trygvissou to accept the new faith.<sup>1</sup> It bears no distinctive Christian formula, but its age and character are determined on other grounds.

To take the words of the inscription in order—

(\* \* \* \* \*) The name of the person who raised the stone, broken away.

(RIS) ÞI—(ris) THÍ (?), *raised*. The third person singular, imperfect indicative. There are two verbs, *reisa*, to raise, and *rista*, to carve, used indifferently on these monuments, distinct words, though often confounded. RÍÞI (RISTHI) *raised*, as probably used here, and RÍ↑ (RIST) and RÍ↑ (RISTI) *carved*, are often so varied in spelling as to be indistinguishable.

ʒIÞ—STIN(?) *stone*, accusative singular of *stenn*, or *steinn*.

IFIR—IFTIR, *after*, preposition governing the accusative. This word is found with numerous variations on the Swedish, Danish, and Manx stones—*after*, *aft*, *aft*, *eft*, *eftir*, *eftir*, *oftir*, *aiftir*, and *iftir* as in the present case.

FATHUR—FOTHUR, *father*, accusative singular of FATHIR. (Gothic, *fadar*; Anglo-Saxon, *fader*; Old High German, *fatar*, Modern, *vater*; Swedish and Danish, *fader*.) Found in rune-carvings with varying spellings.

ʒIÞ—SIN, *his*, possessive pronoun, accusative; singular, masculine (*sinn*, *sin*, *sitt*).

ÞURÞAIR(Þ)—THURBAIR(N), proper name, *Thorbairn* or *Thorbjörn*, compounded of Thur or Thorr, the god, and Bjorn, a bear.

Though these Shetland stones are only four in number, they are undoubtedly an interesting addition to the catalogue of relics of the Northern rune-carvers. Of the four, three have been found within a short distance of each other, in proximity to the site of the ancient church of Cunningsburgh. It may therefore not be inappropriate in this

<sup>1</sup> See the account in the Saga of Olaf Trygvissou.

place to introduce some account of the church and parish,—so far as I may be able to glean a few particulars relating to the past from the very scanty records that remain,—with a notice of the marks of the Scandinavian fatherland, still observable in its place-names, and in the remains of the Norse language.

#### THE CHURCH OF CUNNINGSBURGH.

The origin of parishes in Shetland, as elsewhere, is involved in obscurity. It is always difficult to say in any particular case whether the church has been erected to meet the requirements of a district or parish previously formed, or whether the district has been allotted in the course of time, as a parish, to a church previously existing within its bounds. In the present case, as the circumstances connected with the erection of the Shetland parishes extend far back before the date when the islands were pledged to Scotland, the facts are probably beyond the reach of investigation. All we know is that the parish of Cunningsburgh existed as a parish at the Reformation, and that the church was the recognised church of the district from a very early time.

In the interments and manufactured relics which have been brought to light in the immediate neighbourhood of the church, there is evidence of an early native population existing on the spot. The church stood close by the sea-shore, at a distance of a few hundred yards east from the present Free Church and manse at Maill's Ayre. The fabric has disappeared, but the burying-ground is still used, and is enclosed by a good modern stone wall. Inland, the Broch of Aithsetter remains a fortalice of the early occupants, while across the bay to the southward the broch on the island of Mosa, most celebrated of all the towers of the Picts, stands boldly exposed to view.

The Ogham-inscribed relics which have been found point to Celtic influences existing when probably the original church was reared. The Runic relics found among its ruins, or close by, attest its continuance as a sacred site during the period of the Norsemen; and as the ground surrounding

it is still the burying-place of the district, the traditional sacredness of the site is maintained to the present day.

In 1567, seven years after the legal establishment of the Reformation, the entire district from Quarff to Sumburghhead, upwards of 12 miles in length, with the Fair Isle 25 miles distant, was under the charge of a Reader only.<sup>1</sup> In the course of a few years even this makeshift came to an end.<sup>2</sup> The people ceased to have a local place of worship; the sacred edifice fell into decay,<sup>3</sup> and became a victim to desecration. This desecration appears to have become matter of notoriety, and at a court held at Dunrossness, on 7th July 1603, by Mr John Dishington, depute for Earl Patrick Stewart, the following judgment was pronounced:—

<sup>1</sup> “DUNROSNIS, CANNISBRUGH, and SANDWIK and FAIR ISLE, being Johne Crab, reidar, xx li.,—died November 1571. In his rowme, Johne Kingsone, minister, xl merkis” [£2, 16s. 8d.] “sen November 1571.”—(*Register of Ministers*, 1567.)

Kingson or Kingston, continued in charge till 1575, when Malcolm Sinclair, Reader, was presented to the vicarage by King James VI.

In the *Book of Assignationis of the Ministeris and Reidaris Stipendis*, for the year 1576, the following entry occurs:—

“Dunrosnis, Sandwik, Cunisburgh. — Malcolm Sinclair his stipend the hail vicarage of Dunrosnes, quhairunto he is newlie providit, extending to 80 li., he payand the reidare at thir kirkis.

“Croce Kirk, Fair Isle.—Laurence Sinclair, reidare at thir Kirkis, his stipende, xx li. to be pait be the new providit Vicar.”

<sup>2</sup> The order of readers was authoritatively suppressed in 1581:—

“Anent Readers: Forsuamickle as in Assemblies preceeding, the office thereof was concludit to be no ordinar office in the Kirk of God, and the admisionne of them suspendit to the present Assemblie: the Kirk, in ane voyce, hes votit and concludit farther, that in no tymes comeing any Reader be admittit to the office of Reader be any haveing power within the Kirk.”—(*Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, p. 219.)

<sup>3</sup> It was found in the year 1581, that (besides the province of Argyll and the Isles) there were 924 churches in Scotland. “Of thir, syndrie are pendicles and small parochines, and many Kirks demolished; some parochines also are of greater bounds nor the parochiners may convenientle conveyne to their parochie Kirks.” It was thought meet, therefore, to strike off more than a third of them, reducing the 924 churches to 600.—(*Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, p. 213; Rowe’s *Histoire*, p. 83.) The whole of Shetland was then erected into one presbytery, that of “Tingwell.”

“*David Leslie to mak repentance for misusing the Kirk of Cunnisbrughe.*”

“It is tryit that David Leslie hes maist schamefullie misusit the Kirk of Cunnisbrughe, and placeit his guidis theirinto, making the samen ane kow byre, for the quhilk he is decernit to mak his repentance in presence of the Minister and hail Congregationne on Sunday nixt in sackclayth, and farder to pay xl s̄. to the King for his offence. And forder ordainis the hail commonis to upmak their kirk dykes lawful within the space of one moneth, ilk personn under the paine of xl ii.”—(*Court-Book of Orkney and Shetland*, General Register-House.)

The congregation referred to could not have been one meeting in the church, which had been thus degraded into a shelter for bestial, but must have been that of the church of Dunrossness, at that time Cross Kirk, on the sand at Quendale, more than a dozen of miles distant, which was *the* church of this extensive “ministry” as then reconstituted and as still existing.

The downward course of the building from this to absolute ruin cannot have been a matter of great length of time. A few years later it appears noted in Pont’s Map,<sup>1</sup> published by Blaeu of Amsterdam, as “St Paul’s Kirk,” and to this notice of it we are indebted for the only definite hint we have as to its dedication. But this early hint, I find, cannot be entirely depended upon. In a paper, under the hand of Mr Pitcairn, minister of the parish of Northmavine, without date, but apparently very near to the year 1600<sup>2</sup> the vicarage of Dunrossness is said to comprise the churches of St Matthew, St Magnus, St Colme, and the church of the Fair Isle.<sup>3</sup> The three first named are obviously the churches of Dunrossness, Sandwick, and Cunningsburgh respectively, but in what order stated it is impossible to say, there being no other record known mentioning the saints to whom they were dedicated. In the natural order the church of

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Pont’s survey is understood to have been made as early as 1608, though it remained unpublished till 1654.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Pitcairn was minister from 1579 to 1612.—(*Fasti Ecclesie Scoticanæ.*)

<sup>3</sup> The paper from which I quote has never been before referred to. It is an account of all the benefices in Shetland, preserved among the muniments in the Charter-House of the City of Edinburgh.

Cunningsburgh should be either the first or the last—St Matthew's or St Columba's ; Sandwick being placed topographically between the two. If the latter, the dedication to St Columba would be in entire harmony with the supposition that the church is on the site of an early Celtic foundation.

The church would appear to have been in decay at the beginning of last century, as Brand, who visited the islands in the year 1700, passes it by without mention. He expressly states that the churches in the ministry of Dunrossness, "in which their minister performeth divine service," are three, namely, Cross Kirk (Dunrossness), Sandwick, and Fair Isle only.<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Sibbald, writing in 1711, merely remarks that "in Cunisburgh there is another Kirk built in the time of Poperie."<sup>2</sup>

With this last reference the church of Cunningsburgh passes out of view. No fragment of the fabric now remains standing ; but, as has been mentioned, the dead of all the ages of both the Pictish and Scandinavian races lie clustered around it. The inscribed stones remaining are very few. One, in particular, is a handsome carved slab of large size, with an inscription now much defaced, but seeming to commemorate one Anna Forrester, of date 1691.

Many relics of the successive stages of the history of this venerable edifice must have been destroyed in forming the churchyard wall, and the dwelling-houses and offices of the inhabitants close by. It is all the more remarkable that, with such occasion for destruction, the precious rune-inscribed relics before described should have been preserved. Besides these and other interesting fragments there is in my possession a small hewn stone, in form resembling an inverted cross with the shaft pointed, also found on the spot. It may have been a grave-stone, or more probably a finial terminating the apex of one of the gables of the church. Another small stone cross, in the Greek form, from the same place, now in possession of my friend James M. Goudie, Montfield, Lerwick, is apparently of the same character. These may perhaps be the only distinctive relics of the church fabric remaining.

<sup>1</sup> A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, &c. Rev. John Brand, 1701, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> The Description of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland. 1711, p. 44 (Reprint).

## LOCAL LANDMARKS OF THE SCANDINAVIAN FATHERLAND.

The name of Cunningsburgh is itself very suggestive of the old country. The word is plainly in the northern tongue *Konungs-borg*, burgh, castle, or residence of some king or chief, of whom we shall probably never learn anything. The parish, too, still continues to be the greatest stronghold in all Shetland of the representatives of the ancient Udallers.<sup>1</sup> The prevailing family name is Halcrow, with a number of patronymics (such as Jamieson, Johnson, Laurenson, and Williamson), as usual in all Scandinavian countries.

Apart from the Udallers and the Rune-carved relics which have been described, there is strong evidence of the race and language of the fatherland preserved in the local names of the district. Every homestead, every hill, rock, and rivulet tells its own story of a descriptive meaning, although now unintelligible alike to strangers and natives. The earliest list of local names in Shetland is just 300 years old. In 1576 the enormities committed by Lord Robert Stewart, first of the Stewart earls, and by Laurence Bruce of Cultemalindie, acting under him, and in his own interest, as Great Fowde of Zetland, extorted a semblance of justice to the oppressed islanders from the Scottish Government. At a court held for several successive days at Tingwall before commissioners under orders from the Regent Morton, the complaints preferred at the instance of Arthur Sinclair of Ayth, Andrew Hawick of Scatsta, Gawane Gadie of Lougassetter, in Dunrossness, and other patriotic individuals, were established by the voice of about 800 Udallers and other inhabitants, summoned from

<sup>1</sup> The destruction of the Udal system generally has been accomplished by an enforced feudalising at the instance of the Crown Donatories, and by "gripping" of the lands, or "stressing the Udallers," as it was termed, by larger landowners of Scottish origin. The system, besides, contained the elements of destruction in itself in the minute subdivisions of heritages among heirs, which tended ultimately to reduce individual holdings to mere patches. The result of all this is shown in the Parliamentary Return of Owners of Lands and Heritages, Scotland, 1872-73, in which, though the Udallers (or representatives of Udallers) are surprisingly strong numerically in this parish, most of their holdings (no less than sixteen) are under £5 of annual value, one being entered at 12s. and another at 18s. yearly.

all quarters of the country. Their names and places of residence are given in the Minutes of the Court, preserved in the General Register House.<sup>1</sup> Among those present from the parish of Cunningburgh were the following. In a parallel column are placed the modern place names, which show little alteration, and in a separate column the probable original forms, and an attempted explanation of their meaning:—

1576.	1878.	Probable Original Form.	Meaning.
Olav [in] Flatabustare.	Fladabister.	Flat-bu-stadr.	Place of flat land.
Erasmus af Ocroquoy.	Ookraquoy.	Akra-kvi.	Enclosure of arable land.
Magnus in Howkenasetter.	Ukinster.	Hogna-settr.	Setter of Hogni.
Johannis of Blostoiff.	Blosta.	Blaut-stadr.	Wet place.
Olav of Hellyness.	Hellyness.	Hellu-nes.	Flat Ness.
Magnus [in] Bramer.	Braemar.	Breid-myrr.	Broadmyre.
Magnus of Cutha.	Keotha.	(Kjos.	A deep hollow place.)
Ereik and Magnus of Goird.	Gord.	Gard.	House, or farm.
Olav in Starkegar.	Starkigard.	Styrkars-gard.	Farm of Stykr.
Magnus in Tow.	Tow.	( <i>Danish</i> ) Tue.	A hillock.
Symone in Culbinsgarth.	Culbinsgarth.	Kolbein's-gard.	Kolbein's farm.
Swaine [in] Eldegar.	Ealdigarth.	Eldi-gard.	Keep-farm. <sup>2</sup>
Hector of Brind.	Brinn.	Brunn.	A spring.
Nichole of Clapwall.	Claphoul or Clapwall	Klepp-hólr.	Lumpy hillock.
Brownie of Scarpagarth.	Scarpigarth.	Skarpa-gard.	Rocky farm.
Magnus in Wastano.	Vestanore.	?	?
Magnus of Wattisgarth.	Vatsgard.	Vatz-gard.	Watery farm.
Olav of Maill.	Maill.	Melr.	Sandbank.

To these may be added a few other places in the district, mostly minor names, which do not appear in the above list, spelt, as nearly as may be to their pronunciation at the present day.

<sup>1</sup> Printed by Mr Balfour of Balfour for the Maitland Club. 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Probably a place for *keeping* and feeding other people's animals. Hence *lambseldi*, an obligation on every householder to feed a lamb for the priest in winter, literally "lamb's keep."—CLEASBY.

*Towns (Túns), i.e., Hamlets or Farms.*

	Probable Original Form.	Meaning.
Clivigard.	Klofa-gard.	Farm at a cleft in a hill.
Voxter.	Vág-settr.	Place beside a <i>vœ</i> or creek.
Flugalie.	Fluga-hlid.	Place near a precipice.
Swarthoul.	Svart-hol.	Dark hillock.
(Swardale ?).	Svardar-dalr.	Greensward dale.
Valdigard.	Valda-gard.	Valdi's farm.
Aithsetter.	Aith-settr.	Township of Aith (isthmus).

*Hills, &c.*

Tordal.	Torf-dalr.	Turf-dale.
Torrafield.	Torfa-fjall.	Turf-hill.
Hufield.	Há-fjall.	High hill.
Staraberg.	Stjóra-bjerg.	Stirk's (or Steer's) hill.
Hammerfeld.	Hamar-fjall.	Hammer-shaped hill.
Tungafeld.	Tungu-fjall.	Tongue hill.
Musnafeld.	Musna-fjall.	Mice hill.

*Lochs and Marshes.*

Engla-mor-vatn.	Öngla-mor-vatn.	Hook-trout-water. (?)
Vatnsgard.	Vatns-gard.	Watery place.
Laxadale.	Laxar-dalr.	Salmon-water-dale.

*Gios (Creeks) and Rocks by the Shore.*

Sili-gio.	Sela-giá.	Seal creek.
Yuxnagio.	Yxnagiá.	Oxen's creek.
Dunnabacka.	Dynja-bakki.	Bank of din.
Fugla-stack.	Fugla-stakkr.	Wild-fowl stack.

It would be easy largely to multiply these illustrations, which are taken from a single district, but they are sufficient to indicate with what persistency the Norse language has stamped itself upon the soil, and how reluctant it is to depart, though the original descriptive signification has ceased to be understood.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The explanations of meaning given are merely the most obvious that occur to me, and they may, by change of circumstances, be only approximately applicable now. They are all, however, unmistakably Norse, and their component parts are common in place-names in Iceland now and in ancient times.



## GENERAL PREVALENCE OF THE NORSE LANGUAGE.

It is not to the place-names alone that we have to look for evidence of the general prevalence of the Norse language in Shetland formerly, and its partial continuance to times comparatively recent. The testimony of George Buchanan (1582), one of the earliest writers known to us who alludes to the subject, is very clear. He says:—"The measures, numbers, and weights (of the Shetlanders) are German; their speech, too, is German, or rather Old Gothic" (by which, of course, we must understand Norse).<sup>1</sup>

This is no mere assertion of the historian. It is a matter of the clearest evidence. Many documents in the old language, framed in Shetland during the time of the Scandinavian sovereignty, and for some time after annexation to Scotland, have been preserved, and are printed in the *Diplomatarium Norvegicum*, issued by authority in Norway, forming an important item in the materials of our northern history. Of two deeds in Norse which I found some years ago in the papers of the local court, one, written in the islands, is dated so late as 1536; and within the last few days another document has been forwarded to the Society, dated in one of the early years of the seventeenth century. This, it is to be observed, is long after the annexation, and while the country was administered by tacksmen, with attendant lawyers, from Scotland. The advent of the Stewart earls proved fatal to all these traces of local nationality, and the native lands, as well as language, have been mostly swallowed up by the alien race, and language, which have been dominant since then.

At the same time there is no doubt that the Old Norse language died hard. Brand, writing in 1701, after a visit to the islands in the previous year, remarks:—

"English is the common language among them, yet many of the people speak Norse, or corrupt Danish, especially such as live in the more northern

<sup>1</sup> History of Scotland. Buchanan, 1582. *Mensuris numeris, ac pondere ad morem Germanicum utuntur. Germanicus etiam, aut pene vetus Gothicus est illis sermo* (folio 14).

isles; yea so ordinary is it in some places, that it is the first language their children speak. Several also here speak good Dutch, even servants, though they never have been out of the country, because of the many Dutch ships which do frequent their ports. And there are some who have something of all these three languages—English, Dutch, and Norse. The Norse hath continued ever since the Norwegians had these isles in possession, and in Orkney it is not quite extinct, though there be by far more of it in Zetland, which many do commonly use.”<sup>1</sup>

Sir Robert Sibbald, speaking of the parish of Cunningsburgh (1711), where the Runic stones were found, states that “All the inhabitants of this parish can speak the Gothick or Norwegian language, and seldom speak other among themselves, yet all of them speak the Scots tongue more promptly and more properly than generally they do in Scotland.”<sup>2</sup> Sibbald affirms the same thing as regards the language of the natives generally, which he says “they call *Norn*, now much worn out.”<sup>3</sup>

The Rev. Mr Low visited the parish of Cunningsburgh about the year 1770.<sup>4</sup> A zealous investigator of the antiquities and natural history of the country, he paid some attention also to the language, and has recorded an inhospitable formula formerly addressed by impatient Cunningsburgh hosts to tardily departing guests:—

“Myrkin i liora; lurein i liunga; timin i gvestin i geunga;”<sup>5</sup>

that is, in correct Northern—

“Myrkt i ljora; ljost i lyngi; timi at gestrinn se genginn;”

in English—

“Murk (dark) in the liore (or loover, smoke vent in the roof); light in the ling (heath); time that the guest should be gone.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, &c. Rev. John Brand, 1701, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> The Description of the Isles of Orkney and Zetland, 1711, p. 49 (Reprint).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> MS. now in course of publication (dated 1774).

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Hibbert. “Description of the Shetland Islands,” p. 259.

<sup>6</sup> Munch, “Memoires de la Société Royale des Antiquaires du Nord,” 1850-1860, p. 127.

The original is good Norse, though noted only phonetically by Mr Low, without any knowledge of the language. And this was only a hundred years ago.

In visiting the island of Foula (Fugl-ey, Fowl Isle) at the same time, Mr Low noted, and has preserved, the Lord's Prayer in the "Norn" of the islands, as then remembered :—

"Fy vor o er i Chimeri. Helagt vara nam det. La Konnungdum din cumma. La vill din vera guerde i virdlen sindacr i Chimeri. Gav vus dagh u daglaght brau. Forgive sinder wasa sin wi forgiva gem gem ao sinda gainst wus. Lia wus ike o vera tempa, but delivra wus fro adlu idlu, for do ir Konnungdum u puri u glori. Amen."

It might be interesting to quote the parallel passage to this in the Scandinavian tongues, to all of which the resemblance is very close ; but there is sufficient evidence in itself of its genuine character as the prevailing "Norn" or Norse of a former period in the district. Written phonetically, its slight divergences from the other northern forms are more apparent than real ; as in the word "brau" (bread) for *braud* (Icelandic), "dagh" (day) for *dag* (Icelandic and Danish). Here, and in "adlu idlu" for *allu illu* (all ill), the spelling seems more nearly to approximate the pronunciation of the words in Iceland than the correct written forms do. Other words are obvious, such as "Fy," a softening down of *fadir* (father) ; "vus" for *oss* (us) ; "gem" for *dem* (them) ; "u" for *og* (and) ; a few others are importations from the Scotch ("delivra," "gainst," "tempa" for temptation, "puri" for power, "glori," &c.). "Chimeri," used for heaven, seems at first sight a distorted form (*a himnum*, Icelandic ; *i himlene*, Danish). It is, however, the word *Himi-riki* (heaven kingdom), which is used in an old Swedish version of the Lord's Prayer, probably of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Low also collected, in the same island of Foula, thirty-five stanzas of a Norse poem, recited to him by an old man, William Henry, Guttorm (Guttern ?), in that island. As may be supposed, it is wretchedly indited,

<sup>1</sup> Published by J. H. Schröder. Upsala, 1829.

owing to the illiteracy of the reciter, and Mr Low's own ignorance of the language. It has, however, been revised by a northern scholar, the late Professor Munch of Christiania;<sup>1</sup> and one of its stanzas may be introduced here by way of illustration :—

Da vara Jarlin d'Orkneyar,  
 For frinda sin spir de ro,  
 Whirdi an skilde menn  
 Our glas buryon burtaga.

In the Old Icelandic this would be :—

That var Jarlinn af Orkneyum,  
 Fra frænda sinuþu spurdi rad,  
 Hvert han skuldi möyna  
 Or gler-(glas)-borginni burttaka.

And in modern Danish :—

Det var Jarlen af Orknöer,  
 Af sin Frænde spurgt om Raad,  
 Om han skulde Möen  
 Af Glasborgen borttage.

This is a rather favourable specimen. Many of the other verses are more difficult to render. The wonder is, in the circumstances, that the obscurities are not more insurmountable than they are. In English the lines may be given as :—

It was the Earl of the Orkneys  
 Of his friends asked (spiered) advice,  
 Whether he should a maiden  
 From a glass castle forth take.

The poem has been recognised by Munch as akin to the Old Scandinavian

<sup>1</sup> Geographiske og Historiske Notitser om Orknöerne og Hetland; *in* Samlinger til det Norske Folks Sprog og Historie. Christiania, 1838.

*Koempveiser* (knightly songs), and based upon the *Sörlathattr*, one of the scenes of which is laid in the island of Hoy in Orkney.<sup>1</sup>

I think it is conclusively shown by the foregoing illustrations to what comparatively recent times the Norse language lingered in the Shetland Islands. Traditional fragments of it are still occasionally to be heard; indeed it is only those who are acquainted with the life and manners of the people that can comprehend how much of it is still mixed up with their ordinary colloquial dialect; and how almost exclusively it embraces the articles of domestic use, and the terms and phraseology of native industry and common life.<sup>2</sup>

Constantly increasing intercourse with Scotland, Scottish settlers, and Scottish ministers, the English Bible, and schools, have all combined towards obliterating the distinctive traces of the old Udallers and runecarvers. Hence the great and increasing interest of every early relic that may be able to throw light upon those forms of life the last traces of which are so fast passing away.

<sup>1</sup> The ballad goes on to relate the story of Hildina, daughter of a king of Norway, married to an earl of Orkney, who was afterwards slain by a former lover. The murderer ere long is the victim of a bloody revenge at the hands of Hildina.

<sup>2</sup> The remains of it still known have been preserved in the "Etymological Glossary of the Shetland and Orkney Dialect" (T. Edmonston, Edinburgh, 1866), of which a copy, greatly amplified, in manuscript, by the late Principal Barclay, is in the Library of the Society. The "Shetland Fireside Tales, or the Hermit of Trosswickness," a work recently published by Mr George Stewart, is also a valuable record of the life and language of the people.