

III.

NOTES ON A SWEDISH STAFF-CALENDAR, PRESENTED TO THE MUSEUM BY THE HON. JOHN ABERCROMBIE, F.S.A. SCOT., DATED 1710. BY H. F. MORLAND SIMPSON, M.A., F.S.A. SCOT., RECTOR OF ABERDEEN GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

This staff is hexagonal, 2 feet 5½ inches in length, of a light brown (stained ?) wood, smooth in grain. At the two ends knobs have been attached subsequently (?), rude in form, evidently intended to save the carving from rubbing. The runes, symbols, &c. are well but not finely cut.

This staff is remarkable, and, within my observation, unique in several conspicuous details :—

1. The forms of the runes employed for the Sunday letters.



2. The commencement of the year with January 8 (unique ?).

3. The reading, if we go by the symbols, is from right to left, ←. This is not uncommon on older staves.

4. The use of 15 *symbols* or letters occurring regularly to *every other Sunday letter*. These occupy the position usually assigned to the Golden Number Runes or Prime; but I have failed to discover their meaning, or find anything like them on any other staff-calendar. Beginning with the one attached to January 8 (small-knob end) these 15 signs are :—



(here inverted or "stupid" for convenience).

Jan. 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 1 3 5
Feb.

Some of these are Runes; others apparently Roman letters; others again, neither. Undoubtedly they are *numerical*, and probably contain some method of finding the movable feasts; but I know of no cycle of 15, except that of the Roman Indiction, with which I cannot homologue the above 15 signs.

The prominence given to certain more peculiarly Romish festivals (note those for the B.V.M., and "All Souls," November 2), and the absence of the Protestant November 6, Gustav Adolf, seem to indicate that this staff was made by or for a Roman Catholic; but this evidence is very inconclusive. Even the modern Protestant almanacks retain feasts abolished in practice; and probably November 6 was occasionally marked on the staves in commemoration of St Leonard.

5. The *vigils* preceding the festivals of the Virgin, Apostles, Holy Rood, Yule, John Baptist, All Saints, and S. Michael are prominently marked by a cross, sometimes slanted, to make room for the symbol of the feast following.

6. The symbols are often merely initials, or the first two or three letters of the saint's name, e.g., TIB = Tiburtius; NI = Nicholas; CA = Catharine, &c.

7. The staff is dated Anno 1710.

8. This is the first staff I have *seen* which bears the "*Black-Days*" or "*Dies Ægyptiacæ*," days on which it was unlucky to commence any

undertaking. Such days are regularly indicated in the old Abbey Calendars of Scotland, in the famous Codex Membranaceus of Worm, a Runic church calendar, dated 1328, and in the calendar attributed to Bede. The observance of these days, which was very wide-spread, perhaps universal, though local and personal circumstances seem to have introduced great varieties into the lists usually found in the above. I have noted marks, undoubtedly indicating "Black Days," on several calendars of which I have photographs or illustrations. Frequently the day is marked by a small nail or brass-headed tack driven in above or below the day-letter. Here they are marked by $\text{||}=\text{||}$, finely scratched, but perfectly distinct. There are in all 24 such marks, occurring to—

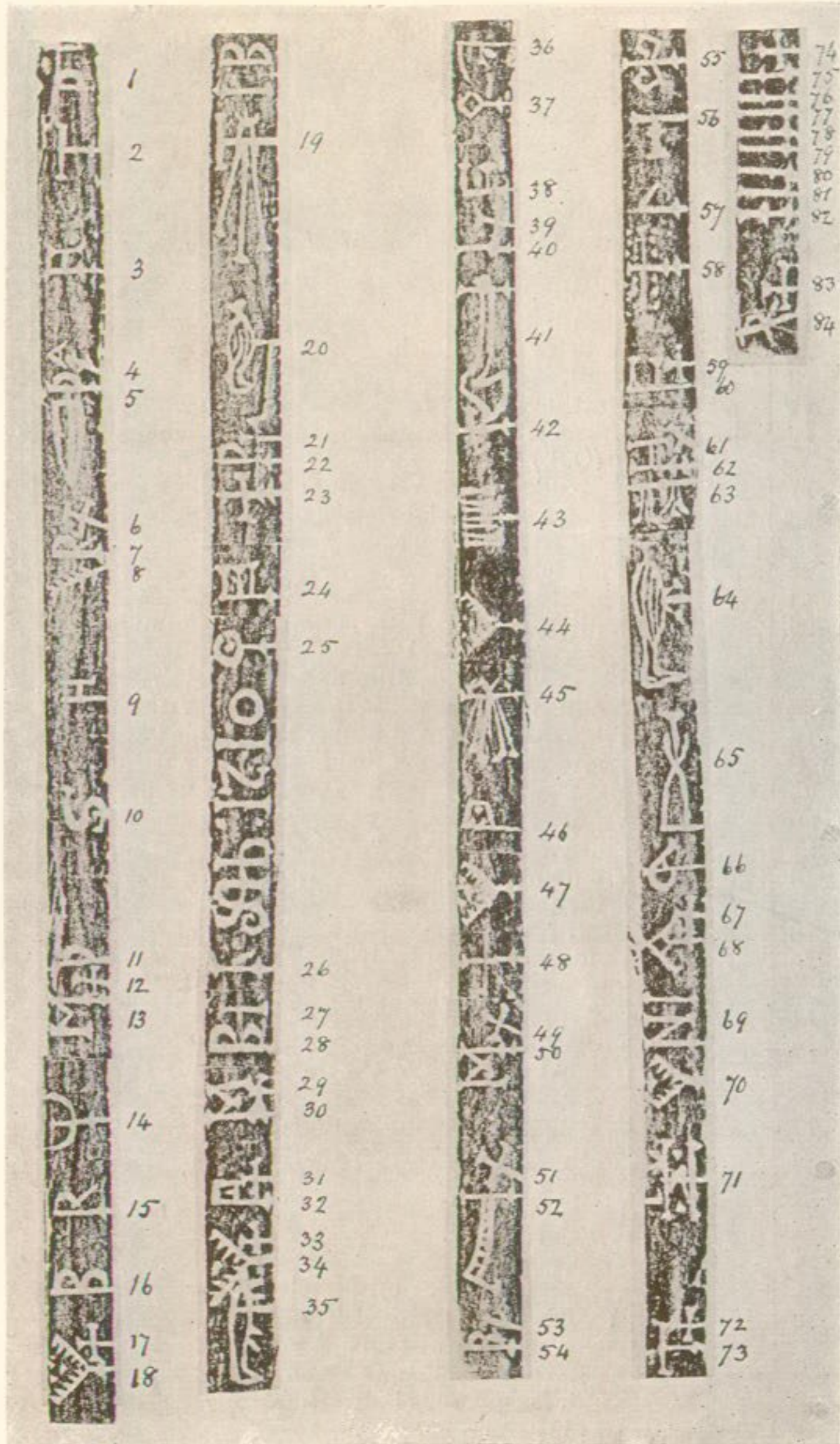
Jan. 1, 2, 4, 29.	Jul. 9.
Feb. 11, 17, 18, 29.	Sep. 10, 18.
Mar. 1, 4, 14, 16.	Oct. 6.
Apr. 10, 17, 18.	Nov. 6, 10.
May 7.	Dec. 11, 18.

Those in italic type I find in the lists of such days observed in "Gaul" and Denmark, in Worm's "Fasti Danici." The whole subject is a curious study in itself; but as I propose to examine it fully on some future occasion, it will suffice to remark here that the above agreement with Worm's lists renders the explanation given quite certain. The three exceptions, January 29, February 29, and July 9, were perhaps personal and private.

9. The first rune of each month is indicated by three strokes to the right.

The "Mark-days," their symbols and meanings, are as follows:—

Date.	Symbol, as in Fig. on p. 237.	Meaning and Saint, &c.
Jan. 8-9	No. 1	Perhaps owner's initials; not attached to these days.
" 13	" 2	Tiugunde Day, or 20th day after Yule. ☽
" 19	" 3	S. Henry Bp.
" 24	" 4	The cross marks the Vigil to the 25th. Possibly the A, to this, the first of the Vigils, is for <i>Aften</i> = Evening. The day is (rarely) marked in honour of S. Erik's Translation.
" 25	" 5	S. Paul's Conversion: usual symbol of the sword. The pommel of the hilt is shaped to form the initial P.



Symbols of Mark-days on Swedish Staff Calendar.
(From a rubbing.)

Date.	Symbol, as in Fig. on p. 237.	Meaning and Saint, &c.
Feb. 1	No. 6	Vigil.
" 2	" 7	Purification (R="Renelse") B.V.M.
" 3	" 8	Blasius.
" 9	" 9	Apollonia?
" 15	" 10	Sigfrid Bp.
" 22	" 11	S. Peter at Antioch.
" 23	" 12	Vigil.
" 24	" 13	Matthias Ap., "Leap-Year's Day."
Mar. 12	" 14	Gregory. Is the symbol meant to denote the Equinox (O.S.)?
" 17	" 15	Gertrude? Not very often marked. I suspect the R is for some abbreviation of the name, e.g., "Rude"?? (in German, "Trude").
" 21	" 16	Benedict.
" 24	" 17	Vigil.
" 25	" 18	Annunciation B.V.M. "Mary mass the former," or in Spring (i Vaar). The same symbol recurs to her other days, e.g., July 2, &c., with varying number of points and dots. Is it a fanciful V for Virgo?
Apr. 14	" 19	Tiburtius. "The first day of Summer," hence its prominence. The symbol is suggestive of a sun and rays?
" 25	" 20	Mark and his "Gowk" (Cuckoo). "Cuckoo-Day."
" 30	" 21	Vigil.
May 1	" 22	Philip (and James), "Apostles Twain."
" 3	" 23	Finding of the Holy Rood. "Cross mass in Spring." Cf. September 14.
" 18	" 24	Erik, King.
" 25	" 25	Urbanus. Frequently marked by a <i>Grain</i> , especially of maize.
June 11	" 26	Barnabas. Not often marked.
" 15	" 27	Vitus (and Modestus). Not often marked. The symbol is not attached to the day, and may belong to the B of June 17th, <i>q.v.</i>
" 17	" 28	S. Botolph, of Ikanhoe, or Ivanhoe.
" 23	" 29	Vigil.
" 24	" 30	S. John Baptist. "Midsummer's Day."
" 28	" 31	Vigil.
" 29	" 32	S. Peter. Key.
July 1	" 33	Vigil.
" 2	" 34	Visitatio B.V.M. Cf. March 25, &c.
" 5	" 35	? The modern Swedish almanack gives Melcher. The Cm. of Worm (1328 A.D.) marks it merely as the octave (of S. Peter's Day).
" 10	" 36	Knut. Lee Knud (Danish). Knut, the Reaper. Scythe, as usual.

Date.	Symbol, as in Fig. on p. 237.	Meaning and Saint, &c.
July 13	No. 37	Margaret. Usually marked to the 20th.
" 22	" 38	Mary Magdalene.
" 24	" 39	Vigil.
" 29	" 40	(?)
" "	" 41	Olaf. Axe, as usual.
Aug. 5	" 42	Dominic? Oswald?
" 10	" 43	Lawrence. Gridiron.
" 15	" 44	Assumption B.V.M. Cf. March 25, July 2, &c.
" 24	" 45	Bartholomew. Note the absence of a Vigil to this and S. Barnabas. Much less prominence is usually given to their days on the Scandinavian calendars than to the other Apostles.
" 31	" 46	Key? Arwid?? (modern Swedish Almanack).
Sept. 8	" 47	Nativity B.V.M. Cf. August 15, &c.
" 14	" 48	Elevatio S. Crucis. "Holy Rood in Autumn." Cf. May 3.
" 20	" 49	Vigil.
" 21	" 50	Matthew Ap. Ev.
" 28	" 51	Vigil.
" 29	" 52	Michael. The symbol probably denotes a graduated <i>steel-yard</i> , in allusion to S. Michael's <i>scales</i> .
Oct. 6	" 53	Eskil. Rarely marked. Cf. my article, <i>Proc. Ant. Scot.</i> , 1892, p. 365. The Modern Swedish Almanack gives "Bruno." The two side strokes to the unexplained symbol are the marks of an "unlucky day," <i>vide</i> above, p. 236.
" 7	" 54	Birgitta. Specially Swedish.
" 10	" 55	Gereon? Rarely marked. Symbol unintelligible. About this time (October 14, Calixtus), the winter half of the year begins. The omission of Calixtus is remarkable.
" 13	" 56	(?) An error for 14th. St Callixtus; almost always given.
" 18	" 57	Luke Ev. An inverted L?
" 21	" 58	S. Ursula and 11,000 Virgins.
" 27	" 59	Vigil.
" 28	" 60	SS. Simon and Jude. "Apostles Twain in Autumn." The day was commonly called Fyribod=Forebode; <i>vide Proc. Ant. Scot.</i> (1891), <i>sub die</i> p. 325. Hence the F.
" 31	" 61	Vigil.
Nov. 1	" 62	All Saints. Hallowmass, "Helgerne."
" 2	" 63	All Souls. A Roman Catholic festival, abolished at the Reformation, but retained in the modern Protestant Calendar, though not frequently marked on the staves. Symbol unintelligible.

Date.	Symbol, as in Fig. on p. 237.	Meaning and Saint, &c.
Nov. 11	No. 64	Martin and his Goose.
" 23	" 65	Clement. Pincers and Nail? Symbol unexplained. Usually an Anchor.
" 25	" 66	Catherine. CA.
" 29	" 67	Vigil.
" 30	" 68	Andrew.
Dec. 6	" 69	Nicholas.
" 8	" 70	Conception B.V.M. The varying number of points and dots to her symbols (<i>cf.</i> September 8, &c.) may be intended to denote varying degrees of sanctity attached to her days.
" 13	" 71	Lucia. The symbol perhaps intended in some way to denote the solstice (old style).
" 20	" 72	Vigil.
" 21	" 73	Thomas Ap.
" 24	" 74	Vigil. (Extra large.) Christmas Eve.
" 25	" 75	Yule. Here and in the succeeding days, including January 1st the octave, we have what is probably intended to denote the <i>Julelys</i> , Yule Tide Candles. The special sanctity of this to other days is emphasised by the double stroke at the base of the vertical stroke or "staff" of the symbol. <i>Cf.</i> December 21 and <i>passim</i> .
" 26	" 76	Stephen.
" 27	" 77	John Ap. Ev.
" 28	" 78	Innocents. "Bairns' day."
" 29	" 79	"Thomas Bishop," <i>i.e.</i> , Thomas à Becket, not very often marked, and perhaps only as one of the Yule-week days.
" 30	" 80	Sabinus of Assisi. David (modern Swedish Almanack), but <i>vide sub</i> December 29.
" 31	" 81	Sylvester Pope, but <i>vide sub</i> December 29.
Jan. 1	" 82	Circumcision. Octave of Yule, <i>vide sub</i> December 29. The two fine horizontal strokes to the right mark an unlucky day, <i>vide</i> p. 236 above.
" 5	" 83	Vigil.
" 6	" 84	Epiphany. Holy Three Kings. "Heligtrekonger." Symbol probably TR for Trekonger.