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with best wishes
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THE KENSINGTON RUNE-STONE

A Modern Inscription from Douglas County, Minnesota

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A N A D D R E S S

by

G E O R G E T. F L O M

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THE KENSINGTON RUNE STONE.¹

In the fall of 1898 there was found on a farm a little over three miles northeast of Kensington, Douglas County, Minnesota, a stone with a series of runic characters inscribed upon it. The finder of the stone was Oluf Ohman, who is also the owner of the farm on which it was found; with him at the time of the finding, we are told, was his little son Edward, then ten years old. The stone is a small one, only about thirty inches long, about half as wide and seven inches thick at the upper end. At the base it is narrower, being considerably bevelled on the back. The inscription which is a rather long one, as inscriptions go, contains in all fifty-six words and several numbers, a total of 211 characters, of which 152 occur on the face of the stone and fifty-nine on the left edge; it begins near the top of the stone and extends a little below

¹[The present somewhat detailed examination of the subject has been prompted merely by the desire to aid in establishing and recording the truth. The author has so far not wished to take part in the discussion, though his opinion of the language and the runes has frequently been requested, because he refused to believe that an inscription, the language of which is modern and radically different from Old Swedish should long be able to maintain itself as authentic. He was therefore not a little astonished when in January last he was informed that the stone was coming to be generally regarded as authentic and that the Minnesota Historical Society was about to put itself on record for it, that its Museum Committee, after a "careful" investigation of the whole question, had arrived at that conclusion and were ready to report that the inscription was genuine. He further learned that no Scandinavian philologist had been present in their sessions, that philologists had not been consulted, and that apparently the linguistic questions involved were not appreciated by the committee. When, therefore, the stone was to be exhibited at a meeting of the Chicago Historical Society on February third last and he was urged to be present and discuss the language of the inscription he thought it his duty to do so. He has since visited the locality where the stone was

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the middle of it and to a corresponding distance on the edge. The stone itself is partly graywacke, partly calcite, the latter being the lower left hand corner and extending about two-thirds up on the side; some ten of the runes are cut in the calcite part of the stone.

The stone was found in the ground close to and partly under a young tree, two of whose roots had twined themselves around the stone, the one perpendicularly down under the stone, the other along its surface clear to the other edge, where it again followed the outline of the stone downward. Mr. Ohman² informs me that the tree looked stunted; that is, its age might be greater than its size would indicate. The tree which was an asp, has not been preserved, but the stump was kept for some time and examined the following spring by several men, who, thinking there might be a treasure hidden under the spot where the stone was found, dug below to a distance of six or seven feet. There was no other stone of any kind encountered in the ground under the spot, nothing that could have served as a base for the rune stone. It had either been planted directly into the ground or had been buried in the ground in the position in which it was found. When found the side with the inscription was down, the bevelling thus being up, a circumstance to which I shall return below.³

found and the Minnesota State Historical Society's Museum, and examined the runes and made his own transcription of them. This together with certain new discoveries are embodied in this paper, among them the identification of the dialect and certain facts of local history from Douglas County, Minnesota. While knowing that the runological-philological questions involved are the only ones that have scientific value, he has upon special request also undertaken an investigation of the general external evidence. These results, covering the various phases of the question but stressing the linguistic and runological features of it, he was then invited to read before the annual meeting of the Illinois State Historical Society at Springfield, Illinois, on May sixth, 1910. The paper is here printed as there presented, except for the references and a few technical details. The paper was illustrated by a syllabus, photographs, runic alphabets and impressions of old runestones.]

²The name has been Americanized from Öhman.

³This fact was told me by Mr. H. H. Winchell and corroborated by Mr. Ohman.

Upon the request of Mr. Ohman, I am told, Mr. Samuel Olson⁴ sent the stone to Professor Curme of Northwestern University for examination. It is reported that Professor Curme was at first inclined to regard the inscription as genuine, but that he later arrived at a different conclusion. The stone was then returned to Mr. Ohman.* The find aroused considerable discussion in the press at the time, but the unusual character of some of the runes made a reliable transcription difficult and the stone was not therefore submitted to a detailed examination. The prevailing attitude was one of skepticism and Mr. Ohman was told "the expert" had pronounced it recent; he then put it in front of his granary, where for ten years it was used as a door-step.

About two years ago interest in the stone was again revived by the report of an account of it which appeared in *Husbibliotek*, 3, for 1908, in which the stone was pronounced authentic by one who was, it seems, then engaged in a study of the Vinland voyages, and who saw in it a document of great historical value, recording as it alleges Norse visits to America as late as 1362, i. e. 238 years later than the historically recorded last Vinland voyage. This report was by a Mr. H. R. Holand, who had purchased the stone from Mr. Ohman or, as it now appears, a share in the stone. Since that time Mr. Holand has devoted much time and energy in the gathering and publishing⁵ of evidence looking toward establishing the genuineness of the inscription. And contributions pro and con have recently appeared in considerable number.⁶

*Since this paper was written I have learned that Professor O. J. Breda, then of Minnesota University, now of Christiania, Norway, also at the time passed adversely on the stone.

⁴Jeweler and optician of Kensington, formerly of Milwaukee.

⁵Several articles in *Skandinaven* one in *Symra* (Decorah, Iowa) and one in *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 9, 1909.

⁶Thus e. g., to mention only a few, by Dr. Knut Høegh, "Om Kensington og Elbow Lake Stenene" in *Symra*, V, pp. 178-189, by R. B. Anderson in *Wisconsin State Journal*, Feb. 7, 1910, by O. E. Hagen in *Amerika*, April 1, 1910 (bearing the title "Ad Utrumque Parati Simus"), and by R. B. Anderson, *Amerika*, Feb. 18, 1910

The basis of the discussion has been the conditions surrounding the discovery of the stone, there being apparently no evidence of fraud here. Among these are the fact that the stone was actually found in the ground, the veracity of the men who saw the stone and the tree, the apparent age of the tree, the weathering of the stone, the recent settlement of that locality, the unlikelihood that any of the earlier settlers of that region should have possessed the knowledge of runes, or if so had any reason for foisting such a fraud upon the public, etc. Those who have been skeptical have held that it is absurd to suppose that a company of explorers, thirty in number, should in 1362 have succeeded in penetrating from Vinland on the Atlantic coast clear to Western Minnesota, that to do that, furthermore, in fourteen days would have been a physical impossibility; that the inscription itself looks too recent, that there is much uncertainty as to the age of the tree, that the evidence is too vague and general, and that there has as yet been no thorough and scientific examination of the subject.

Among the contributions to the discussion there is a short article by Helge Gjessing of Lysaker, Norway, which was published some months ago in *Symra*, V. pp. 113-26, in which he discussed quite fully the numeric system employed and the historical conditions involved; he also treated briefly of the runes and the language, in his conclusion denying the authenticity of the stone. Mr. Gjessing dealt broadly with all phases of the question; his discussion is scholarly and his conclusions justified at every point by the material he presents. But his article is brief and he contented himself with too cursory a treatment of the linguistic test for the article to be as generally convincing as it deserved to be.⁷ A more thorough analysis of the whole inscription will be found to offer an abundance of added evidence that we have to

⁷The "Answer to Gjessing" in *Symra* V. pp. 210-13, of course fails absolutely to meet the points at issue.

do here, not with a fourteenth century inscription, but with a narrative in a modern dialect—recorded in modern runic characters.

Observing the stone one's doubts may well be aroused, however, even by the external facts that he meets with—the smooth surface of the stone which gives it the appearance of having been shaped and chiseled in recent times by some mason for this particular purpose; and the perfectly distinct runes themselves, so different from the characters of genuine old inscriptions, roughened through weathering and often worn down utterly beyond recognition.

It is to be noted that the Kensington stone is partly of comparatively soft calcite, and yet the runes of this particular part of the stone are as clear and distinct as they are on the upper part which is of graywacke. Had the stone been planted and its face subjected to continued weathering for a series of years the runes upon this part of the stone would have been disfigured to a far greater extent than those of the rest of the inscription. *That these runes, however, are as legible as the rest limits the possible period of weathering so much as to practically establish the probability that the stone never was planted.* Further, it was observed above that the stone was found with the face down, the bevelling at the base being up. But in a stone of this thickness, seven inches at the top and with a base of only about four inches, the face being perfectly straight, there would be so much more weight to the back of the central line in the base as to make it certain that the stone would have fallen backwards, for there was no stone to have formed a support behind and there is every likelihood that the ground would have been made as firm in front of the stone as at the back. *Thus in the position of the stone when found there is the strongest circumstantial evidence that the stone was originally buried, not planted.*

But it is said, the calcite does show considerable decay, pieces of the stone are there chipped off and the surface is rougher. However, it is not the age of the stone itself that is in dispute, but the time when the runic features were carved into it. The stone may have lain on the ground a very long time and become much decayed by long weathering, but that has of course no bearing upon the age of the inscription. Anyone who studies the surface of the Kensington stone will find plenty of suspicious features. Through the decaying and wearing away of the stone portions of the inscriptions of many an old rune-stone have been effaced and its text often left fragmentary. But our Kensington rune-master was more fortunate; the stone went on decaying, pieces falling off (observe the piece, three inches long, near the upper left hand corner, and observe the depressions elsewhere), but by some miraculous influence the disintegrating process failed to affect the runic characters; they were to be left unmarred so that nothing in the account left by these intrepid explorers might be spoiled! The lower portion of the stone is not inscribed; that part was to be placed in the ground, we are told,—or *did the scribe stop where he did to continue on a more suitable surface on the edge of the stone?*

There is further the thoroughly modern character of the narrative itself, so very circumstantial in its account of the direction of the journey, the purpose, their stopping over night by two skerries a day's journey north of the stone, their being out fishing, their return home finding their comrades *red with blood and dead*,⁸ and finally the information that they have ten men by the ocean looking after their boats, and how long it would take to get back there. Now, in the old inscriptions the circumstances of an experience are never told with such care of details. It is only the one important event or

⁸Observe!

fact that is there told in the shortest possible space. The detailed character of our narrative is also evidenced in the author's preciseness in his numbers; and further the method of giving the year is characteristic of the modern inscriptions of the 17th century to the 19th century. In the old inscriptions the year would have been indicated in harmony with the practice of the time, as "the seventh year of the rule of king Hakon," etc.

Then there is further the preposterous assumption that twenty men returning to camp, finding that ten of their number had been butchered by the Indians in their absence, should go a day's journey still farther inland into the wild country, and then coolly sit down and remain there while one of their number carved on a stone the complete record of their tragic experience, a task which would have taken several days perhaps. The neatness of the job shows that the work was done with care⁹ and desire for detail that indicates the mental attitude of composure, no fear of further disturbance, an attitude which is quite incompatible with that which we naturally assume to have existed under the circumstances narrated in the inscription.

Let us now turn to the internal evidence.

I can not stress too strongly that where we are dealing with an alleged old inscription in a language whose history is known, the scientific test of authenticity lies principally in the vocabulary and the linguistic forms of the inscription. If, as in this case, the alphabet used is a runic one, then the runic characters employed offer a valuable collateral test. *The key for determining the age of inscriptions is always to be found in the internal evidence of the inscription itself.* Now it is a most elementary principle in the science of philology that a living language is constantly undergoing slow imperceptible changes according to certain definite tendencies. It is the province

⁹This fact was also pointed out by Dr. C. N. Gould, of Chicago University, in his report to the Museum Committee at St. Paul.

of the philologist to ascertain and formulate the laws that have governed all these changes and to fix their chronology. Upon the basis of such study the character of a language in its different periods may be ascertained and the history of the language written.

With archeological finds it may often happen that the date of the find can be given only in the most general way, according to the known characteristics of the different periods; this frequently, because of the nature of the archeologist's material and the more limited criteria at hand. But in tracing the changing forms of art and in the classification of his material he need experience no such uncertainty. The archeologist and the philologist have a common scientific interest in old inscriptions upon old finds; the philologist is interested in the inscription as a linguistic document and a record of the life and activities of a people, the archeologist is interested in the find as an archeological document and a record of the cultural history of the race or of a region. The archeologist interprets and classifies his find—he may assign it to a particular time in the civilization of the race according to the type of art and industry and the degree of advancement it exhibits. But the inscription offers in this case a much more specific means for fixing the date and he accepts for it the date which the philologist determines, who tests it by the known facts of the language for its different periods.

About 2,300 ancient and medieval runic inscriptions have been discovered in the Scandinavian Countries.¹⁰ The inscriptions are for the most part preserved in the various National and Royal Museums and Libraries of the Scandinavian North. Of this number nearly 2,000 are Swedish,¹¹ but the oldest are Danish and Norwegian.

¹⁰And a considerable number in Great Britain.

¹¹On the age and distribution of the Swedish inscriptions the interested reader may be referred to Noreen's *Altischwedische Grammatik*, §6. The subject is discussed briefly and more popularly in Noreen's *De nordiska Språken*, 1903, pp. 5-10.

The great preponderance of Swedish inscriptions over the Danish and the Norwegian is significant for the place runic lore and the art of writing runes occupied among the Swedes at that time.¹² The inscriptions have been subjected to most careful study by eminent Scandinavian runologists, as Ludwig F. A. Wimmer in Denmark, the late Sophus Bugge in Norway and others.¹³ The latter of these is the author of a work in which all the runic inscriptions of Norway are given a minute philological examination, namely, "*Norges Indskrifter med de aeldre Runer*" and "*Norges Indskrifter med de yngre Runer*," Christiana, 1894-05.¹⁴

It is recognized by the scientific bodies who are the keepers of these museums and libraries that the runological and linguistic investigation furnishes the only definite criteria of date, and in the dating of an inscription they are guided accordingly.¹⁵

Among the settled facts of the science of runology is that of the three successive alphabets and the order in which they succeeded each other. The oldest series of twenty-four runes began early in the Viking age to be supplanted by a shorter alphabet of sixteen, which continued in use for about three centuries.¹⁶ The so-called "youngest" alphabet began to come into use in the tenth century, later wholly replacing the second runic alphabet, the evolution of the third runic alphabet of twenty-four characters out of the one of sixteen being prompted by the development of new sounds in the language. The evolution of these three runic alphabets was fairly uni-

¹²As to a later time see below.

¹³The chief authority on runes in Norway now, is Prof. Magnus Olson.

¹⁴Wimmer's great work is *De danske Runemindesmarker*, I-IV, Copenhagen, 1895-1908.

¹⁵There may of course often be other evidences also.

¹⁶The great work upon the subject is *Die Runenschrift*, revised edition, Berlin, 1887, by Professor Wimmer, the founder of the science; the basis of this work is his *Runernes Oprindelse og Udvikling i Norden*, Copenhagen, 1874.

form throughout the whole Scandinavian North.¹⁷ It is also to be borne in mind that this alphabet was in use for several centuries as the alphabet regularly employed in runic writing at the time, very much as we today employ our particular form of letters in all writing because generally used and generally understood.

With these facts recognized let us now turn to the inscription of the Kensington stone.

In general the transcription of the stone does not present any serious difficulty. There are some unusual characters, such as γ and \textcircled{T} in the first line,

\times in the second, and f in line four (fifth letter from the margin). Further, also, what appears to be a punctuated *m*-rune is used for *v* as in the initial character of the name Vinland. Also the runes for *k*, *p* and *u* are striking, but when these have been identified (see below), there can be little doubt as to what the characters of the inscription are intended to convey. The two transcriptions which have been made agree also in nearly all particulars. One of these was published on page fifteen in *Harpur's Weekly*, for October 9, 1909, the other by Mr. H. Gjessing in *Symra*, V. page 116. The differences, which are due to different reading of four of the characters, affect only the demonstrative for "this" before *sten* in line five on the face of the stone, and before the word *öh* in the last line of the continuation on the edge of the stone, and of the sixth and seventh characters in the sixth line on the front. Otherwise the lines are throughout the whole inscription perfectly clear and distinct, and the final vowel in the word before *öh* is a perfectly clear *o*-rune. Similarly with the last character before the word *sten* in line five; it is a little irregular but clearly has not had the cross-bar of the *e*-rune. The uncertainty in the

¹⁷Wimmer, *Die Runenschrift*, page 300, discusses this question.

sixth and seventh characters in line six would seem to be due to the fact that the original types ᚠ ᚡ have erroneously been written for ᚢ ᚣ , the word intended being *po* not *ok*. Discovering this the author has then tried to correct the former, the result being the hybrid forms which the inscription exhibits.

In the third runic series the rune ᚢ stood for the dental spirant. This rune occurs fourteen times in the inscription. Mr. Gjessing has correctly and consistently transcribed *dh*, but the transcription in *Harper's Weekly* cited has *dag* in line five, as also *opdagelse* in line two, while in lines six and eleven the same word is written with initial *dh*, (*dhag*). Inasmuch as *dh*, *th*, represented the spirant in Old Swedish, a sound which in runic script was written ᚢ , it becomes impossible to read anything but *dh* (and *th*) in this word as in the rest of the fourteen cases where the rune *thorn*, ᚢ , is used if we attempt to transcribe into the runic series of that time. I shall return to this rune below. For the moment then we shall consider the language on the basis of these transcriptions, writing *po* in line six and *dhenö* in lines five and twelve. The inscription would then read as follows:

8 göter ok 22 norrmän po opdhagelsefærdh frö Vinlandh
of vest vi hadhe læger vedh 2 skjær en dhags rise norr frö
dhenö sten vi var po fiskë en dhagh æptir vi kom hem fan 10 män
rödhe af blod og dhedh A. V. M. fraelse af illu.

har 10 män ve havet at se æptir vore skip 14 dhagh rise frö
dhenö öh ahr 1362.

One who is familiar with Old Swedish will find in these few sentences of fifty-six words spellings that do not represent the pronunciation of Swedish in the year 1362; adjective, noun and verb inflexional forms that were not

used at the time; words occurring which had not come into use and did not exist in fourteenth century Swedish, while other words are employed in meanings which they did not have at that time but only assumed several centuries later. I shall take the inflexions first.

1. INFLEXION.

vi var, vi kom, (vi) fan, (vi) har. In Swedish of the fourteenth century the first person plural of the present indicative still regularly had the ending *um*, the shorter forms being modern. On the inscriptions of that time the forms are therefore *vi varom, vi komom, vi funnum,* and *vi havom*.¹⁸ In middle Swedish the third person plural in *a* is often taken over into the first person, as *vi skula, Styffe II, 36, from 1396*; other occurrences are cited in Söderwall's *Hufvudepokerna af svenska Språkets Utbildning*, Lund, 1870, page 66. But the transference of the singular *var, fan, kom* and *har* to the plural is comparatively recent.¹⁹ The verb *hava* is in the third person singular, in the fourteenth century and long after regularly *haffver* (as *han haffver xi söner*).²⁰

vi kom hem fan 10 man rödhe af blodh og dhedh. The accusative plural of the adjective was in fourteenth century Swedish *-a*, hence here *rödha* and *dödha*. Later the ending becomes *æ*. Plural *mans* is of course also irregular.

vi hadhe. Should be *vi haffthom* or *haffdhom*. *vi hadhe* is modern (spelled *hade*, or in Norwegian *hadde* besides *havde*). The modern scribe has here employed the verb form of his own speech. *Hadde* occurs in a *Diplome* of 1453, but of course as third person singular.

fra dhenno sten. Should be *fra pæssom sten* (variant

¹⁸*um* or *om* according to the principles of vowel harmony and vowel balance.

¹⁹For verification of all these facts see Noreen cit., or Rydquist's *Svenska Språkets Lagar*, Vol. I.

²⁰cf. also *haver* in sentence cited and misunderstood in *Symra*, V, p. 211.

þœmma sten): later *fra* may also govern the accusative, which would give the form *fra þœanna sten*. *Dheno* (*dēno*) is an impossible form in any position.

at *se æptir vore skip*. *Se æptir* in Old Swedish, like Old Norse *sja eptir*, meaning 'look after, take care of' governed the dative case, which further had the ending *um* (*om*) for adjective and noun in the plural. The corresponding Old Swedish phrase then was *at se æptir varom skipum*. Except for the word *æptir* the phrase on the Kensington rune-stone is that of present speech. On *sja eptir* in Old Norse see Fritzner *Ordbog* III, page 256. But see below.

from *dheno öh*. Old Swedish *ö* is a feminine noun; the demonstrative pronoun for this was *þæesse* in Old Swedish, which again was *þæesse* in the dative and *þæsssa* or *þœanna* in the accusative case. The corresponding phrase was then in Old Swedish: *fra þœanna ö*.

2. THE MEANING OF CERTAIN WORDS.

po. *Pa*. which at that time was just forming from *upp-a* > *up-pa* could not be, and was not, used in this way. *uppa* meant 'upon' 'on the top of,' used with reference to locality, not with reference to an activity.²¹ One could say *pa jordhen*, 'on the ground,' but for 'on a fishing trip' or 'out a-fishing,' one said *a fiski* (cf in Old Norse *vera a fiski*, *sitja a fiski* (Fritzner under *fiski*). The use of *pa* (*paa*) with nouns denoting activity, as here, is modern, indeed (in Swedish) comparatively recent.

opdhagelse. This word Falk and Torp show to have come from Dutch *opdagen*, 'to come to light,' 'to dawn;'

²¹As correctly given by Gjessing in *Symra*. 1909, p. 121.

the modern meaning of the word is due to High German *entdecken*. This would require a date during the first period of, or subsequent to, German influence on the Swedish language, i. e. after the reformation. The author of the inscription, therefore, here uses a word which in 1362 was Dutch and not known till long after in Scandinavian speech. The conception 'journey of exploration' did not and could not exist in 1362.²² *Kanna landit* or *njosna*, Old Swedish *njusna*, was used but not in the sense of 'exploration.'

lager. This is a later loan from German. The Old Swedish word *læggher* meant: (1) burial place, (2) copulation.²³

rise. Old Swedish *resa* meant 'to raise,' being originally the same word as English 'raise.' *Resa*, 'journey,' is a late meaning-loan from German.

se eptir. The idea 'look after, take care of,' was in Old Swedish expressed by *tilse* (*tilsea*, *tilsia*). In Old Norse *sja eptir* and *sja til* were both used. See Rydquists' *Ordbok öfver svenska Språket*, pages 393 and 458, or Söderwall's *Ordbok öfver svenska Språket i Medeltiden*.

3. PRONUNCIATION AND SPELLING.

hadhe. At the time of the alleged date, the preterite singular form of *hafa*, 'to have,' was *hafpe* that is, the disappearance of *v* before consonant had not yet taken place. *Hadhe* or *hade* (see transcription, page 24) are impossible forms for the year 1362.

vedh should be *vidh* or *vidher*; *vedh* occurs in "*Jöns Buddes Bok*, a ms. of 1487-1491. The development of *i* to *e* in open syllable before *dh* which brought about the

²²On this see Juul Dieserud's excellent discussion in *Skandinaven* for May 4, 1910, in article entitled "*Holand og Kensingtonspögen*."

²³See Fritzner under *legr* and Rydquist under *læggher*.

change of *vidher* to *vedher* begins about 1400. Kock cites *wedh*, from older *vidh*, for the year 1620. A full discussion of the development of the *e* in Swedish may be found in Kock's *Svensk Ljudhistoria*, Vol. I, pp. 27-59 (1906). In the third line from the end of our inscription occurs the form *ve* which is merely a phonetic writing of the modern colloquial Swedish *ve* (= *ved* but *d* silent).

fro. The pronunciation was regularly with the vowel *a*. *Fra* and *fram* both occur as prepositions in Middle Swedish but never with *o* as in 'from,' last line of the inscription. On the identification of *fro* see below.

of. The vowel of the preposition was, and still is, *a*, hence the form here required is *af*. Comparison with the prefix *of*, meaning 'too,' is beside the point, for 'of' is an adverb; (as e. g. in *ofmykit* 'too much'), and was never used for 'of,' or 'from.' *Of vest* for 'far west' would in Old Swedish be as impossible as to say 'too west' in English today. On the identification of (the apparently archaic) *of* see below.

öh. The long or short *ö*-sound in Old Swedish was written with one vowel. When final, however, length was sometimes indicated by doubling, as *öö*, *döö*, etc., (see Kock, *Ljudhistoria*, II page 24), which was also in Middle Swedish the regular way of representing length. The writing of *h* after a vowel to indicate length (as in German) is due to modern German influence and is characteristic of the seventeenth century in certain works, as Georg Sternhjelm's *Musae Suetizantes* (1668): *åhren och dagarne lijda*.

ahr. We have the same error here as in *öh*.

dhag, *opdhagelse*, *dhedh*. It is evident from these words that the writer of the runes uses the character for *dh*, *th*, (see above page 13) not only for the cases where spirantal sound actually existed (as e. g., in *färdh* and *blodh*), but also where the language at that time had the stop sound *d*, as in *dhag* and *opdhagelse* and in the

first dental in *dhedh* (Old Swedish *dödh*). If we assume the date to be the fourteenth century, the inscription would be in the alphabet of that time, in which *d* had its own rune (see below), the spirants *dh* and *th* being written þ . Hence we should have to read *thag* and *opthagelse* (*th* = voiced as in 'then'), which was not the pronunciation of that time, nor had been since primitive Germanic times.

The word for 'day' was pronounced *dagh* and that for 'dead,' *dödh* (*th*). To have said *thagh*, or *thödh* would have been as impossible in the language of that time as it would be for us to say *thay* for 'day' or *then* for 'den' in English and expect to be understood.

To illustrate to the lay reader the language of the time and the consistent use of forms I cite the following passage from *Själinne Thröst*, 1370, manuscript 1430. The second selection—from *Margaret's Chronicle*, late 15th century MS. 1514-1525—will show the presence still of the inflexional features which are lacking in the Kensington inscription:

Christofforus thydhyr swa mykyt a wart maal som'then ther bar Christum', for thy han bar Christum a sinom armom j mænniskio like. Han bar oc Ihesu Christi nampn j sinom mun oc altidh j sino hiarte. Sancte Christoffer war först een hedh-nunge oc het Reprobus. Han war stærkir oc stoor oc wæl xii alna hæghir. En dagh stodh han oc thiænte for sinom herra, Canaan rikis konunge. Tha fiol i hans hugh, at han ey wilde thiæna vtan them mæktoghasta herra j wærlinne ware. Honom war sakt aff enom mæktoghum oc widhfræghum konung. Han kom til hans oc bödh honom sina thiænist. Konungen sagh han wara een froman man; togh han gladhlika oc gærna til sinn. Thet hænde thær æpte, at een koklare lekte een dagh for konuxins bordhe oc hafde diæfwulsins nampn j munne. Swa opta han diæwulin næmpde stygdis konungin widhir oc giordhe kors for sino anne. Thet mærkte Christofforus wæl oc spordhe konungen hwat han ther medh mente. Konungen swaradhe honom: 'Hwan then tidh, iak höro, etc.—(*Själinne Thröst*.)

Mædh Guz nadh haffwom wi tænkt at hær sammanskriwwa sancta Birgitta slægt, swa mykyt wi haffwom aff sannindamænn-

iskiom sport oc hört. Först är wetande, at sancta Birgitta modherfadher han hæt hær Bænkt laghman oc war thæs konungens brodher, som tha styrdhe i rikeno. Han tok sik til hustru ena ædhlasta oc fæghersta iomfru, som het Sighridh, wtfödh aff godhe slækt oc tho ey aff swa store oc mäktoghe som han, for huilket konungen hans brodher wart honom mykyt oblidher oc sænde honom en kiortel halffwan aff gyllene stykke oc halffwan aff wadhmal, til smälikhet oc mente thar mädh, at han haffde wanwört theras slækt. Än hær Bænkt læt thæn delen allan besækia mæd gul oc pærlom oc mædh dyrom stenom sætia, swa at han wart dyrare an thæn andre delen. Thær æpter læt konungen honom wnsighia oc fegdha honom oppa sit liff oc sænde honom bodh.—From Noreen's *Altschwedisches Lesebuch*, p. 104.

Let us now then turn to the question of runic forms.

There has come down to us a most remarkable literary document from the year 1300—a manuscript of the Scanian Law in runes. The manuscript is written in the runic alphabet of that time, “the third” or “youngest” series of twenty-four characters, as enlarged and developed out of the shorter alphabet of sixteen characters. This manuscript, called *Codex Runicus*, has been edited in a photolithographic reproduction by Prof. P. G. Thorsen, and an illustrative page was included in P. Hansen's *Dansk Literaturhistorie*.²⁴ The alphabet was printed on page two hundred fifty-six of Wimmer's *Die Runenschrift*, edition of 1887, and is herewith reproduced, opposite page, as No. 1. This alphabet is often called the punctuated runes, because new runes for *d*, *e*, *g*, *p*, are formed by punctuation of older runes for *t*, *i*, *k* and *b*. It is to be observed (1) that the rune for *e* is a punctuated stave; that is, the old rune for *i* is differentiated by punctuation to designate *e*, (2) that the runes for *k* and *g* have an ascending arm on the right, *g* being punctuated; (3) that the rune for *t* is a stave with only one arm; (4) that the rune for *v* is still the same as the one for *f*, though it is sometimes punctuated; (5) that there are distinct runes for *æ* and *a*; (6) that the rune for *ö* is the *o*-rune with

²⁴There is a fac-simile of a ballad fragment reproduced on page 69 of Thorsen's *Runernes Brug til Skrift*.

the two bars extending across to the right; and finally, (7) that the rune þ can only represent the two spirants.

The alphabet of the *Mariaklagan* (Lament of the Virgin) of the beginning of the 15th century is the same alphabet, the minor variations represent the tendencies that developed in the course of the 14th century.²⁵ One page of this early Middle Swedish poem in runes was photographed in Thorsen's *Runernes Brug til Skrift*, Copenhagen, 1877, page fifty-seven. The original is now preserved in the Royal Library at Stockholm. Its alphabet is here reproduced as No. 2. Mr. Gjessing, in an article previously referred to, has called attention (page 119) to the fact that the alphabet in the Rauland inscription, 1352, from Telemarken, Norway, is identical with that of the Scanian law.

Such is therefore the runic system then in use. The difference between this alphabet and that of the Kensington stone will be most clearly shown in a transliteration of the latter into an alphabet. See opposite page, No. 3.

The divergence between the third runic series (see alphabet 1 and 2 opposite) and the alphabet of the Kensington inscription is, as will be seen, very pronounced. The differences are, in fact, more numerous than the correspondences. The only runes that are identical are those for *b*, *f*, *h*, *i*, *l*, *m*, and *s*, while those for *e* and *o* are of the same general type. The remaining thirteen of the total of twenty-four are, however, different and most of them of a wholly different type, some of them clearly elaborated forms. The rune for *g* has an ascending arm on

²⁵The history of the former of these may be found in "Köbke's *Om Runerne i Norden*, 1890, pp. 80-81." The *Mariaklagan* is discussed in "Schück's *Svensk Literaturhistoria*," a fac-simile of one page also appears on page four of this work. It is further discussed in Alund *De nordiska Runorna*, pp. 75-77 and in Thorsen. Since the impression was expressed by Mr. Holand at the Chicago meeting that modern word forms occur in the Lament, I take occasion to say this is an error; the inflexional forms are the old ones.

1. The

1

a

B

þ

2. The

1

K

3. The

X

a, a.

B

þ

1. The alphabet of the Scanian Law:

1	B	-	†	†	†	†	*	†	†	†	†	†	†
a	b	c	d	e	f, v.	g	h, gh.	i, j	k	l	m	n	c
B	B	-	R	†	†	†	†	-	†	†	†	†	†
þ	q	r	s	t, th, dh.	u, w.	x	y	z	a	ö			

2. The alphabet of the Lament of the Virgin:

1	B	-	†	†	†	†	*	†	†	†	†	†	†
K	-	R	†	†	†	†	†	-	†	†	†	†	†


3. The alphabet of the Kensington Inscription

x	B	þ	†	†	†	*	†	†	†	†	†	†	†
a, æ	b	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o, ð,
B	R	†	†	†	†	†	†	†					
þ	r	s	t	u, y.	v	z.							

the left of the stave in place of the right; a similar change occurs in the rune for *v*, in which one of the arms has been transferred to the left producing a stave with an ascending arm on each side. To differentiate from the *m*-rune the rune for *v* is punctuated. The runes for *a*, *j*, *k*, *u*, *y*, *æ* and *ö* exhibit still greater departures; in fact, most of them are evidently from a different runic alphabet, and some suggest modern compromises with the corresponding Latin letters.²⁶ It is to be observed especially that the dental series is represented only by two runes, one for *d*. (see below) and one for *t*.

The question thus arises: Where does this alphabet come from? Was it used anywhere and at any time for purposes of writing? The answer is yes.

Now it is a well-known fact that the knowledge of runes did not cease with the Old Scandinavian period, and it has long ago been established that the use of runes was not, in Sweden and Denmark, limited to inscriptions on monuments. We need only to cite the evidence of the runic manuscript of the Scanian law, and the fact that occasionally verses in runic script appear in the old ballads, which were not committed to writing before the middle of the sixteenth century. See Thorsen: *Runernes Brug til Skrift udenfor det monumentale*, page sixty-nine, where two lines in runes from a popular ballad are reproduced. According to Grundtvig, runes appear in twenty-seven of the Old Danish ballads. An alphabet, *a* to *v*, representing the runes of the ballad is reproduced in Thorsen's volume, page 71; the date is the middle of the sixteenth century. Its runes are, however, in almost complete agreement with that of the third or youngest Old Scandinavian series.²⁷ While these runes were also else-

²⁶So  is the letter *ö* with the *e*-rune set inside the circle.

²⁷The variations represent the transition to the later alphabet; see below. See also the ballad fragment in runes in Ålund. page 75, or in Thorsen.

where published in modern times, as by Ole Worm, we cannot, however, find here the literary source of the Kensington runes, for these are a different alphabet. It may be pointed out, however, that runes are mentioned in Danish ballads, in such a way as to show knowledge of the formation of runes in Denmark and their correct interpretation to a very late period. See note 71 in Thorsen's volume, citing *Gamle jyske Folkeviser*, No. twenty, "Den elskedes Död." Thorsen concludes: "Den Dag i Dag leve saaledes "Runerne" endnu gjennem Folkevisen,—den er nedarvet umiddelbart og vilkaarlig fastholdt, og Kilden har været saa dyb, at den i Tidernes Løb har kunnet bevare og forklare." In subsequent pages of his work, Thorsen offers an abundance of evidence of the use of runes in Denmark in modern times.²⁸

This we also find to be the condition in Sweden; and what is more, the preservation of the knowledge of runes and skill in the use of runes here received royal encouragement, and we have every reason to believe that the practice of writing runes was not uncommon among the common man in Sweden until the last century. On July fifth, 1684, Charles XI decreed upon the recommendation of the College of Antiquities: att de, som visade största skicklighet att skära runstafvor och att undervisa om deras bruk, och sålunda förmå allmogen att till allmänt begagnande återtaga de samma, skulle åtnjuta friket från utskrifning och skatt till kongl, majestät och kronan."²⁹ (Thorsen, note 69). During Gustavus Adolphus's Polish War, in 1628, Count Jakob de la Gardie used runic ciphers in secret orders sent from Riga to the commanding officer

²⁸Further evidence in Ålund, *De nordiska Runorna*, p. 77, who also cites similar evidence for Iceland, as a rune-inscribed gravestone for 1681.

²⁹That those who showed greatest skill in cutting runestaves and in instruction how to use them and thus induce the common man to a general use of runes should be exempt from military duty and from taxes to his royal majesty and the crown.

at Bohus.³⁰ We further learn that several of these letters have been preserved (see Köbke, page eighty-two).

During the seventeenth century there took place a revival of interest in runes in Sweden, and runes came again to be used in inscriptions on monuments and otherwise.³¹ The influence of Bureus through his *Runakänslones Lärospån* (1599) and his various A B C books on runes (1611, 1612, 1624) must have been considerable. Modern rune-inscribed gravestones exist in Sweden, among them three of recent date near Stockholm, one of the year 1861; or, to name earlier ones, at Upsala over the grave of Verelius and in Helsingland over Rev. O. J. Broman's grave. And runes have been extensively used for other inscriptions.³² Runes have in the modern period often been used by private persons as private marks of ownership in inscriptions on spoons, chests, chairs and other objects of use, further on window frames, over doors, on a stone in the foundation of houses, etc., etc. In *Land og Folk* for 1876, pp. 24 and 26-28, N. G. Bruzelius published a photographic copy of an account of such a one as still found and used in Borreby in Ingelstad County in Skaane until after 1820.³³ These things will serve sufficiently to point out the extent to which runes have been cultivated and actually used in modern Sweden even down to recent times.³⁴ So that it need not surprise us if now we shall offer to point out the precise modern source of the Kensington runic letters, for if we can identify the alphabet in use on it, the above survey should have dispelled any skepticism which we, here in America at the present time, might not unnaturally have as to the likelihood of any immigrant from Sweden having suffi-

³⁰Liljegren, *Runlära*, 213.

³¹Erik Ålund, *De nordiska Runorna*, p. 78.

³²Ålund records several cases, p. 79.

³³As late as 1840 there was published in Upsala a work entitled: *Svenskt og Runskt Calendarium in till åhret 1840 samt Bekrifning öfver Runstafven*.

³⁴See Thorsen, p. 80.

cient knowledge of runes to be able to produce an inscription here in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

According to Bureus a runic alphabet was in use in Dalarna in the sixteenth century, a statement which is verified by a runic inscription in the Älfdal dialect found on a chair from Lillhärddal now preserved in the historical museum of the Swedish Government.³⁵ This inscription was dated about the year 1600 by Sophus Bugge. Another runic inscription which is found over the door of an old garret room in the village of Orsebeck in Orsa Parish in Dalarna, is of the same origin. It is dated 1635, and the text states that 'Erik Olson built this garret.'³⁶ Further, the Botanist Linné in his description of Dalarna, speaks of the fact that runes were in use in Älfdal then; i. e., in the eighteenth century (1734), a fact which finds verification in Ihre and Götlin's work on *De runarum in Svecia occasu*, 1773, pp. 20-21, according to which the people of Älfdal made use of a runic series with certain new characters for personal messages and for other personal records.³⁶ The runic alphabet contained in Ihre and Götlin was reproduced by Thorsen, page a hundred three, and new forms later brought to light have been published.

From it we observe the significant facts that the rune for *a* = **X** or **✕**, and *d* = **þ** both of which we find on the Kensington stone; it has certain developed forms as **l** and **ʃ** for *j*, **⊙** for *o*, and **ö** for *ö*.³⁷ It



further contains the runic letter **k** for *k*, which in the Kensington inscription is cut with the arms to the left, the same kind of modification appearing in the rune for *u*, which is further characterized by a cross-bar. Especially

³⁵These facts from Älund.


³⁶Thorsen's statement is as follows: *Etiam hodierno die in suprema Dalecarliae regione ab incolis parœciæ Elfdalen Runae retinentur.*

³⁷See Dalarna inscriptions of recent times in *Fornvännen*, 1906.

significant is the identification of the troublesome characters for *a*, *d*, *j*, and *ö*. The alphabet is in some respects different; in the form as published in J. C. Liljegren's *Runlära*, Stockholm, 1832, appendix, it is already somewhat simpler and approaches the Kensington forms. The two are the same alphabet, the only important differences being clearly due to the scribe himself.³⁸

A most significant feature of the correspondence between the two is the symbol employed in them for *d*. We saw that in the old series the spirant *th* and *dh* was represented by  and *d* by . Thus we are forced to assume on the part of a scribe of the fourteenth century ignorance of the runic letter for *d* used in his time, which is not conceivable, or ignorance of the pronunciation of the time, which is impossible, or else *that the writing of thag for dag, and theth for dödh must originate with a modern scribe who is ignorant of the pronunciation of the time, as well as of the runic system.*


Now, however, another explanation at once suggests itself. In the Dalecarlian runic alphabet there is no rune for the spirants *dh* and *th* for these sounds disappeared from the language in the eighteenth century and no longer exist in Swedish except locally and sporadically. But this modern runic alphabet came to employ the rune

 for *d*, owing to its greater similarity to D.³⁹

Thus the dental spirants do not exist in our inscription. We therefore arrive at the following new transcription of what the author of the Kensington runes had in mind when he wrote:

8 göter ok 22 norrmen po opdagelsefærd fro vinland of vest vi hade læger ved 2 skjær en dags rise norr fro deno sten vi var

³⁸Or to local variation, and in the case of the runes for *e*, *o*, *l*, literary influence (ballad books, rune-lists, modern readers with runes in.)

³⁹On the survival of the rune  see Köbke, pp. 83-84.

po fiske en dagh æptir vi kom hem fan 10 man röde of blod og ded. A. V. M. fraelse af illu.

har 10 mans ve havet at se æptir vore skip 14 dagh rise from deno öh, ahr 1362."

Our inscription is therefore the work of one who was familiar with the Dalecarlian runes, he being either a native of that region, or having gotten his knowledge of them from some literary source. The latter would have been a comparatively simple matter, for these modern runes have been printed several times, e. g. as late as 1832 in the appendix of Liljegren's *Runlära*. As the language indicates (see below) the author was probably an immigrant from Dalarne or that region of Sweden, hence it is not necessary to assume literary source for his Dalecarlian alphabet. However, there occur runes that are not evidenced in Dalecarlian inscriptions, as the runes for *o*, *n* and *t*.⁴⁰ But these three runes occur in an interpreted inscription printed on page forty-five of the History of the Language of Dalarne referred to below, page thirty and a native of Dalarne may easily have known this work. Or he may have learned them through such a work as *Runelista, eller Konsten att Läsa Runor, Folkskolorna och Folket Meddelad*, by C. Joh. Ljungström, published in 1866 and in a second edition in 1875. Of the second edition of this publication 2,000 copies were purchased by the Government and distributed to the teachers of the public schools in Sweden. It is not even necessary to assume literary source of the non-Dalecarlian runes. Observing the different characters upon some rune-inscribed gravestone⁴¹ the one familiar with Dalecarlian runes would naturally have taken occasion to inquire of someone the meaning of these (to him new) runes and thus come into possession of that knowledge.

Our investigation of the runic characters has, then, lead us to a particular Swedish province among the people

⁴⁰See above page 19.

⁴¹As near Stockholm, at Upsala, in Helsingland and elsewhere.

of which the knowledge of runes has been preserved down to recent times.

The correctness of these results now finds most convincing collateral proof in the peculiar language of the inscription. While the word forms are modern, the narrative is neither in literary Swedish, nor chiefly Swedish mixed with Danish or Norwegian and English words, as hitherto supposed.⁴² It becomes quite unnecessary to assume such a mixture. *The inscription is written in Swedish dialect. The forms and words and meanings and all point to the dialect of the locality where the peculiar runic alphabet employed has already directed us.* (See now the transcription and the table of old and modern forms on ~~the opposite page.~~²⁵) The inflexional forms suggest rather Norwegian *vi har, vi var, vi kom, vi fandt*, than Swedish *vi hafva, vi voro, vi kommo, vi funno*. But there is no such difference, of course, in the dialectal speech of the contiguous dialects of the two countries. Here the language merges under the shorter levelled forms in the verb. Furthermore, large portions of western Sweden, viz: Härjedalen, part of Dalarne, Jämtland and Bohuslän were originally Norwegian territory, ethnically and politically, and is today linguistically more Norwegian than Swedish.* The shorter verb forms of the Kensington inscription are the regular Dalarne forms: *vi fan, vi kom, vi har, vi had*, while the preterite of *var* is *va*. (See Noreen's *Dalbymålets Ljud ock Böjningslära*, Stockholm, 1879, pp. 54, 56, 58 and 61.) Further, the preposition *fra* is here *fro*, and *up* = *op*; the literary Swedish demonstrative *denne* or *denna* (Nom. *denne*) is here *dene* with one *n* (See Noreen, *Dalbymålet*, page 53). The form *ded* is simply the

⁴²*From. ded* and *mans* have been supposed to be English; the final rune in *illu*, not having been identified, one writes as English *ill: läger. hem* and *göter* e. g. are literary Swedish, while *rise* is again by one writer regarded as the Danish *reise* with English spelling.

*The districts named became Swedish territory politically in the seventeenth century.

dialectal *ded* or *dæd*, according to the change of *ö* to *e* which has taken place in Orsa and the neighboring part of Mora in Dalarne. (Noreen's *Inledning til Dalmålet*, pp. 8-9.

THE DIALECT OF THE KENSINGTON INSCRIPTION.

[8 Göter ok 22 Norrmen po opdagelsefærd fro Vinland of vest. Vi hade læger ved 2 skjær en dags rise norr fro deno sten. Vi var po fiske en dagh; æptir vi kom hem fan 10 man röde af blod og ded. A. V. M. fraelse af illu.

Har 10 mans ve havet at se æptir vore skip 14 dagh rise from deno öh ahr 1362.

8 Swedes and 22 Norwegians on an exploring expedition from Vinland west. We camped over night by 2 skerries a day's journey north from this stone. We were a-fishing one day; after we came home found 10 men red with blood and dead. A. V. M. Save from evil.

Have 10 men by the ocean to look after our ships 14 days' journey from this island. Year 1362.]

	The Modern Forms. Kensington In- scription.	Dialect of Dalarne, Sweden.	The Old Forms of 1362.
vi hade	vi hade	(had)	vi haffdhom
vi kom	vi kom		vi komom
(vi) fan	vi fan		vi funnum
(vi) var	vi var	(va)	vi varom
(vi) har	vi har		vi havom
se æptir vore skip	se ætter vor(e)	skip	se æptir varom skipum
fro deno sten	fro dene sten		fra thæssom sten
from deno öh	fro dene ö		fra thæssi ö
en dags rise	en dags resa		en daghs færth
po fiske	po fiske		a fiski
ded	dēd (Orsa locality)		dödh
fraelse af illu	fræls fro illu ⁴³		fræls fra illu
op	op		up
of	o' (= of), ov		af
fro	fro		fra, (fran)

The change of *ö* to *e* or *æ* is one of the striking vocalic characteristics of these regions, thus *dör* becomes *der* in

⁴³See discussion, page 29.

Älfros in Härjedalen, *hort* and *kört* become *hært* and *kjært* in Jämtland (see *Svenska Landsmälen*, 59, page 72), *dö* = *dæ* in Älfdal and *dæia* in Mora. Here also we find the explanation of the vowel in the preposition *of* which looks old, but which is the regular form in many Swedish dialects today, the vowel being very slightly more closed than in the corresponding English preposition. Phonetically it would be written *äv*, our scribe not finding it necessary to use two runes for so closely similar sounds wrote *of* a principal which he also followed in *po*⁴⁴ and *fro*, where we have the same vowel sound.⁴⁵ The preposition 'from' is merely the dialectal *fro*,⁴⁶ but having observed the Middle Swedish preposition *fram* in some old book the author thought he would give it an ancient look by adding an *m*, the result being a hybrid which is equally impossible for both Old Swedish and the modern language. The plural *man* in the second part of the inscription is clearly the colloquial use of a singular with numerals with collective function, as *vi har ti man*, which is the only way a Swede would say it; the *s* can only be accounted for as an error. The word *opdagelse*, which is Norwegian (Swedish *upptäckt*) is to be explained as an example of language mixture in the Douglas County settlement.*

Finally, the expression *fraelse af illu*, which has seemed so troublesome is taken from the Lord's Prayer in the

⁴⁴The reader may be referred to Noreen's *Fryksdalsmålet's Ljudlära*, Upsala, 1877, and *Ordlista öfver Dalmålet*.

⁴⁵The dialectal phonology also furnishes us the key for the use of the same rune for *a* and *æ* but there is hardly any need of going into that here.

⁴⁶While it is possible that *from* in the inscription is the English 'from,' the author's cleverness in other respects precludes our attributing to him such a piece of stupidity.

*Also see above page twenty-seven. Barring Bohuslän the territory is today linguistically North Scandinavian, that is Norwegian, as opposed to South Scandinavian (Denmark and southern Sweden), East Scandinavian (Gothland and other nearby Isles) and Middle Scandinavian (Swedish proper).

dialect. In *Historia Lingvæ Dalecarbiæ*, Uppsaliæ, 1773, page seven, the Lord's Prayer is given in its dialect form for Älfdal, Mora and Orsa. In the first of these the words are *loss fra vondu*, in Orsa they are *fræls fra vandu*, in the Mora dialect *fæls fra illu*.⁴⁷

The final vowel *o* in the demonstrative *deno*, which occurs twice in the inscription, is merely an effort at giving an old look to the word. Had the author observed more intelligently the old forms of the books he had he would not have committed such an error as to use a neuter demonstrative form with a masculine (*sten*) and a feminine (*öb*) noun.

The dialectal forms and words of the inscription then point to the region of Orsa and Mora as the locality from which the author of the Kensington inscription immigrated. At the same time it may be added that the contracted verb forms and the phonological characteristics the inscription exhibits are more or less common also in the neighboring districts, north, east and south; yet the author must have come from somewhere near Mora or Orsa. But this at the same time gives us a definite period *a quo* for the inscription. The old dative endings *-um* in noun and adjective remained in these and other Dalarne regions until the nineteenth century. This is the last fact therefore that the linguistic analysis yields. However, the date of the inscription may safely be set down as nearer the end of the century than the beginning, probably between 1880 and 1890.

So far we have been dealing with the tangible concrete facts of the case. The moment we turn aside from the inscription itself and ask ourselves the question: then how could the stone have gotten there? what is its origin?

⁴⁷The use of the preposition *of* instead of *fra* is clearly an antiquarian effort.

we are on very uncertain ground. All sorts of conjecture is possible. We are then dealing with the puzzle in the situation. If one is weak on the side of facts, but has a strong imagination, as some who have discussed this question seem to have, one can build up a form of belief on the basis of things imagined. One may even, it seems, believe that the inscription is authentic in spite of the irrefutable facts of the case to the contrary. But these phases of the question that engage the imagination have no scientific value to the archeologist or the philologist. All that he as a scientist is concerned with are the facts which prove or disprove the authenticity of the inscription. For him the stone, proved a forgery, has no further interest.

The record of archeological fakes is a long one. Here in America, too, the scientist has more than once had forced upon him the fact of the fraudulent character of reported archeological finds. Western Minnesota, the Red River Valley especially, appears to have been a fertile field for the exploitation of similar frauds. The petrified man of Warren, as being evidently the petrified remains of a European white from pre-Columbian times, netted a handsome profit to the two owners, until they became involved in litigation, when it was revealed though sworn testimony in court that the "petrified man" had been manufactured by a Lucas O'Brien of Crookston, Minnesota.⁴⁵

The Elbow Lake rune stone was much heard of a year ago; its runes were so much decayed with the age of the stone that they could no longer be read. It was evidently of the same age of the Kensington stone it was said. But a geological examination of the stone itself proved it to be petrified clay of recent date. Now a philological test of the Kensington inscription has proved, as we hope for all time, that it, too, belongs in a class with the two above finds.

⁴⁵Who removed to California in 1905.

But the question is again asked, What is the origin of the Kensington stone?—for the veracity of the finder is not doubted. There are witnesses to the fact that it was found (see *Symra*, VII pp. 180-84) and the weathering of the stone shows age. All of that, however, was also true of the Elbow Lake stone—it was badly weathered, there was no doubt that it was found and the finder was honest enough.

To get at the exact facts in the case of the Kensington riddle is no longer an easy matter. The accounts heard and read are already assuming a legendary character and new accretions appear with every new account. It was first reported that the asp under discussion was a small one; later we are told it was a "large tree" (*Harper's Weekly* article cited above), which to begin with was a very significant discrepancy. Then there appear exact figures; some believed the tree was "over five inches thick," others said "seven or eight," and again that it was "eight to ten inches." Then in a published account it was set down as an established fact that the asp was "eight to ten inches thick." Again we are told that the age of the tree had been definitely ascertained to be "twenty-eight years," but in spite of the fact that here there was evidently an established fact, the tree continued to age with most remarkable rapidity. In an article written a few months later we are told that the tree was "forty years old" and those whose attitude was that of wanting to be convinced of the authenticity of the find began to doubt. Further, it was said, that locality had not been settled before 1873, hence, if the tree were forty years old, it and the stone must have been there fifteen years before the first settler arrived. But if the tree were twenty-eight years old the question assumes a somewhat different aspect, especially when we learn that that locality began to be settled in 1865, and had been visited by white men long before that.

Then we are told that the finder evinced no interest in the stone, that he presented it to the one who later appears as its owner; but again, we learn that the price was \$7.50 or \$10.00, which surely was no large sum. But this, too, is evidently legendary, for now we learn that just where the proprietary right in the stone lies is disputed. Finally the statement that the stone had been purchased by the Minnesota Historical Society for \$1.000 has been officially repudiated,⁴⁹ etc., etc.⁵⁰

With a view to examining the stone again and making my own transcription of the runes, and also to visit the locality where the stone was found. I went to St. Paul and out to Kensington April 14-19th. In St. Paul I was especially urged by a member of the Historical Society to see Mr. Samuel Olson⁵¹ as one who was disinterested, knew the facts, and was in every way level headed and intelligent. I was also, for similar reasons, asked to see Mr. Peterson.⁵² I did so. From St. Paul I took with me a witness and at Kensington I engaged Mr. Peterson to take us out to Mr. Ohman's farm. We spoke with Ohman, visited the site of the find and saw something of its environs. I had previously written Mr. Ohman and received in answer a hearty invitation⁵³ to come. When we arrived he received us cordially. Mr. Ohman spoke Swedish dialect, he told me he immigrated from North Helsingland in 1879. His language also suggested that in the locality Swedish and Norwegian have been contaminated somewhat, as indeed could not help being the result in a community where the two nationalities are represented in considerable numbers and about equally. Mr. Peterson did not discuss the subject very freely,

⁴⁹See *Amerika*, Febr., 1910.

⁵⁰That the language of the inscription is in perfect accord with that of the 14th century (*Harper's Weekly*, cit.) is also a part of the legend.

⁵¹See above, page 5.

⁵²Proprietor of one of the local livery stables.

⁵³The letter was written in good Swedish, both as to spelling and choice of words. I later learn that the letter was not written by Mr. Ohman, but probably by his son.

seemed not to wish to commit himself on specific points, probably because he did not remember clearly enough. He told us, however, of various local rumors. Mr. Ohman impressed me as honest; he was very much interested in the stone and in learning what I thought of the inscription. He had seen the *Forsa Ring* inscription in Helsingland before immigrating, but he disclaimed emphatically any ability at cutting runes. He pointed out a tree which he said was about the size of the one under which he had found the stone. It might have been seven or eight inches thick and stood in a cluster with other chiefly young trees, most of it being very young shoots of asp.⁵⁴

Later I had a visit of about four hours with Mr. Samuel Olson, the jeweler. He was one of the men who, the next spring, excavated to a depth of six or seven feet where the stone was found, believing that there might be a treasure hidden there. There was no other stone of any kind in the ground below (see above page four). I learn further that the stump was preserved for some time; Mr. Olson saw it, examined it, remembers it distinctly as it lay there sawed off to a length of about twelve inches. Mr. Olson says regarding its thickness it was "about four inches"; and when I asked him to think it over very carefully and to measure off four inches on a table across the room and mentally make a comparison with the stump he did so, finally concluding: "*it wasn't more than four inches anyway.*" Now a rapid-growing asp may shoot up to a thickness of four inches in eight or ten years, I am told by those who are supposed to know, and it should under no circumstances require more than twelve or thirteen.⁵⁵ But, as that

⁵⁴According to the "legend," however, the stone was found on a hill heavily covered with tall timber (a veritable primeval forest we see.)

⁵⁵A friend of mine has a poplar thirty years old that is ten inches thick. In the case of a *hickory* forty-eight years old the thickness was found to be 10½ inches.

region was settled in 1865, the tree would seem to be later by twenty years, at least, than the first settling of the locality. In fact, the tree may have grown up since (been planted as late as) 1889.

Then there is the legend of the skerries and the island. Here, it is said, are convincing proofs of the truth of the narrative, for the skerries have been found and that part of Minnesota was under water not many centuries since!⁵⁶ This sounds strange indeed to the layman who has at least a little knowledge of the physiography of that region. What does one with expert knowledge say to such a seemingly strange tale? "That it would be absolutely safe to put 1,000 years back as the nearest possible date when that part of Minnesota was under water to such an extent that those hills would have been islands."⁵⁷ We can imagine the Kensington runemaster's satisfaction with his own shrewdness at hitting upon this external corroboration of the date he chose to affix to his narrative. It has perhaps never occurred to the Committee that our practical joker may have chosen to designate a hill in a forest by the term 'island,' which is neither ancient nor rare.

But he was fertile in invention, our Minnesota runemaster! There are a score of lakes in that part of Minnesota to the north of Kensington. To say that his imaginary explorers had stopped by two skerries a day's march north was another capital idea; it added a touch of realism that should be conclusive. And it was a perfectly safe thing to say, for skerries there undoubtedly are a-plenty in all that lake region. If the author of the inscription is still living we can imagine how he is enjoying the spectacle of the search for the skerries. And now the skerries have been found also, somewhere on the shores of Pelican Lake! However, only two of these lakes have been exam-

⁵⁶So several advocates of the stone.

⁵⁷His further statement is "Western Minnesota was under water once but that was thousands of years ago." The answer comes from a present member of the faculty of one of our largest universities.

ined, I am told. But, there are more than twenty other lakes to the north of Kensington in Douglas, Ottertail and Becker counties.⁵⁸ I would suggest that the shores of all these lakes be most carefully examined; perhaps those discovered are the wrong skerries.

The discovery of these skerries, however, involves the rune-master in a very serious difficulty. Pelican Lake, I learn, is about sixty-five miles north from the site of the rune stone. Now that was no doubt a good march to make in one day for a company of twenty men through a region enchained with lakes. But ten of their number had just been killed by Indians, and they would of course have fled with all possible speed. But if sixty-five miles registers their capacity for the day, how reach the Atlantic Ocean in fourteen days?⁵⁹—and in that time and under those circumstances? And they were exploring the country, too!

The local rumors at Kensington and the country about are many. It may, first of all, be said that few seem to take it seriously, but they vary in the explanations offered. Some hold the view that the stone was brought from elsewhere recently and placed in under the roots of the tree, or that the stone and tree were planted at the same time. The stone being fitted in between the roots as the tree was planted, the roots in their growth would of course have followed its damp surface. Some go as far as to name Mr. Ohman himself as the one who planted the stone there (or the stone and the tree). But the tree being so young it is not necessary to assume that the tree was planted, and Ohman denies planting the tree.

Again it is learned that a Dane of some education who had come to America and to Hudson Bay in one of the

⁵⁸Lakes Carlos, Ida, Christina and Milton, in Douglas County; Battle, Otter Tail, Rush, Dead, Lida, Lizzie, Pine and Pelican in Otter Tail County; Height-of-Land, Shell, Flat, Cotton, Round, Many Point, Elbow, White Earth, etc., in Becker.

⁵⁹For the inscription *says* 14 days; To read forty-one would be convenient, but the inscription *says* 14.

Hudson Fur Company's trading vessels visited that region about eighty years ago. *He* may be the author of the fraud. But the Swedish dialectal character of the words preclude that unless he brought the stone, or worked in collusion with a Swede. Now we know that Norwegians and Swedes occasionally came across in Dutch or English ships before the period of Scandinavian settlement—even in the eighteenth century. Further, we also learn that the Hudson Bay Company had its chief station at York Factory as late as 1859:⁶⁰ every summer ships came from London, by York boats—the journey was made along the Nelson River to Lake Winnepeg and down the Red River.⁶¹ Early in the last century, we learn, French and English explorers came down the Red River as far as Lake Ottertail or about forty-two miles north of Kensington. At a later time, but before the settling of Douglas County, there was considerable shipping carried on over the Red River as the present settlers there, who came there as early as 1865, are said to remember. It is quite within the bounds of the possible that some Swede, a member of some of these early parties, could have fashioned the stone and cut the runes, provided he possessed the necessary skill at masonry.⁶²

But the knowledge of runes and considerable ability at chiselling in stone were certainly among the accomplishments of the author of the inscription. Not everybody who knows runes could make them so perfect. Those who have believed in the authenticity of the rune-stone have said it is well-nigh impossible that any of the early settlers there, or still earlier adventurers, should have

⁶⁰The Norwegian sailor, Jens Munk was, it seems, at York Factory on his visit to America in 1619.

⁶¹This fact is made the basis of an elaborate argument for the genuineness of the stone in *The Norwegian-American*, Northfield, Oct., 1909.

⁶²More than one person, upon seeing the larger photograph of the stone have said to me: "That isn't old, the lines are too perfect; it looks as if it were the work of a skilled mason."

possessed the requisite knowledge of runes. Now as a matter of scientific fact the lateness of the runes and the modern character of the language does prove that some sailor, traveller, adventurer, settler or someone has chiselled those runes in recent times. But even as circumstantial evidence the argument is already materially weakened by the fact that it has been shown that the practice of writing with runes survived in a portion of Sweden down to recent times. But it falls completely if it can be shown that at least two men versed in runes are associated with that locality.⁶³ And this fact is the last discovery.

One of these men was a certain Svend Fogelblad, a Swede, one time minister, examined from Upsala University. Becoming addicted to drink, he was expelled from the State Church; then he emigrated to America. He wandered west to Douglas County and was a well-known character around there for many years. He died in 1895, at the age of seventy. I have spoken with those who knew him and I have indirect reports from others who were acquainted with him. They tell me he knew runes, had books on runes and used to cut runes in various places with evident pride over the art. Asked about him Mr. Ohman said, yes, he had known him, he had been a guest at his house for a week once. From other sources I learn that he made his home with a man by the name of Andrew Anderson, a brother-in-law of Olof Ohman, and who owns a farm at Hoffman, Minnesota. Some people at Kensington associate Ohman and Fogelblad together in the manufacture of the rune-stone. This rumor almost takes the form of conviction in the country east of Elbow Lake, where also Fogelblad was well-known and where Ohman once worked. Fogelblad was something of an adventurer and wandered about quite a bit and, as one might expect, had stored up a fund of strange narratives with which he would entertain people. One of these was *that*

⁶³How many others we do not know.

Scandinavian explorers had visited that region hundreds of years ago. This is certainly interesting in connection with the narrative of the Kensington inscription. And it is as certainly significant.* The other citizen of that locality who, it is testified, was versed in runes is none less than Olof Ohman himself. I found no evidence of the knowledge of this among the people of Kensington. At Kensington they say Ohman chiselled the runes but Fogelblad must have prepared the copy of the inscription for him to follow. Ohman came to Minnesota in June, 1879. Before his marriage he worked for farmers in various parts of Douglas County.⁶⁴ For three years he then worked mostly around Brandon⁶⁵ in the same county. In 1884 he returned to Helsingland, Sweden; coming back to America in 1886, he went to Portland, Oregon, where he remained six months. Thereupon he returned to Douglas County living for a time at Hoffman, the nearest station west of Kensington, the same year moving to Oscar Lake in the same county. In 1889, having married, he bought and moved to his present home near Kensington.

There has been current for some time a rumor at Elbow Lake of a Swede who worked near there thirty years ago who was versed in runes and used to cut runes into window casings and other objects and derived much amusement from being able to puzzle people with these strange characters. It had not been possible to verify it, or learn who this man was. A friend of mine, in whose ability to ferret it out I had confidence and who is ac-

⁶⁴And the neighboring county to the west.

⁶⁵About fifteen miles north of Mr. Ohman's present home.

*Since the above was in print I have learned that Andrew Anderson, like Fogelblad, was a student at Upsala University, but left the University in 1882, emigrated to America and settled at Hoffman. He is said to be well versed in Greek and Latin, in history and Swedish literature and like Fogelblad, possessed considerable knowledge of runes. Anderson brought with him to America a copy of Fryxell's work on runes, and found in the study of runes his favorite pastime. The latter fact I learn from a sketch of Anderson in *Amerika* for May 27, 1910.

quainted at Elbow Lake, offered to investigate the rumor for me. That was on April seventeenth. On April twenty-fifth I received the following letter:

Concerning Mr. Ohman, on whose farm the Kensington Rune Stone was found, and who was himself the finder, there seems to be a variety of opinions as to his ability or proficiency to be the author thereof. He himself disclaims any proficiency along that line. His word is generally regarded as good by most of his neighbors and acquaintances; and his whole bearing and conduct, according to one who lately called upon him, stamp him as one who seemingly would take no delight in maintaining as a truth something which he knew to be a positive falsehood. There is, however, another opinion held by many, whom are some of his oldest acquaintances in Douglas county. According to report he was a stone mason, who in his leisure moments would write "rune" figures on the window casings, granary walls, etc. When, therefore, the Kensington Rune Stone was later found on his farm, many doubted its authenticity on account of the fact mentioned above. Further, a grammar of "rune skrift" was found in Mr. Ohman's possession. This I know on positive authority. Questioned as to where he had it from, he stated it was given him by a minister. It seems that this minister, who it is reported, had lost caste, sojourned with Ohman for quite a while, and they were together a good deal in the various places where Mr. Ohman had work to do. This was (a) 35-40 years ago. The minister's name has been found to be Fogelblad.

The grammar, which contained a runic alphabet is now in the possession of Mr. H. H. Winchell, State Geologist and Curator of the Minnesota State Museum. He showed me the copy. In Fogelblad we recognized our defrocked minister of Kensington and Elbow Lake. Ohman, it has been said, says he has no knowledge of runes. To me he disclaimed "the ability to make such an inscription." But Ohman also denies having made the inscription. He volunteered a denial of that, evidently thinking that I knew that the suspicion is directed against him and his denial was very emphatic.⁶⁶ But the latter does not

⁶⁶I had not indicated in any way that I knew this suspicion. There were, however, two other persons present and one of these he knew had knowledge of it.

necessarily imply much, for such an emotional reaction would be about the same in the case of a man who is innocent and knows himself suspected as in the case of one who is guilty but is trying to conceal his guilt. And finally, relative to Mr. Fogelblad, Ohman denies emphatically that Fogelblad could have done it or would have done it. However, ——! Finally there comes from Brandon, Minnesota, information of similar nature. The source is Gunder Johnson, who lives near Brandon, and for whom Olof Ohman built a house about twenty-seven years ago. He says at that time the latter had cut some runes into a piece of wood to show him what kind of script they used in the Scandinavian countries in olden times. When Ohman was asked about this he answered he could not remember, but also that he would not absolutely deny that he had done it.

From Anderson comes the information that he, Fogelblad and Ohman would often sit studying and discussing runes, presumably from Fryxell and the runic book or books Fogelblad and Anderson had.

With this fact I shall leave the problem to the imagination of the reader.

The Kensington runic inscription is a recent forgery. While the present writer has from the first time he saw the inscription never had any doubt upon this point, he has entered into a somewhat detailed discussion from a more popular point of view in order that the layman also should no longer be deceived. He feels that the public should know the truth at once as the truth is. He feels that in such cases the scientist owes this service to the public. The Kensington rune stone will claim the attention of archeologists or historians no longer. Proved a forgery as it now has been, the public surely will no longer countenance it. We Scandinavians, least of all, should tolerate the injection of such a fraud into the history of the pre-Columbian discovery of America by the Norsemen. That discovery is an established fact

and the record of it has long held an adorned place in American history.⁶⁷

The only interest that the Kensington rune stone will have to the scholar in the future is that it adds one more chapter to the already long list of fraudulent inscriptions in modern times. The number of faked runic inscriptions in modern times is indeed considerable. For a partial list the interested reader may be referred to Liljegren's *Runlära*, page 215. The difference between most of these and the Kensington inscription is, however, that the latter is written in a modern dialect with only minor attempts at archaic forms. In the earlier instances there was a consistent effort at reproducing the language of an earlier time. In each case failure somewhere to accomplish this furnished the means for detecting the fraud. Our runemaster, not having even an elementary knowledge of fourteenth century Swedish, chose to employ his own dialect; but he was clever enough to embody elements (as the island, the skerries, the numeric system used and a most apt date, 1362) into his narrative which were calculated to puzzle one though they might not long deceive. And the stone was planted, later to be discovered. That he succeeded in puzzling people is certain. For twelve years he has deceived many into the belief that the inscription is an authentic document of American history. Though linguistically a clumsy piece of work, it was in many respects cleverly done and will deserve a place in the record of archeological frauds with the Cardiff Giant and the Dwighton Rock.

University of Illinois, May 4, 1910.

⁶⁷The appeal to our loyalty to nationality that was recently made in a letter in *Scandinaven* (May 18, 1910, page 12), is as unscholarly as it is dishonest. Only he who is ignorant, or worse, will be misled by that. The appeal itself is a sad commentary upon him who gave expression to it. This is not a matter of loyalty; it is a question of truth!

APPENDIX.

At a meeting of the Philological Society of the University of Illinois, early in April last, it was voted that a committee of seven be appointed to examine into the language and the runes of the Kensington inscription with a view to determining its claims to authenticity. The committee appointed consisted of the following members: Dr. Julius E. Goebel, chairman of the Society, Professor of German; Dr. D. K. Dodge, Professor of English; Dr. C. N. Greenough, Professor of English; Dr. L. M. Larson, Assistant Professor of History; Dr. H. S. V. Jones, Associate in English; Dr. Josef Wiehr, Instructor in German, and Dr. George T. Flom, Assistant Professor of Scandinavian Languages. On ~~May~~ ^{June} third the committee held a double session, afternoon and evening. The writer presented the above report in full and many new points were brought up and every phase of the question was weighed. The finding of the committee will later be reported to the Society and embodied in its minutes. I am, however, now authorized to announce and publish that the verdict of the committee is that the Kensington inscription can not be from 1362, (1) because of the absence of the inflexions of the language as spoken at the time, and, (2) because it does not exhibit the runic series of the time, further it must be recent because the identification of the language with a modern Swedish dialect has been conclusively proved in the paper. The committee's finding is therefore (1) that the inscription is a forgery and (2) that its manufacture is recent. In seeking a cause for the fraud several members of the committee expressed the view that it had its origin in the extensive discussion of the Vinland voyages which took place in the late seventies and the early eighties.

It may be added that each member of the committee was specifically selected because of his philological knowledge of Old Norse.





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