

II.

NOTICE OF A SCULPTURED STONE, BEARING ON ONE SIDE AN INSCRIPTION IN RUNES, FROM KILBAR, ISLAND OF BARRA. BY PROFESSOR DR GEORGE STEPHENS, COPENHAGEN, HON. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

[In introducing Professor Stephens's paper to the meeting, Mr Anderson stated that the Society was indebted for the knowledge of the existence of this stone to Mr Alexander A. Carmichael, Corr. Mem. S.A. Scot., who had sent a tracing on cotton, of both sides of the stone to W. F. Skene, LL.D., who sent it to Captain Thomas, by whom it was sent to Mr Anderson, who then sent a tracing from it to Professor Stephens. There were some points in connection with the inscription which neither the tracing nor the drawings subsequently received by Professor Stephens from Mr Carmichael himself were capable of determining, and it was therefore necessary to procure a photograph of the stone itself. It seemed that the simplest and most satisfactory plan was to remove the stone to Edinburgh for this purpose, and after considerable delay (owing to the death of the proprietor of the island, Mr John Gordon of Cluny) the requisite authority was obtained through the good offices of Mr Alexander Ross, architect, Inverness, F.S.A. Scot., who also kindly caused the packing and transport of the stone to be carefully superintended by his clerk of works. It was now exhibited in the Museum, and was of great interest as the only specimen existing in Scotland of the class to which it belongs, bearing on one side the cross of Celtic form and character decorated with purely Celtic ornamentation, and on the other side a Runic inscription, the purport of which would now be explained by the learned author of the great work on the "Old Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England."]

For some 800 years has this venerable grave-minne remained where it



Sculptured Stone from Kilbar,
Barra. (Obverse).

was first uplifted, in the old and now disused burying-ground of Kilbar in Barra, a remote island in the Outer Hebrides, off the north-west coast of Scotland. It was first found in 1865 by Alexander A. Carmichael, Esq., of Strathavon, Oban. But the carvings were first drawn by his artist wife, Mrs Mary Francis Carmichael, in 1875, and since then they have both repeatedly examined it. I have to thank them for the friendly help of drawings of both sides, and a full-sized facsimile of the runes on linen. In August 1880 this costly block happily reached the Edinburgh Museum, and its keeper, Mr J. Anderson, after having cleared away its lichen, obligingly favoured me with photographs and other valuable aid. For all this generous assistance I am deeply grateful.

The stone measures 4 feet $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length, its greatest width being $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches above and 10 inches below. It is the first example of runes in the Hebrides, and hence is doubly valuable.

As to the names; UR is a well known but scarce old northern man's name; PUR (short for THUNOR) is more common; RISKURS (if so it be,

for Mr Anderson writes me that the second letter may possibly be λ (Λ) is dialectic for RASKURS, genitive of RASK-UR, the RASH, RASK, bold, daring, UR, one of several names compounded with UR and found here I believe for the first time. RASK is still a common name in Scandinavia. Highly interesting is the *genitive formula* here, the name of the forth-faren in the genitive, of which some examples are found both in old northern and later runes.

The expression STANIR, *stones*, in the ac. plural, may refer to a block at each end of the grave, or may be equivalent to *stone-setting*, a ring or line of stones in general, as so often.

The use of SIE for *bless* is also costly, as being so rare in runics; from heathen times it survives into the Christian period. I have spoken of it at large in my "Old Northern Runic Monuments," vol. ii. pp. 660 and 738, and further instances will be given in my vol. iii. The last word, perhaps ANTI or ATI or something such, in the third line, is so worn away that it cannot surely be read. The well-known formula, however, demands either this word or its equivalent SALI or SILI or something such, in the accusative, as OND and SOUM interchange on the monuments.



Sculptured Stone from Kilbar,
Barra. (Reverse).

With the exception of the last word, only one letter is doubtful, the **ǫ** (κ) in KRISTR, for its stem is broken away. CHRIST, in various spellings, is frequent on runic monuments, especially in a final prayer as here. The last letter in KRISTR, the-r, is merely the Scandinavian nominative mark, at this time and for long earlier and later common in Scandinavia. It has long since fallen away, though largely surviving in Icelandic. I need only add, as to the *forms* of the letters, that the staves for S and T belong to the shortened and later types, while the mark for E is a still later "stung" or "pointed" rune. The whole then will be :—

UR, þUR, KIRþU STANIR RISKURS (OR RASKURS) SIE (κ)RISTR (ANTI).

UR and-THUR GARED (*set up*) these-the-STONES of-RISKUR (OR RASKUR).

MAY-CHRIST SEE (*see-to, bless, save, guard*) (his-ond, his-soul)!

The western islands were early occupied by a Scandian, chiefly Norwegian, population, and the kings of Norway took care that they adopted the Christian faith. We may therefore safely call this Kilbar monolith a *Norse* stone, from about the *eleventh* century. The large cross on the back reminds us of several such on the rune-pillars in the Isle of Man, and the Celtic and northern styles are curiously intermingled in its decoration.