

III.

NOTICE OF A SCULPTURED STONE IN THE ISLE OF MAN, WITH REPRESENTATION OF SIGURD FAFNI'S BANE. By GEORGE F. BLACK, ASSISTANT IN THE MUSEUM.

The sculptured stone here described was first made known to me through a photograph lent me by Mr J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A. Scot. In a letter accompanying the photograph Mr Allen referred me to Mr P. M. C. Kermodé, advocate, Ramsey, Isle of Man (the original finder of the stone), for additional information. I at once wrote to Mr Kermodé, who kindly supplied me with the following particulars.

The stone, it appears, was only noticed some three years ago, when Mr Kermodé found it doing duty in Kirk Andreas Churchyard as a headstone to a modern grave, but it is said to have been previously built into the wall of the churchyard. Mr Kermodé caused it to be photographed, and finally placed in the porch at the west end of the church at Kirk Andreas. Hitherto the stone has not been described except by Mr Romilly Allen in a paper read before the British Archæological Association, but not yet published.

The stone is sculptured with figures of peculiar interest, taken from the mythologico-historical lays of the Elder Edda, and is valuable as being the first instance of such a sculptured stone on this side of the North Sea. The date of the stone may be placed about the close of the eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century, thus classing it with the rune-inscribed stones of Man, which are mostly of this date. The subject carved on the front of the stone is taken from the story of Sigurd Fafni's Bane,—a short abstract of which it is necessary to give for the proper understanding of the sculptures. It is briefly this:—

THE STORY OF SIGURD FAFNI'S BANE.

There was a king named Sigmund Völsungsson, who married Hiordis, a daughter of King Eylimi, for his second wife. Some time after his marriage Sigmund was attacked in his kingdom by King Lingvi Hundingsson and his brothers, and was mortally wounded through being opposed by a one-eyed man, with a broad-brimmed hat and blue cloak (Odin), who held his spear

against the sword of Sigmund, which was shivered into fragments. At night, Hiordis came to the battle-stead and asked Sigmund whether he could be healed, but he did not wish to be healed, for his good fortune had forsaken him since Odin had broken his sword, of which he requested Hiordis to collect the fragments, and give them to the son she would bear, who should become the greatest of the Völsung race. Hiordis was carried off by Alf, son of King Hialprek of Denmark, who had just landed at the battle-stead with a band of Vikings, and who married her after she gave birth to Sigmund's child. This child was named Sigurd (*Sigurðr*),¹ and grew up in Hialprek's court, under the care of the dwarf Regin, who taught him all the branches of knowledge known at that time. He also urged him to demand his father's treasure of Hialprek, but Sigurd only asked a horse of the king, who allowed him to choose one; and Odin, in the guise of an old man with a long beard, aided him to find out Grana, that was of Sleipnir's² race. Regin then counselled Sigurd to go in quest of Fafni's gold, of which he gave him the following account:—

“Hreidmar had three sons, Fafni the Dragon, Ottur, and Regin the dwarf-smith. Ottur could transform himself into an otter, under which form he was in the habit of catching fish in Andvari's waterfall, so called from a dwarf of that name. One day as Ottur was sitting with his eyes shut eating a salmon, Odin, Hœnir, and Loki passed by; and Loki cast a stone at Ottur and killed him. The Æsir (gods) then skinned him, and came well satisfied with their prize to Hreidmar's dwelling. Hreidmar caused them to be seized, and compelled them to redeem themselves with as much gold as would both fill and cover the otter's skin. To obtain the gold Loki borrowed Rán's³ net, cast it into the waterfall, and caught in it the dwarf Andvari, who was accustomed to fish there under the form of a pike. The dwarf was compelled to give all his gold-ward as the price of his liberty; but on Loki taking from him his last ring, with which he hoped to redeem his fortune, he foretold that it should prove the bane of all its possessors. With this gold the Æsir covered the otter's skin; but on Hreidmar perceiving a hair of the beard still uncovered, Odin threw on it the ring of Andvari. Fafni afterwards slew his father Hreidmar, took possession of the gold, became one of the worst of serpents, and now watched over his treasures at Gnitabeid.”

Sigurd then asked Regin to forge him a sword, and Regin forged one that

¹ The Sigurd here mentioned is the same person as the Siegfried of the Old High German *Nibelungenlied*. The northern version, however, is the older, more mythical, and more simple of the two. A bold attempt has lately been made by Dr G. Vigfusson to identify Sigurd with the noble Cheruscan youth Arminius.—*Sigfried Arminius*, pp. 1–21.

² *Sleipnir*, “the slipper,” was the eight-footed steed of Odin. *Grana* (commonly *Grani*) means the “grey steed.”

³ *Rán* was the goddess of the sea, and caught in her net all those who were drowned.

could cleave an anvil and cut through floating wool. Armed with this weapon Sigurd fared forth, first to his maternal uncle Grip, who spæd his fortune. He then sailed with a large fleet collected for him by King Hialprek to avenge his father's death. During a storm they were hailed by an old man (Odin) from a cliff, whom they took on board. He told them his name was Hnikar, together with many other things. The storm abating, he stepped ashore and vanished. Hunding's sons, with a large army, encountered Sigurd, but were all slain, and Sigurd returned with great honour. Sigurd now expressed a wish to slay the dragon Fafni, whose lair had been pointed out to him by Regin. After a hard fight Sigurd pierces the dragon through the body, but nevertheless it holds a long conversation with its slayer, in which it answers Sigurd's questions relative to the Norns and Æsir, but strives in vain to dissuade him from taking the gold.

After the death of Fafni, Regin cut out his heart, and told Sigurd to roast it for him while he took a sleep. Sigurd took the heart and roasted it on a spit, and when he thought it roasted enough, and as the blood frothed from it, he touched it with his finger to see if it were quite done. He burnt his finger and put it into his mouth, and when Fafni's heart's blood touched his tongue he understood the language of birds. He heard a bird telling its companions that Sigurd should himself eat the dragon's heart. A second bird said that Regin would deceive him; a third said that he ought to kill Regin; another one counsels that he should take the dragon's treasure. All these things Sigurd performs, and rides off with the treasure on Grana's back.

THE STONE AND ITS SCULPTURINGS.

The stone is a slab of the ordinary clay-slate of the island, and measures 2 feet 3 inches in length by 1 foot 4 inches in breadth, and has a uniform thickness of about 3 inches. The stone is chipped and broken all round the edges, but Mr Kermodé has been led to believe that it must have measured originally about 4 feet in length by 20 inches in breadth. The stone is sculptured on both sides.

The sculpturings are formed by double incised lines, with the exception of the human figures, which are formed in outline by a single line. The greater part of the two sides of the stone are carved with the zoomorphic patterns so characteristic of Scandinavian ornamentation of the Viking times, examples of which occur on the silver brooches found at Skaill and on several of the Manx crosses.

In the upper left-hand corner of what for convenience we may call the front of the stone (fig. 1) is carved the figure of Sigurd roasting the

heart of Fafni. Only the upper part of Sigurd's body is now visible on the stone, the remainder being broken off. In his left hand Sigurd is



Fig. 1. Sculptured Stone at Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man (Obverse).

(From a Photograph by G. Patterson, Ramsey.)

represented holding a spit containing the heart of Fafni, which is divided into three gobbets, while at the same time he inserts the finger of his

right hand into his mouth. The flames of the fire are represented by three small isosceles triangles, one for each gobbet. Immediately above Sigurd's shoulders is shown the head and neck of one of the talking birds which warned him of Regin's intended treachery, and counselled him to forestall the deceiver by cutting off his head. The head of the bird is shown with the neck stretched forward, and the beak open as if addressing Sigurd.

The head and neck of Sigurd's horse Grana is also shown above that of the bird, and, like the zoomorphic patterns, is formed by double incised lines. The whole subject is thus referred to in *Fafnismál*:—

The first bird¹ says :

“There sits Sigurd sprinkled with blood
Fafni's heart at the fire he roasts.
Wise methinks were the ring-dispenser,
If he the glistening life-pulp ate.”

Second bird :

“There lies Regin communing with himself ;
He will beguile the youth who in him trusts :
In rage he brings evil words together,
The framer of evil will avenge his brother.”

Third bird :

“By the head shorter, let him the hoary sage²
Send hence to Hell ; all the gold then can he
Possess alone, the mass that under Fafni lay.”

Fourth bird :

“He would, methinks, be prudent,
If he could have your friendly counsel, my sisters !
If he would bethink himself and Hugin gladden.
There I expect the wolf where his ears I see.”

¹ The original word is *igða*, which has been variously interpreted eagle, hawk, nuthatch, woodpecker, or magpie ; *Egðir* is the poetical word for eagle.

² The original word is *pútr*, the technical meaning of which is obscure. In the Cleasby-Vigfusson *Icelandic Dictionary* it is rendered “a sayer of saws, a wise man, a sage (a bard ?).”

Fifth bird :

“ Not so prudent is that tree of battle,
As I that warlike leader had supposed,
If he one brother lets depart,
Now he the other has of life bereft.”

Sixth bird :

“ He is most simple, if he longer spares
That people's pest. There lies Regin,
Who has betrayed him. He cannot guard against it.”

Seventh bird :

“ By the head shorter let him
Make the ice-cold Jötun,
And of his rings deprive him ; then of that treasure thou,
Which Fafni owned, sole lord wilt be.”

Sigurd replies :

“ Fate shall not so resistless be,
That Regin shall my death-word bear ;
For the brothers both shall speedily
Go hence to Hell.”

In the lowest left-hand corner is shown the upper half of a human figure holding a sword at arm's length. It no doubt represents Sigurd, but whether before or after slaying the dragon it is impossible to say.

On the other side of the stone (fig. 2) is carved the outlines of what Mr Kermodé believes to be a wheel-headed cross, the diameter of the circle of which must have been at least $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The zoomorphic pattern on the shaft of the cross he thinks, judging from other examples, must have extended to at least 3 feet 6 inches in length. The interlaced zoomorphic pattern differs slightly from the other Manx stones, but has some resemblance to one of the Kirk Michael crosses (Cumming, *Runic Monuments in Man*, fig. 19) and to the Malew Cross (Cumming, fig. 15). In the middle of the cross-shaft is a curious human figure in a high hat and a frock reaching to the knees. The arms of this figure are extended forwards at full length, with the left crossed over the right, and bound together at the wrists by what seems to be a ring. The feet also of this figure are bound together in a double ring shaped like the

figure 8. At the back of the figure, and shown perpendicular to the shaft of the cross, is the figure of a serpent interlaced twice on its own



Fig. 2. Sculptured Stone at Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man (Reverse).

(From a Photograph by G. Patterson, Ramsey.)

self. The head of the serpent is on a level with the shoulder of the

human figure, but is turned in the opposite direction. There can be no doubt but that this carving is meant for a representation of "the bound Loki," the devil of the old Norse mythology, the story of whose end is as follows:—

After Loki had enraged the gods by his many treacheries, he was chased by them, and took refuge in the waterfall of Frarangr, where he was caught by the gods in a net under the form of a salmon. After his capture he changed to his human form, and as a punishment the gods caused him to be bound to a rock with the entrails of his own son Nari. After he was bound Skaði (a goddess, daughter of Þiassi and the wife of Njörð) took a venomous serpent and fastened it up over Loki's head. The venom dropped down from it on to Loki's face. Sigyn, Loki's wife, sat beside him, and held a basin under the serpent's head to catch the venom, and when the basin was full she took it away to empty it. Meanwhile the venom dropped on Loki, who shrank from it so violently that the whole earth trembled ¹ (*Ægisdrekka*, 49–65).

To the left of the cross and at the same height as the bound Loki, there are traces of another and larger human figure. It is partly scaled off, only the lower part of the body from the breast down being distinct. It is impossible to tell for whom it is meant, but it may be only another representation of Sigurd.

OTHER EXAMPLES.

For the sake of comparison with the Manx stone, all the other examples of Sigurd Fafni's Bane known to me are here brought together and described as briefly as possible.

1. *Ramsunds-berg, Södermanland, Sweden.*—This stone is a large rock surface, measuring 16 feet long by from 4 to 6 feet in breadth. On it is carved the bellows, anvil, hammer, and tongs used in forging Sigurd's sword "Gram"; Sigurd sitting roasting Fafni's heart, and holding his thumb in his mouth; the tree and the talking birds; Sigurd's

¹ The subject of "the bound Loki" occurs on the Gosforth Cross, Cumberland, with the addition of Sigyn holding the dish to catch the venom as it dropped from the serpent's mouth.

horse "Grana"; the decapitated body of Regin, with his head lying beside it, &c. Surrounding these carvings is the conventional dragonesque figure so common on Swedish rune-stones (but in this case divided into three separate animals). Sigurd is also shown holding his sword in both hands, and piercing the body of the largest dragon. On the body of the dragon is carved the following Runic inscription:—*Sigrifr : kiarfi : bur : posi : muþir : alriks : tutir : urms : fur salu : hulmkirs : faþur : sukrufar buata : sis*, which may be thus translated: "Sigrid made this bridge, she was Alrik's mother and Orm's daughter, for Holmger's, her husband's soul, he was Sigrud's father."¹ Fig. 3.



Fig. 3. Sculptured Stone at Ramsunds-berg, Södermanland, Sweden.

2. *Gök, Södermanland, Sweden*, a few miles from the above.—The stone is nearly the same size as the above, but it is imperfect at one end. The carvings are similar, but more rudely done. It also bears the following incomplete Runic inscription:—*Isaio : raisti : stai : ain : pansa : at : puar : fauþr : sloþa : kbrat : sin : faþu[r] uli : hano : msi : iurari : kaum*, which may be translated thus: "Isaio raised *this* stone, by him-

¹ Säve, *Sigurds-Ristningarna å Ramsunds-Berget och Gök-stenen*, p. 27, pl. i. Note the change of *bur* for *brü*, *buata* for *buanta*, *sis* for *sins*. For the explanation of the loss of the *n* in the last two words, see Stephens, *Old Nor. Run. Mon.*, i. p. 24. In the translation above the words in italics are supplied to complete the sense.

self, this after Thuar, *the* father of Slod, and *after* Brand his father Iurar ?”¹ Fig. 4.

3. *Dräfte, Upland, Sweden.*—This stone is only known to me from a short description of it by Prof. Stephens in his *Studies on Northern Mythology*, p. 370. Prof. Stephens says:—“In the Danish *Illustreret Tidende* for May 13, 1877, I made public a third Swedish funeral stone, from Drafte, Upland, on which is sculptured SIGURD slaying FAFNE the dragon. But, for the first time in Europe, it shows us also ANDWARE the dwarf reaching forth his only remaining golden jewel, the fatal Ring,

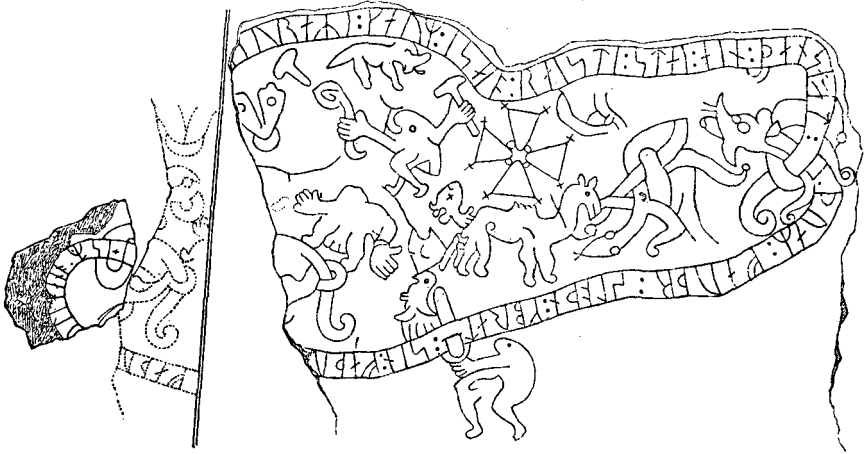


Fig. 4. Sculptured Stone at Gök, Södermanland, Sweden.

with which the Anses covered the last hair of the death-struck OTTER. This piece is from the first Christian Age, is incised with the later runes, and must date about A.D. 1000–1050.”

4. *Gaulstad, Jarlsberg, Norway.*—This example consists of a series of five circular panels carved on a church door-pillar at the above place. The top panel, which is imperfect, shows Sigurd with one foot advanced,

¹ Säve, *ibid.*, p. 33. Note here also *stai* for *stain*, and *brat* for *brant*. Owing to the stone being imperfect it is impossible to read the latter part of the inscription correctly.

and holding his shield before him. The next and lower panel contains the only known instance of the representation of Otter's skin covered with the gold. The third panel shows Regin sitting beside the anvil, and holding the hammer and tongs. The fourth contains a nondescript animal representing the dragon, which is being killed by Sigurd, who sits in the fifth and lowest panel, and thrusts upwards with his sword.¹ Fig. 5.

5. *Hyllestad, Setersdal, Norway*, and now in the Christiania Museum.—The figures in this example are carved on the pillars of a church door, supposed to date from 1150. The carvings are to be examined from the bottom of the right-hand panel upwards. The first panel shows Regin and Sigurd forging the sword "Gram"—Sigurd working the bellows. The second panel shows them tempering the sword—Sigurd this time with his helmet on. The third panel shows Sigurd, armed with sword and shield, piercing the dragon's body. The second pillar at the bottom shows Sigurd sitting roasting Fafni's heart, which is here represented by three gobbets on a spit, as on the Isle of Man stone. Sigurd is also represented as inserting the thumb of his left hand into his mouth. In the left half of this panel Regin is represented sitting with head bowed (sleeping), and clasping Sigurd's sword by the cross-guard. Above this panel is another, containing the tree with the three talking birds sitting on the branches, and also Sigurd's horse Grana. The next panel shows Sigurd with his shield hanging on his left shoulder, and holding Regin by the wrist while he severs the arm from his body.²



Fig. 5. Door Pillar at Gaulstad, Jarlsberg, Norway.

The top panel of this pillar furnishes an interesting example of Gunnar harping in the wormpit, as set forth in the *Greenland Lay of Atli*. The story is briefly this:—Gunnar Giuking had married Sigurd's first-love, Brynhild. Some time after he journeyed to the court of King

¹ *Norske Fortidsmindesmerkens Bevaring*, 1855, pl. vii.

² *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1870, pl. xiv.



Fig. 6. Door Pillars at Hyllestad, Setersdal, Norway.

Atli (Atilla, King of the Huns, the Etzel of the *Nibelungenlied*), his brother-in-law, where, because he would not betray the hiding-place of Sigurd's gold-hoard, he was cast into a den of snakes with his hands fast tied. His sister Gudrun sent him a harp, and on this he played so sweetly with his toes that he charmed the serpents to sleep, save one, which gnawed through his breast, and stung him in the heart. Fig. 6.

6. *Veigusdal, Robygdalag, Norway*.—Nicolaysen¹ describes a church door at this place as being formed of two planks, the right one carved with the figures of two animals, and the left one with four representations from the saga of Sigurd Fafni's Bane. These representations are not arranged in chronological order. Thus the first or uppermost shows Sigurd in the act of killing Regin, while in the second he tests the sword; in the third he and Regin make a new sword; and in the fourth and lowest Sigurd roasts Fafni's heart under a tree with a bird on the top. The date of the carving is placed by Nicolaysen at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

7. *Durham Castle*.—Prof. Stephens, in his paper "On a Runic Door from Iceland," published in the *Archæologia Scotica* (vol. v. pt. 1, p. 252), quotes from *Notes and Queries*, of June 7, 1873, p. 459, the following account of a *miserere* in the chapel of Durham Castle, which he thinks contains a representation of Sigurd and the dragon:—"6. Winged and long-eared dragon with clawed feet. A human figure has been broken away, but a hand pushing a shield against the dragon's nose, and a bare foot broken off at the instep, remain. In background a cabbage-like tree. On either side a mask, one with tongue out." It is possible that this is another example, but the details are not characteristic enough to enable us to determine with certainty. The carving is supposed to date from the beginning of the sixteenth century.

8. *Leeds, England*.—In the *Journal of the British Archæological Association* (vol. xli. pp. 138-39) the Rev. G. F. Browne, B.D., describes a sculptured cross-shaft in the parish church at Leeds as having a panel containing the pincers, hammer, bellows, and the anvil of a smith. The same panel contains an obliterated figure, probably intended for a human being. Attached by bands to the sides of the

¹ *Norske Forlevninger*, p. 252.

figure are two wings, while above what should be the head is the figure of a woman in a long dress, who is being held by the back hair and the tail of her dress by the supposed human figure. Mr Browne supposes this to represent Völund (the Weyland Smith of the Anglo-Saxons) carrying off a swan-maiden. It must be admitted, however, that his interpretation is exceedingly improbable.

Another panel on the same cross-shaft contains the figure of a man holding a sword, and what by a stretch of imagination may be called a shield. This figure Mr Browne thinks represents Sigurd, but it may be anybody. Unless we have more characteristic and definite points to base judgment upon, it must be held as a very unsatisfactory method of interpreting sculpturings to come to a conclusion on one or two points of resemblance. In his remarks on the Gök Stone—an illustration of which accompanies his paper—Mr Browne falls into the error of mistaking the rude representation of the tree for the body of the dead Fafni. A glance at the Ramsunds-berg stone (which he also figures) would have saved him from committing such an error.

9. *Halton, Lancashire.*—Mr J. Romilly Allen describes a cross-shaft at this place as having a panel containing a “blacksmith seated at his forge, with a hammer upraised, in the act of striking; below is what seems to be a pair of double-bellows and an anvil; on the forge a pair of pincers. The top of the panel is filled in with a circular ring and a figure of eight loops interlaced, a sword, a pair of pincers, a hammer, and another object.”¹ The “other object” is clearly the headless body of a man. This is a much more probable example of Sigurd Fafni’s Bane than the Leeds cross, but, as Mr Romilly Allen remarks,² “Until some much stronger evidence has been brought forward than the supposed resemblances between the descriptions in the sagas and the sculptures on the cross, we must hesitate to accept this view of the case, viz., that heathen legends were ever adapted to Christian purposes.”

¹ *Jour. Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, vol. xlii. p. 331.

² *Ibid.*, p. 334.