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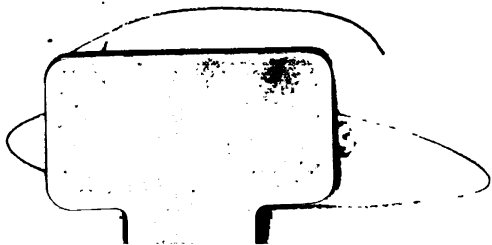
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ON  
A RUNIC CALENDAR

FOUND IN LAPLAND IN 1866.

COMMUNICATED TO THE  
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY,

MARCH 20, 1877.

BY  
EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON, M.A.,  
UNDER LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE.

*(From the Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications, Vol. iv. No. 1.)*

Cambridge :  
PRINTED BY C. J. OLAY, M.A.  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

1877

*See Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications, Vol. iv. No. 1.*





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1

# EARLY RUNIC CALENDAR.

FOUND IN LAPLAND, 1866.



A -	26		e	Conversion of St Paul.	1		d	
	25		d		28		c	
	24		c		27		b	
	23		b		26		a	
	22		a		25		g	
	21		g		24		f	
	20		f		23		e	
	19		e		22		d	
	18		d		21		c	
	17		c		20		b	
U	16		b	St Henry, Bp. & Martyr	19		a	
	15		a		18		g	
	14		g		17		f	
	13		f		16		e	
	12		e		15		d	
	11		d		14		c	
	10		c		13		b	
	9		b		12		a	
	8		a		11		g	
	7		g		10		f	
N	6		f	St Hilary.	9		e	
	5		e		8		d	
	4		d		7		c	
	3		c		6		b	
	2		b		5		a	
	1		a		4		g	
	30		g		3		f	
	29		f		2		e	
	28		e		1		d	
	27		d		St Sigfrid, Bp. and Martyr.	31		c
26		c	30			b		
25		b	29			a		
24		a	28			g		
23		g	27			f		
A	26		e	Epiphany.		25		g
	25		d			24		f
	24		c			23		e
	23		b			22		d
	22		a			21		c
	21		g		20		b	
	20		f		19		a	
	19		e		18		g	
	18		d		17		f	
	17		c		16		e	
J	16		b	Circumcision.	15		d	
	15		a		14		c	
	14		g		13		b	
	13		f		12		a	
	12		e		11		g	
	11		d		10		f	
	10		c		9		e	
	9		b		8		d	
	8		a		7		c	
	7		g		6		b	
R	6		f	Innocents.	5		a	
	5		e		4		g	
	4		d		3		f	
	3		c		2		e	
	2		b		1		d	
	1		a		31		c	
	30		g		30		b	
	29		f		29		a	
	28		e		28		g	
	27		d		27		f	
E	26		c	St John, Ap. and Evangelist.	26		c	
	25		b		25		b	
	24		a		24		a	
	23		g		23		g	
	22		f		22		f	
	21		e		21		e	
	20		d		20		d	
	19		c		19		c	
	18		b		18		b	
	17		a		17		a	
B	16		g	St Stephen, Protomartyr.	16		g	
	15		f		15		f	
	14		e		14		e	
	13		d		13		d	
	12		c		12		c	
	11		b		11		b	
	10		a		10		a	
	9		g		9		g	
	8		f		8		f	
	7		e		7		e	
R	6		d	Nativity of our Lord.	6		d	
	5		c		5		c	
	4		b		4		b	
	3		a		3		a	
	2		g		2		g	
	1		f		1		f	
	30		e		30		e	
	29		d		29		d	
	28		c		28		c	
	27		b		27		b	
A -	26		a	Conversion of St Paul.	26		a	
	25		g		25		g	
	24		f		24		f	
	23		e		23		e	
	22		d		22		d	
	21		c		21		c	
	20		b		20		b	
	19		a		19		a	
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U	16		e	St Henry, Bp. & Martyr	16		e	
	15		d		15		d	
	14		c		14		c	
	13		b		13		b	
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	11		g		11		g	
	10		f		10		f	
	9		e		9		e	
	8		d		8		d	
	7		c		7		c	
N	6		b	St Hilary.	6		b	
	5		a		5		a	
	4		g		4		g	
	3		f		3		f	
	2		e		2		e	
	1		d		1		d	
	30		c		30		c	
	29		b		29		b	
	28		a		28		a	
	27		g		27		g	
A	26		f	St Hyginus.	26		f	
	25		e		25		e	
	24		d		24		d	
	23		c		23		c	
	22		b		22		b	
	21		a		21		a	
	20		g		20		g	
	19		f		19		f	
	18		e		18		e	
	17		d		17		d	
J	16		c	Epiphany.	16		c	
	15		b		15		b	
	14		a		14		a	
	13		g		13		g	
	12		f		12		f	
	11		e		11		e	
	10		d		10		d	
	9		c		9		c	
	8		b		8		b	
	7		a		7		a	
R	6		g	Circumcision.	6		g	
	5		f		5		f	
	4		e		4		e	
	3		d		3		d	
	2		c		2		c	
	1		b		1		b	
	30		a		30		a	
	29		g		29		g	
	28		f		28		f	
	27		e		27		e	
E	26		d	Innocents.	26		d	
	25		c		25		c	
	24		b		24		b	
	23		a		23		a	
	22		g		22		g	
	21		f		21		f	
	20		e		20		e	
	19		d		19		d	
	18		c		18		c	
	17		b		17		b	
B	16		a	St John, Ap. and Evangelist.	16		a	
	15		g		15		g	
	14		f		1			

M	A	R	C	H	A	4	c	Annunciation of the Virgin.	M	P	R	I	L	M	8	b	Invention of the Holy Cross.
						3	b								7	a	
						2	a								6	g	
						1	g								5	f	
						31	f								4	e	
						30	e								3	d	
						29	d								2	c	
						28	c								1	b	
						27	b								80	a	St Philip and St James, App.
						26	a								29	g	
						25	g	St Gregory.							28	f	
						24	f								27	e	
						23	e								26	d	
						22	d								25	c	St Mark.
						21	c								24	b	
						20	b								23	a	
						19	a								22	g	
						18	g								21	f	
						17	f								20	e	
						16	e								19	d	
						15	d								18	c	
						14	c								17	b	
						13	b								16	d	
						12	a								15	g	
						11	g								14	f	Tiburtius.
						10	f								13	e	
						9	e								12	d	
						8	d								11	c	
						7	c								10	b	
						6	b								9	a	
						5	a								8	g	
						4	g								7	f	
						3	f								6	e	
						2	e								5	d	





B				O				C				T				O				B				E				R			
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St Ursula and companions.

St Calixtus.

St Bridget?

St Francis.

St Michael.

St Katherine.

St Clement.

St Martin of Tours.

Feast of All Saints.

St Simon and St Jude, App.



V. ON AN EARLY RUNIC CALENDAR, FOUND IN LAPLAND,  
1866. By EIRÍKR MAGNÚSSON, M.A., of Trinity  
College.

WE have here exhibited, by the favour of the owner, the Rev. James Beck, Rector of Parham, Sussex, a runic Calendar of Scandinavian origin, engraved on six plates of reindeer horn. The only thing known of the history of this calendar is that, in 1866, the present owner secured it in Lapland from a native who was in the habit of carrying it on his person.

The six plates, on which the calendar is carved, are treated as six leaves, and are bound together loosely, so as to allow them to turn over easily, by a piece of thong drawn through a couple of holes which go at a corresponding distance near the inner margin, or the back of the carving as it were, through all the plates. Thus the calendar presents the appearance of a small volume with the writing running down the page lengthways instead of cross-ways. The outside of the outside plates, *i.e.* the *recto* of plate 1 and the *verso* of plate 6, is left blank. Plate 1 has, apparently a good long while ago, split in two halves, and has been mended by a couple of clumsy hafts of copper secured by copper rivets through the plate. The engraving, or writing, begins on the verso of plate 1, and covers  $9\frac{1}{2}$  of the sides of the plates, leaving thus blank  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the recto of plate 6, as the autotype representation shows. Along the sides of the plates on which the writing is found, and roughly speaking along the middle, is drawn a line, which serves as a rule-line to a series of runic characters, that run from left to right, and represent the dominical letters. On the verso of plate 1, and

the recto of all the rest, the line of runic characters runs below this rule-line; on the verso of plates 2—5 inclusive the runes run above it. This arrangement is merely the result of the rune-carver's convenience; and the various emblematic signs attached to certain days, which are always found on the side of the rule-line opposite to that taken up by the runic characters, consequently alternately above and below the rule-line, undergo no change in signification by reversing their position as to the rule-line. In every case they betoken a Saint's or a feast-day, or the fast, or the vigil, to be observed in connection with such days. I mention these details purposely, because, as carved runic calendars, as a rule, exhibit, besides the dominical letters, and the feast-days' emblems, also figures and signs for the purpose of calculating the lunar cycle, and generally on that side of the line of the dominical letters, which is opposite to that where the emblems of the saints' days are found: so some might be disposed to think that the signs here, when changing their position from above to below the line of the dominical letters, thereby underwent a change in signification. But such is not the case. This calendar knows no golden numbers nor affords any means to calculate the moon's cycle, and consequently supplies no clue to the moveable feasts.

I must notice that, on the verso of plates 1 and 3, and on the recto of plate 4, there occur some erasures which I think must be taken as evidence of the calendar being the work of a copyist, not that of an original compiler. In support of this surmise may also be adduced an uncorrected slip on the recto of plate 4, where in the first week of that side, the runes **ᛚ** (dom. let. b) and **ᛚ** (dom. let. a) interchange their proper position.

The runic characters employed in this calendar for dominical letters differ from ordinary runes in some details. They are evidently meant to represent, as is generally the case in runic calendars, the first seven letters of the ancient runic alphabet:



**ƿŋǡŕŕ\***, i.e. **FUÞORKH**, but here the rune for **U**, being identical in form with that for **K**, and the rune for **O**, are both altogether irregular. The upward reversion of the side-stroke of the **R** and the **U** and the downward reversion of the side-strokes of **F**, **O** and **K** are also irregularities to be noticed.

In order to make the calendar more easily understood I have added an engraving of it with the days of the month on one side of the runic line and the dominical letters on the other. By this means the important question, on what day the year commences and what day is left out (see I.), is settled at a glance without giving the reader the trouble of following me through the wearisome process which led to the discovery.

I think all points of interest directly connected with this calendar will find their solution, so far as I am able to solve them, by grouping them under the following three heads of inquiries:

1. What are the probable reasons for the number of days given to the year in this calendar?
2. Why does the year begin as it does here?
3. To what time does this calendar belong?

## I.

As to the first inquiry, it is a most remarkable peculiarity, and worthy of especial notice, that this calendar gives not 365, but 364 days to the year. After some search I have failed in discovering any evidence of the existence of another runic calendar giving the same number of days to the year. Worm, in his *Fasti Danici*, and Liljegren, in his *Runlära*, both of whom are exhaustive writers on the subject, are equally ignorant of any such calendar-year on runic staves, or what commonly are called clog-almanacks. Therefore, the rarer the case before us is, the more interesting it becomes and the more worthy of inquiry.

As I mentioned before, this calendar is, I think without

doubt, a copy, not an original compilation. Then the question is, does it, in this particular point, faithfully represent its original? If it does so it would represent a calendric tradition which acknowledged only 364 days in the year. But, as I shall show more fully in my answer to the second question, I think it may not unreasonably be doubted, whether it is not a copy of an original, which counted 365 days in the year instead of 364. And supposing that to have been the actual case, one of two things must be accepted: either the number of days in the year in this calendar is the result of an accidental oversight, or the copyist, refusing to accept the computation of his original, *wilfully* computed 364 days to the year. The supposition of an accidental oversight may, in my opinion, be dismissed at once. Seeing that this is not only a copy, but a collated and corrected copy of an earlier original, the omission of one day, supposing that the copyist was cognisant of the fact that 365 days ought to belong to the year, could not have escaped him in the collation, and much less in afterwards putting it to the practical test of perusal. The things moreover, which he corrects, being only some few misplaced strokes indicative of vigils and fasts, are but trifling mistakes in comparison to what to him must have been the grossest blunder possible, that of leaving out a day. I do not therefore see how the inference is to be avoided that, supposing there was an original really representing 365 days in the year, for the evidence on the point only amounts to probability, the copyist for reasons of his own did not choose to give to the year more than 364; and these reasons could scarcely have consisted in anything but an old established tradition, in which the copyist had greater confidence than in the accuracy of his original.

But in assuming that in this particular point the copyist was carrying out an old established tradition against a new method of computation, it will be asked where the evidence is of the Scandinavians ever having calculated their year at 364

instead of 365 days. There not only is an evidence on record to prove this; but it is an evidence which takes us back to the very times, when the things existed to which it bears witness. According to this evidence, which I shall bring forward immediately, the custom prevailed among the heathen Scandinavians as late as the middle of the 10th century, of counting in the year twelve (lunar) months, each consisting of 30 days, with four additional days, making the cycle of the year 364 days altogether.

Ari the Learned, 1068—1148, who, I may mention in passing, wrote Icelandic prose long before vernacular prose-composition was attempted in any other living European language, mentions in his *Islendingabók*, or *Libellus Islandorum*, the probable date of which is circa 1133 A.D., an incident which it is of great importance to notice in connection with this calendar. This book contains a survey of the earliest events of importance in the history of Iceland. In the fourth chapter the author gives an account of a computistic difficulty which had been puzzling the Icelanders for some time, and tells how that difficulty was solved, and how the solution was invested with legal authority. The sense of Ari's words, which it is impossible to translate literally, is as follows:

"It also befell then—the wisest men here in the land having been wont to count in two half years 364 days, which amounts to 52 weeks, or twelve months of thirty days, and four days beside—that they marked from the sun's course, that the summer would draw back towards spring; but no one knew, or could tell them, that in two half years there was one day beyond the full tale of complete weeks, or that this was the cause. But there was a man called Thorstein the Swarthy, who hailed from Broadfirth, a son of Hallstein the son of Thorolf of Mostr, who was a land-settler, and of Osk the daughter of Thorstein the Red. This man had a dream. He thought he stood on the Rock of Law (*Lögberg*) when many folk were

gathered there together, and he thought that all other folk slept at the time. Again he thought that he slept himself, while all other folk awoke. This dream Osyf the son of Helgi and the father of the mother of Gellir Thorkelsson interpreted to mean, that all men would grow silent while he (Thorstein the Swarthy) spoke on the Rock of Law; but afterwards, when he had done speaking, all folk would give good cheer to that which he had spoken. But these were mightily wise men both of them. Now, after this, when people came to the Thing, he (Thorstein the Swarthy) gave out the counsel at the Rock of Law, that every seventh summer should be increased by a week for a trial as to how that would answer. And even according as Osyf had interpreted the dream all men awoke well at this, and it was forthwith sanctioned by law at the counsel of Thorkel Moon and other wise men."

This correction of the heathen calendar in Iceland took place about the year 960 A.D. We learn from this account, first, that the heathen year had 364 days; that now it was so far corrected that it fell in with the ordinary year according to the Julian Calendar, but that as yet the Icelanders were not cognizant of the *bissextile* day, for Thorstein's advice goes clearly to prove that that day had no place in his calculation<sup>1</sup>. This incident

<sup>1</sup> To the passage quoted above from the *Islandingabók* there is added the following note of explanation, which aims at reconciling the old heathen computation with the method of that of the Julian Calendar:

"By right reckoning there are, in every year, 365 days, when the year is not a leap year, in which case it has one day more; but by our reckoning (there are) 364 (days in the year); so when by our reckoning every seventh year is increased by a week, but by nothing according to the other reckoning, then seven years together become equally long by both reckonings. But if two leap years fall between the years which are to be increased, then the sixth must be augmented."

In order to understand what can be understood of this note it must be clearly remembered, that the two modes of computation are set off against each other in order to show how the old (our reckoning) tallies with the new (the right reckoning) *i.e.* the Julian computation. In the first passage

gives us an insight into the *previous* as well as the actual state of things in this particular in Iceland. Some ninety years before this event the Norwegians had begun to emigrate to Iceland. The immigration lasted for 60 years according to Ari's no doubt truthful account. By this time, therefore, the country had been fully settled for thirty years only. As it is certain that in other matters the Norwegians brought with them the traditions of the mother country, so in this matter it must have been especially the case, for of all things they must have guarded most faithfully the mother country's method of computing time and changes of seasons. When Ari therefore says that the Icelanders had been in the habit of calculating the days of the year at 364, it is evident that that could not be a mode of counting the days invented in Iceland, but was, on the contrary, one of the fixed features of the civilization of the

the author squares seven common Julian years of 365 days—striking out the bissextile day (for that seems to be the only meaning of “increased by nothing”)—against the seven years of “our reckoning” of 364 days each + 7 days added to the summer of the seventh year. These two periods, thus calculated, are equally long. But if the author means that, in this calculation, only the seventh year in the Julian cycle is not to be a leap-year but a common year, which some might perhaps contend was the meaning, from the contrast which the opening words of the second clause convey, then his calculation is utterly at fault, as in that case “our reckoning” would be invariably one or two days short against the “right” or Julian. But of the second clause I do not see how anything can be made at all. The author evidently confounds one method of computation with the other. For what happens when “two leap years occur between the (six) years which are to be increased,” is this, that by the Julian computation every five and six years produce the seven days which he thinks that six years by “our reckoning” produce at the end of the sixth summer, which, of course, is impossible. The conclusion seems to me to lie near, that this explanatory note is scarcely genuine, but is rather the interpolation of a later unskilled computist. It is a curious peculiarity with regard to the language of this chapter that *dagr* in the sense of day = day and night, is used here instead of *nátt*, which is much more common in the earliest and best writings of Iceland. Is this word used in obedience to the ancient canon law of Iceland, which ruled that, in computistic calculation, day should take the precedence of night? See *Kristinn röttr Þorláks ok Ketils*, ch. xlv.

mother country. And a further proof of it can be drawn from the relations of the two countries at the time. People were perpetually going backwards and forwards between Norway and Iceland, the intercommunion was of the closest, and was most frequent even among the very classes who must have guarded the computistic lore of the country most faithfully—the hereditary aristocracy, who in Iceland remained what they had lately been in Norway, kings and priests at once, and were thereby the self-constituted guardians of the observances of the heathen rites, festivals and high seasons. In fact, these people were the living editions of the calendars of the time<sup>1</sup>. I may still mention a

<sup>1</sup> In support of my statement I may adduce the following passage from the republican code of laws, the Grágás; Uer scolom leiðir eiga oc scoló goðar þeir eiga leið saman er þing eigo saman. oc scal þar leið þeirra vera sem þingstoð þeirra er.....þar scal ny mæli oll up segia aleið oc misseris tal. oc imbrodaga hald. oc langafösto i gang oc sva ef hlavp ár er eða ef við sumar er lagt. We shall have Leets and shall those priests hold a Leet together who belong to the same thing (district), and their Leet shall be holden where their thingstead is.....There shall all new law-provisions be given forth at the Leet and the computation of the year and the Ember-days' observances and the advent of lent, likewise (it shall be stated) if there be a leap-year or if summer is added to. Grág. ed. 1853, p. 111—112. Opr. also; drottins dag þan scoló ver ganga i fostv. sem upp er sagt a þingvm oc a leipvm. On that Lord's day shall we enter on lent which is given out at Things and Leets. Grág. ead. ed., p. 32. These were among the duties which the local aristocrats had to perform in returning to their respective jurisdictions (thing) from the Althing, where, according to the provisions of the Lögsögumanns-þáttir, the lögsögumaðr, or spokesman-at-law, had to give out, on the Rock-of-Law, amongst other things, the computation for the current year: Lögsogo maðr a up at segia.....at lögbergi..... misseris tal. Grág. ead. ed. p. 209. These local aristocrats were the descendants of the heathen aristocrats, goðar or priests, who, during the heathen age, combined in their person the pontifical with the autocratic power. It cannot be considered anything but a continuance of their whilom prerogatives and duties that, under the episcopal régime in the Christian age, they should have to promulgate to their *thingmen* or liegemen the current calendar. Had this not been formerly a part and parcel of their prerogatives, we may be certain that the Christian bishops would not, in disregard of their clergy, have committed to lay lords the care of so important a branch of the ecclesiastical polity.

fact pointing in the same direction. Some thirty years before this correction of the calendar took place the Icelanders had procured from Norway a set of unwritten laws, called, after its author, *Ulfjót's laws*. It is hardly conceivable that these laws should have left the calendar question, one of the most important legislative questions in primitive times, altogether unnoticed. And had they computed the year at 365 days, there would have been no cause for the long standing puzzle, which Thorstein the Swarthy was called upon to solve at a public assembly of the legislators of the country. As far, therefore, as I can see, no doubt is possible as to the uncorrected year, that Ari describes, having been the common heathen year of Scandinavia; on the other hand, it is equally certain that Thorstein's correction is a computistic achievement of purely Icelandic origin. But that is a point with which we are not further concerned now.

I am not aware that in Scandinavia any efforts were made to correct the year until Christianity, at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, brought in the Julian Calendar, as adapted to the Christian era by Dionysius Exiguus, and further popularized and expanded by the venerable Bede in his admirable work *De ratione temporum*. To this treatise and the other astronomical works written by the same author the great majority of the earliest Scandinavian writings on astronomy and computistic lore trace their origin more or less directly. But Bede, after all, was accessible only to the clerks. To the outside world, the laity, he was a sealed book, and although the church from the very beginning followed the correct calculation of the days, &c., the great mass of the people, who were in absolute ignorance of literature of any kind, followed the traditions of their forefathers in the calculation of their days and seasons. And it would be difficult to mention anything connected with the history of human civilization and culture to which man clings with such a stubborn conservatism as ancient calendrical and computistic traditions. Naturally,

The primitive attempts at framing a calendar are based upon untutored observations of various natural, chiefly celestial, phenomena, among which the solstice, as one of the most easily grasped, takes from the first a prominent place.

The observation of these phenomena, being accompanied by imagination unhampered by the abstraction of a scientific age, takes from the very beginning the character of a lore which veers between superstitious science and scientific superstition on the relation of a certain day or a certain set of days at certain seasons to man and man's interests. By its concrete or material and especially in virtue of its subjective nature this lore becomes easily the property of the multitudes, its doctrines, ominous or propitious, pass from father to son, and become the lifelong companions of the tiller of the land and the toiler of the sea. While the nation has no vernacular literature and does not know the use of books, a large portion of its literary treasures is made up of computistic lore, which in these circumstances is faithfully guarded and long preserved in unalloyed primitive purity, as all ancient mythologies bear out incontestably.

That the Scandinavians were at a very early age acquainted with some practical mode of recording their calendric and computistic experiences seems certain. The early records of their history and traditions speak of *aldr-rúnir* and *æfi-rúnir*, i.e. runes of age and time, which can only mean writings of calendric nature. What the precise nature of those records may have been, we have no means of determining now. But their general outward characteristic was certainly that they were cut on solid objects of portable nature, logs of wood (*kefli*) generally. These heathen logs became doubtless the prototypes of the Christian runic calendars, which in a similar manner were cut on portable objects of various description, but in the great majority of cases on the so-called runic staves, of which a large quantity is found in Scandinavia in private hands, and public collections; while



in Iceland itself, where writing was practised and books were read, more or less generally, from the 12th century onward, not one, to this day, so far as I am aware, has been found. When the Roman alphabet found its way to Scandinavia with the introduction of Christianity, the vernacular writing at the time was in the runic character, which at that time had passed from the antique (old runes) to a more modern type (later runes). In practice this writing was chiefly used for memorial and magic purposes. The latter, the magic employment of the runes, though practised by few only, was extensive and popular, the more so for the very fact, that skill in rune-craft, being a rare accomplishment, was confined to a select class of society, and was not the property of the multitudes. During the 'sword-age' of the North, which extended over the first four centuries of the authentic historic era of Scandinavia, this accomplishment was, apparently, chiefly confined to the womankind, as indeed the art of medicine generally, of which the magic rune-craft constituted a conspicuous branch. The popularity of the runes was so firm, that when the church brought in the Roman method of recording the festivals of the year, the Roman dominical letters a, b, c, d, e, f, g, had to be abandoned, and as many of the vernacular alphabet were adopted, the first seven generally, **F, H, I, K, L, M, N**, and such was the tenacity with which people clung to this particular form of calendric record in the North, that for upwards of 600 years after the introduction of Christianity, and for nearly, if not fully, two centuries after that of printing, it was the popularly current one in Scandinavia, and is still in use in certain places in Norway and Sweden. Thus all runic staves, without exception, represent the calendar of the Christian church, no stave or log, representing a purely heathen computation of the year, having been discovered as yet. These points it is well to notice here, because this very calendar, though of Christian origin, betrays intermixed with the Chris-

tian computation heathen traditions which assign to it a pre-eminently important place in the still imperfectly explored, but none the less important literature of early runic calendars. And it stands, as yet, as a unique collateral evidence of Ari the Learned's computistic record in *Islendingabók* being a true one as far as the number of days in the year is concerned.

## II.

As is shown by the explanatory engraving of the calendar, the year begins on the 23rd of December. That this date is correctly given for the first day of the year is proved by the agreement between the saints' days, the days of the month on which they fall, and the Christian Sunday letters. On that point no further explanation is required. In thus beginning the year this calendar exhibits a very rare, if not unique peculiarity. I could point to no other runic calendar beginning the year in the same manner; while numbers could be shown which, beginning the year in the Yuletide, invariably commence it on the 25th; and of the two modes of beginning it there is no question that the one here exhibited is the genuine heathen, while the other, of course, is the genuine Christian.

Again I must refer to the words of Ari the Learned which I quoted in the beginning. At the time to which he referred, we saw that the solar year was known, not as we know it under the collective notion of 365 days; but as a sum total of two half-years; a half-year, in fact, forming the unit, as it were, of the so-called year. This half-year Ari knows under the name of "misseri," which, no doubt, is an Anglo-Saxon immigrant in Icelandic, and means half-year, practically speaking, although by its derivation it probably only means changing season. It is further evident from Ari's account that the two half-years are Winter and Summer. The *Islendingabók* bears out abundantly, that these were the names given, in Ari's time, to each half-year. And we have them distinctly defined in the *Rym-*

*begla*, an old computistic work, which says that it is called "misseris"-tale that two "misseri" make one year, that is winter and summer. It is therefore evident, that anciently the year was known, in the technical sense at least, as only a *semestre*, the six months passing from solstice to solstice. Among the Icelanders this notion of the year's length would seem to have been quite in common vogue even as late as the 14th century, and is so, I might say, to this day. The early writers, in making chronological statements most generally employ the term "*á þessum missirum*," during these half yearly seasons, meaning this year; or they use the word *vetr*, winter, to signify a year, except when they talk of events of annual duration, such as, *e.g.*, the yearly tenure of an office, which they know to commence within the summer season, in which case summer is the term employed for a year. Now the distinction drawn between the two solstitial semestres, winter and summer, winter being used generally in a chronological sense to signify a year, and summer only in special cases, proves that winter was the *semestre* which computistically took the precedence, was in fact the *semestre* which began the year on the day following the winter solstice.

And here, by digression, it is worth noticing, that as winter takes precedence of summer in the sense of a year, so night takes precedence of day generally in the sense of a civil day of 24 hours in old Icelandic writers<sup>1</sup>, a manner of speech which to

<sup>1</sup> This statement could be substantiated by thousands of instances from Icelandic writers. Even the *Rymbegla*, where accuracy in terms is more strictly observed than in the sagas, uses, as a rule, winter for year, and night for day of 24 hours: *Sólar öld er kölluð at bókmáli Concurrentis öld; i þeirri öld eru vetr xxviii*,—The solar cycle is called in learned computation the cycle of the concurrents; in that cycle there are twenty-eight years, *Rymb. 54; Páska öld, i þeirri öld eru tveir vetr ens iv tigar ens vi hundraðs tíræðs*,—Paschal cycle, in that cycle there are five hundred and thirty-two years, *Rymb. 64*; and so on.—*Fimm nætr þær er umfram eru xii mánuði xxx náttu skulu fylgja Martius*,—The five days in excess of twelve months of thirty days each shall be added to the month of March, *Rymb. 56*.

this day is far from having gone wholly into desuetude. Both peculiarities stand in direct traditional connection with the cosmogonic ideas of Northern Mythology. Winter<sup>1</sup> and night descend directly from the Titanic chaos which preceded organised creation, and in her turn the latter becomes the mother of the day, and on her steed Hoar-mane (*Hrímfaxi*) rides *before* Day round the Earth<sup>2</sup>. This cosmogonic idea lived on in the

I tveimr misirum eru vikur tvær ens ví tigar og nótt ein umfram; nótt sú ein heitir concurrens,—In two half years there are fifty-two weeks and one day extra, that one day is called a concurrent, *Rymb. 60, &c., &c.*—The oldest ecclesiastical law of Iceland, the *kristinn rætt þorláks* of Ketils from 1123, provides that *dagr skal fyrr koma alls misseris tals enn nótt*, Day, in all computation of seasons, shall precede the night, *ch. XLV. p. 166* (*Cpr. Grágás* ed. by Finsen, *Kaupmannahöfn*, 1853, p. 37), which proves that in vulgar computation the reverse was the case. This very law, however, reverses its own rule almost throughout. The vulgar mode of computation was called *almannatal*, all men's tale, *Rymb. 100, Isl. ch. 10* fine, *alment tal*, id, *Rymb. 16*, *alþýðutal*, id, *Rymb. ib. and 48*, where it says: *Enn víknatal eitt þarf til alþýðutals i.e.* but for vulgar computation calculation by weeks only is sufficient, *cpr. Isl. 6, ch. 9* fine.

<sup>1</sup> *Enn faðir Vetrar er ýmist kallaðr Vindlóni, eðr Vindsvafr, hann er Vasaðarson, ok voru þeir áttungar grimmir ok svalbrjóstaðir, ok hefir vetr þeirra skaplyndi,—*But the father of Winter is called either *Vindlóni* or *Vindsvafr* (Chill-blast), he is the son of *Vasaðr* (Wetsome?), and these kinsmen were grim and chill-bosomed, and with their temper winter is endowed. *Edda I. 82.*

<sup>2</sup> *Nörvi eða Narfi hét jötun, er byggði í Jötunheimum; hann átti dóttur, er Nótt hét, hon var svört ok dökk, sem hon átti sett til; hon var gipt þeim manni, er Naglfari hét; þeirra son hét Uðr; því næst var hon gipt þeim er Annarr hét; Jörð hét þeirra dóttir. Síðarst átti hana Dellingr; var hann Ása settar; var þeirra son Dagr; var hann ljóss ok fagr, eptir faðerni sínu. Þá tók Alföðr Nótt, ok Dag, son hennar, ok gaf þeim 11 hesta ok 11 kerrur, ok setti þau upp á himin, at þau skulu ríða á hverjum 11 dægum umhverfis jörðina. Ríðr Nótt fyrri, þeim hesti er kallaðr er *Hrímfaxi*, ok at morgni hverjum döggrir hann jörðina af mel-dropum sínum. Sú hestr er Dagr á, heitir *Skinfaxi*, ok lýsir allt lopt ok jörðina af faxi hans.—*Nörvi or Narfi was hight a giant who dwelt in Giants' home; he had a daughter hight Night, who was dark and black, according to her kind; she was wedded to a man called Naglfari, and their son was hight Uðr; then she was given in wedlock to him who was called Annarr, and their daughter was called Earth. Lastly she was owned by Delling of

efforts of the heathens to construe their computistic systems from the starry phenomena of the nightly heavens. There is no reason for the supposition that the Icelanders borrowed this method of stating seasons and days from the Anglo-Saxons. It is a universal characteristic of early computistic efforts throughout the world.

On this very day then, the 23rd of December, the year begins according to this runic Calendar. This being the term which from the remotest mythical times the heathen Scandinavians assigned to the commencement of the year, a term moreover for the origin of which no ecclesiastical authority can be shown, it affords a very strong evidence, in addition to the number of the days, to show that this calendar belongs to a time when heathen tradition still prevailed in the computistic arrangement of the seasons.

But then the question presents itself: The year consisting only of 364 days, which is the day omitted? To this the agreement between the dominical letters and the saints' days gives a direct answer. When all the saints' days in the calendar fall on their proper dominical letter, or if, as is the case here, some do not, but the reason can be shown why such is the case, then the difficulty about the missing day is easily solved. As will be seen at a glance from the engraving of the calendar, this day is the 31st of December, to which belongs the same dominical letter as to the 1st of January. By the omission of that day no confusion is imported into the relation between the dominical letters and the days of the month or otherwise beyond what I shall now define. The distance in time between Christmas

the kin of the Æsir, and their son was Day, light and fair according to his father's kind. Then Alfather took Night, and Day her son, giving to them two horses and two cars, and set them up into the heaven that they should ride in the course of a day and night round the earth. *Night rideth first* on a steed called Hoar-mane, and every morning he bedeweth the earth with drops from his bit. The horse that Day hath is called Sheen-mane, and of his mane all air and earth are lighted up.

Day and the Feast of Circumcision, Jan. 1, and between Christmas Day and Epiphany, Jan. 6, would, by the omission, become short by one day if these feasts were placed on their proper days of the month. This could not stand in a Christian calendar of course. So in order to observe these feasts *at a proper distance from Christmas Day*, which is the point, the signs of them are placed against the 2nd and 7th of January; and from the latter date the disturbance caused by the omission of the 31st December ceases, I think, as far as Christian feast-days are concerned, so that all Saints' days after that fall on the proper day of the month and the right dominical letter.

The omission of the 31st of December, the only day in the year that could be omitted without disturbing the harmony between the dominical letters, the days of the months and the saints' days, seems to be only proof of heathen tradition accommodating to its wants the ecclesiastico-Julian method of computing the days of the year, but discarding it at the particular point, where it appeared superfluous or puzzling. And to one who began the year on the 23rd of December, who knew it by tradition to consist of 364 days only, the repetition of the same dominical letter, that is, of the same day, within one and the same week, could not be anything but a blunder; a week of eight days being a thing never heard of, a year of 365 days being consequently an absurdity. And by turning to the calendar itself we find on the verso of plate 1 the erasure to which I called attention in the beginning, in the very place where the old heathen tradition and the ecclesiastical innovation must clash, that place being where, in the original, was entered the 2nd of January. This erasure proves to me that the calendar is a copy of a Christian, not of a heathen original.

I said before that in beginning the year on the 23rd of Dec. this calendar followed heathen tradition. I may mention, however, that although that term for the commencement of the year represents perhaps the genuine heathen computation in

Scandinavia, various other terms from which to commence the year are known. I need not mention the common terms of Christmas day and Circumcision day. But I may notice that in Norway it was long the prevailing custom to count the year from Tiburtius day, the 14th of April, which with the Norwegians was the first day of summer, and was called "Förste Sommerdag." It was a very solemn festival, no work might be done, no servant might be absent from home, no sheep-owner might eat mutton on that day, no drop of the winter's milk might be mixed with that of the summer, lest the wolves should devour the herds during the ensuing year, and provisions, of which milk formed the substance, such as curds, whey and cheese, should go bad. Again, the Danes and generally the coast inhabitants of the Baltic used anciently to commence their year with the 23rd of November, St Clement's day. In heathen times that day was the feast of the winter-sacrifice. The seafaring trader and the Viking brought their ships to harbour, and a feast of boisterous thanksgiving was religiously observed. Hence this day, as is the case in the calendar before us, is marked by an anchor, signifying ships in harbour; sometimes it has a sign to it which interpreters of runic calendar staves suppose to mean a temple, but which may just as well, perhaps more plausibly, mean a boat-shed.

Sometimes even runic staves show the 2nd of January as the initial term of the year; but that is a mere computistic mistake arising originally out of causes similar or identical with those which I have shown in this very calendar move the feast of the Circumcision down to the 2nd of January.

According to the old pre-ecclesiastic calendar of Iceland, the domestic year began, singularly enough, on one of the days between the 22nd and the 28th of July, according as Thorstein the Swarthy's seven additional days to the summer fell in with the leap-year of the present style. Roughly speaking, the year began in the middle of the summer, and from that term was

divided into 12 lunar months of 30 days each, with four days extra. And as this is the division of the year which in domestic and economic life in Iceland is still in common vogue, while all similar traditions have died out almost entirely elsewhere, it will not be altogether out of place to add the tale of these ancient months here.

1. Heyannir, Haymaking labours (Old Dan. Hö- = Hay, and Höst- = Harvest Maaned, Swed. Skortant, Skördemånad, reaping Month, Anglo-Saxon Arnmonað, Barnmonað and Weodmonað, Pasture month, *i.e.* the Month when mown fields become pastures for live stock.

2. Tvímánuður, Twin-month, or kornskurðarmánuður, reaping-month (Dan. Fiskemaaned Fishm., Swed. Höstmånad, or Autumn-month, Anglo-Saxon Harfæstmonað, and Halegmonað = the holy month.

3. Haustmánuður, Autumn-month, also Garðlagsmánuður, a name which I think refers to the building and repairing of the walls called göngu-garðar, or walking walls, which were built along mountain sides for the purpose of facilitating the travelling of foot passengers in deep snow, and securing safe arrival to human habitations in heavy snow-storms. At present a common name for it is slátrunarmánuður or slaughtering-month, as in this month the beasts, which are intended to make up the meat-supply to the household during the winter, are slaughtered. Dan. Ridemaaned, *i.e.* mensis pecorum salientium, and Sademaaned, mod. Sædemaaned, sowing month; Swed. Blot- or Blod-månad, sacrificial or bloody month; Anglo-Sax. Seteoda, sowing or seed-tide, and Winter fyllet, winter-full-moon.

4. Gormánuður, the month Gorr, see page 85. Others translate it gore-month, as referring to the slaughter of beasts for winter consumption, thus deriving it from Icelandic gor, the viscous slime which coats the mucous membrane of the intestines of animals. Dan. Slagtemaaned, slaughter-month,



Pölsemaanad, sausage-month, or Vintermaanad; Anglo-Sax. Blótmonað, sacrificial month.

5. Ýlir, yule-month, or frermánuðr, freezing-month. Dan. Vintermaanad; Swed. Vintermånad; Anglo-Sax. Blótmonað and Aerra geola, the first Yule-month, and also Midvintermonað.

6. Mörsugur, fat- or suet-sucker, starvation-month (for beasts), also hrútmánuðr, ram-month (with hrútr compare rut, and rutting season). Old Dan. Glugmaanad, Blastmonth, from glygg (orig. glugg), blast, storm? and Ismaanad, ice-month; Swed. Thore, Thorre, (cfr. the following Þorri) and Thorsmånad (by corruption?) the month of Thor; Anglo-Sax. Wolfmonað and Geola æftera, the later Yule-month.

7. Þorri, which I am inclined to connect with þurr, dry, cfr. þerra, þerrir, &c., and think it means the rainless month, a month in which snow falls generally, but not rain. And in the old myth Þorri was, as a deity, worshipped by the Kvens for making plenteous snow, see page 85. Others derive the name from þverra to wane, as if it indicated the waning winter, or from þorri, main, main portion, main part, majority (not recorded in Cleasby-Vigfússon), as being the month in which the winter weather displays its might and main. Old Norv. Thorre; Dan. Blidemaaned or Blidelmaanad, scarcely connected with blid, blithe, sweet, genial; later Gjö; Swed. Goja; Anglo-Sax. anciently Sprout-kele (Kele = cole, kale), later Solmonað.

8. Góí, now góa; of uncertain derivation. Norv. Gjö; Dan. Thormaanad; Swed. Thurrmånad, Blida, Blidemånad; Anglo-Sax. Rhedmonað, cpr. Icel. hlyðja, sleet, squall, blasty shower, and Hlyða, Hlyðmonad, cpr. Icel. hlær, thawing, the thawing-month. 67

9. Einmanuðr (one month?). This month had the same name among the old Scandinavians as it now has among the Icelanders. Later it was called by the Danes Faremaanad, the

Month of movements, expeditions, &c. In olden times it had also the name of *Asturmānad* among the Swedes, who adopted the name no doubt from English missionaries, the vernacular Anglo-Saxon name for it being *Eostre* or *Eastermonað*, the Eastermonth or month of the Paschal Cycle.

10. *Harpa* i.e. Harp, *Gaukmánuðr*, the Cuckoo-month, or *Sáðtíð*, seedtide. Scandinavian generally *Mai* in various corruptions, which are supposed, by some to have reference to *Meyja*, Scand. *Mö*, a May or Maiden, to which conjecture the Old German name of it, *Uuinne-*, *Wunne-* or *Wonnemanoth*, month of love and delight, seems to give support. Anglo-Saxon *Trimilchi*, Thricemilking month; the month when cows were milked three times a day.

11. *Skerpla*, perhaps connected with *skorpinn*, the droughty month, also called *eggtíð*, eggtime, and *stekktíð*, lambfolding month, from *stekkr*, a lamb-fold. Dan. *Skjærsommer*, the sheer, bright summer month, Norw. *Gro*, the growing-month, the month of fertility. Swed. *Starbrak*, from *starr*, bent-grass (*carex*), and *bräcka* to break, the breaker of bent-grass, the charring month of drought. Anglo-Saxon, anciently *Weydmonað*, later *Searmonað*, the dry month, also *Lida* (*aerra-Lida*) the month of shipping and sailing, or as others hold, but I do not, the mild month.

12. *Sólmánuðr*, the Sunny month, or *Selmánuðr*, the month when the milking stock is kept away from home at mountain dairies, Sel, Norw. *Sæters*; a more recent popular name is *maðka mánuðr*, the month of grubs, which at this season especially infest fish hung up to be dried. Dan. *Madkemaaned*, Swed. *Höant*, cpr. Icel. *heyannir*, and *Hömānad*, the haymaking month. Anglo-Saxon *Hegmonað* and *Mædmonað*, which is explained to mean the month when cattle were allowed to feed in the fields mown. But may not the name be more plausibly connected with *madu*, the Anglo-Saxon for a maggot?

At the end of this month came in the four extra days, the

so-called *aukanætr*, eke nights—night, as we have seen before, taking in chronological style precedence of day with the old writers, as winter takes precedence of summer.

I do not mean to infer by this list of the Icelandic months that this order was the same among the Scandinavians and the Anglo-Saxons. No doubt the order varied in various countries. But I have added the old names of the months to the Icelandic to shew the general similarity of principle on which the names are formed; and without entering into any comparative discourse on the subject, which would be out of place here, it must be allowed that this similarity, one might really say identity, is very striking.

Some of the names of the Icelandic months go back to mythic antiquity. In the account given in *Flateyjarbók* I. 22, of how Norway was found, the historian sets about relating the story of it in the following manner: Now must be told the story how Norway was first found and how the races of kings sprang up there as well as in other lands; and also why they are hight Skjöldungs, Budlungs, Bragnings, Ödlings, Völsungs or Niflungs from whom the kingly races have sprung. There was a man named Fornjot, who had three sons, one called Hler, another Logi, the third Kári; he ruled the winds while Logi ruled fire and Hler the sea. Kári was the father of Jökul, who was the father of king Snow; but the children of king Snow were these: Þorri, Fönn (Snowdrift), Drifa (Snowfall) and Mjöll (Snow). Þorri was an excellent king, and ruled over Gothland, Kvenland and Finland. The Kvens worshipped him for making plenteous snow, in order that they might have a good snow-skid travelling, which is their good year; the sacrifice should be at mid-winter, and afterwards that season was called the month of Thorri. King Thorri had three children. His sons were called Norr and Gorr (cpr. Gormánuðr), but his daughter was hight Goe. Goe ran away from home, and Thorri had his sacrifice a month later than he was wont to

sacrifice. They afterwards called the month, which then began, Goe.

Perhaps this account really preserves an ancient tradition of the barbarous Scandinavian immigrants having borrowed from the far more civilized aborigines, the Fins and other allied races, a certain number of the technical terms by which the more prominent features of the winter season were computistically designated.

It may not perhaps be altogether void of interest, in connection with a calendar which in the present day turns up to bear witness to the old heathen year of Scandinavia, to notice some of the more prominent of the heathen festivals.

In the beginning of the domestic year fell the universally observed sacrifice to Frey, the god of fertility, which lasted for many days. Some of the more prominent points in the cultus of this god were the following. The festivity was always numerously invited to by the priest or the temple owner, and numerously attended. The animal, which plays the most prominent part at the sacrifice, is the boar, *sónar göltr*, the propitiating, atoning boar, which was sacrificed on the occasion. The hilarity of the high tide is kept alive by the ale, a never failing element in heathen worship. To other points connected with the cultus of this god we have some clue in later popular observances in Norway and Sweden, where his worship was especially observed. In Norway even to a late date it was the custom to bake bread at this time representing various figures of animals, among which the horse was the most prominent. It was called the *Helhest*; the Hell-steed on which Frey had ridden to the hell, *i.e.* the depths of the winter solstice, and now appeared in victorious glory again. In Norway and Sweden it was long a universal custom to set up an evergreen tree, a pine or a fir, at this time in the villages or towns; later the custom would have one set up by the entrance to the house; later still, the tree entered the house

itself, where at Christmas it figures now in all Teutonic countries under the name of jólatrè, Juletræ, Julträd, Christbaum and Christmas tree.

About the middle of winter, that is at an equidistance between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox, was held the *Thorrablót*, which has been mentioned before. That must have been a sacrifice derived from people to whom a good year was plenty of snow to make sliding on snowskids good, and thereby the prospects of hunting favourable. It is evidently a festival which owes its origin to a Northern hunting race.

On the 1st of Feb. the Swedes used to observe a great festival at Upsala, called *disting* = *dísa thing*, or *dísablót*. It was the great sacrificial festivity of the year hallowed to the goddesses in heathen times.

On the 2nd of February were anciently observed all over the pagan North certain rites, connected with the worship of fire. In some places the toast or bumper of the fire was drunk by the whole family kneeling on their knees round the fire, who at the same time offered grain and beer to the flames on the hearth. This was the so-called *Eldborgs skål*, the toast of fire-salvage; a toast which was meant to avert for the coming year disasters from fire. Fire- and sun-worship mingled together, no doubt, in the observance of this feast; for where it was most religiously observed, among the Swedes, it was called *Freys-blót*, and was a very great affair. In early Christian times, only wax candles which had received the blessing of the priest were burnt in the houses of the people in the evening. Hence Candlemass.

On the beginning day of the month Goe there was a great sacrifice observed in Sweden called *Goeblót* or *höfublót*, accompanied by much pageantry and festive observances.

By the beginning of the spring month, Harpa (corresponding to the later part of April and prior part of May) a sacrifice was anciently held called *sumarblót*, summer sacrifice, or more

frequently blót móti sumri, sacrifice against, i.e. to meet summer.

On the day of this month which corresponds to May 1, great festivities were held formerly in Scandinavia, especially in Denmark, for the purpose of welcoming summer, the most significant of which was a procession of peasants on horseback decked with twigs and branches and flowers, which was called "riding Summer into town."

On the 21st of June, or the day of the summer solstice, a great sacrifice was observed all over the heathen North, called Miðsumarsblót, and mostly in the open air. In Christian times the celebrations were transferred to St John's day, and in the more remote parts of the North some shreds of the old observances are still traceable. In Iceland people club together for picnicking excursions during the night between the 23rd and 24th, which formerly was called Jóns vaka, the vigil of St John. In some parts, bathing during the night takes the place of other amusements. Throughout Scandinavia, in the olden time, bonfires were lit during this night, and people gathered together from neighbouring countrysides for merrymaking round these fires; and that custom is still observed in parts of Norway and Sweden, but most religiously in Finland. The origin of these bonfire festivities at midsummer lies deep down in the mythic age. It is the myth of Balder's bale-fire which thus lives on still at the present day.

About the autumnal equinox a great and general festivity was observed throughout the pagan North, dedicated to elves and goddesses. This sacrifice had no doubt chiefly reference to the guardian spirits of the land (landvættir, landwights), who stood in close relation to the harvest, and were at the same time intimately connected with the families to whom the lands yielding their harvest belonged. When Christianity came in, these festivities migrated from the equinoctial day to St Michael's day, a week later. Observances are still met with

all over the North about this time in the shape of Christian harvest-home festivities.

On the 14th of October was observed with great and varying solemnities the first day of winter. And to this day the old traditions survive in various shapes throughout the North.

On the 23rd was another sacrifice, the so-called Winter-night sacrifice, observed certainly in Iceland, and probably throughout Scandinavia as well. This sacrifice seems to have been for Freyr especially, as the god of fertility and fruitfulness. The Sagas mention this sacrifice very frequently.

### III.

In connection with the question, what the probable date of this calendar may be, it is well, first, to call attention to the feasts and Saints' days which are contained in it, and to the emblems attached to them, so far as I have been able to make anything of them.

1. The emblem of Christmas day, Dec. 25, closely resembling that given to this day in Northern clog almanacks generally, is taken to mean trays or dishes provided with Christmas fare.

2. The emblems for St Stephen's (A.D. 33), St John's, and Holy Innocents' days, Dec. 26th, 27th, and 28th, are all identical or nearly so, and I fail to see what they may be meant to indicate. Generally St Stephen's day has for emblem on northern runic staves a fleam or a lancet, to note the day as the most auspicious in the year for bleeding horses, which in the old times was supposed to preserve them from disease during the ensuing year. St John's has generally an eagle for emblem, while Holy Innocents' day is marked by a sword indicative of Herod's murder of the Innocents at Bethlehem.

3. In consequence of the 31st of December being omitted, the Octave of the Lord's Nativity falls on the second of January. The emblem for this day represents a bell, significant of the

holy season of Christmas coming to an end, when Yule was "rung out." I have put against the day its common ecclesiastical title; to which, however the emblem has no reference.

For the same reason that the octave of Christmas falls here on the 2nd of January, Epiphany or Twelfth Night falls on the 7th instead of the 6th. The emblem, again a bell, signifies that on this day the festive season of Christmas terminated, and was "rung out." It was, in all probability, owing to the very omission of the 31st of Dec. that, anciently, the so-called Eldbjargarmessa, or feast of fire-salvage, was observed in the North; the name is still given to the 7th of Jan. in Icelandic almanacks. The name signifies that on this day the Yule-fires, which had been kept alive from Christmas day, were put out. On that day the festivities came to an end, and the Christmas guests took their departure. From Tellemarken in Norway a tradition is preserved illustrative of the customs which were observed on this particular day, in the olden time, in commemoration of the victory which the bright and warming Sun had won over the dark and cold winter. The mistress of the house entered the room where round the fire burning on the hearth the household were seated, and took her stand before the fire, and from a bowl of beer which she carried in her hand she drank the fire's toast with this formula:

So high my fire,

But neither higher nor yet hotter.

Then the company, seated on the floor, drank the fire's toast in the following manner: the beer-bowl was placed between their legs on the floor, and each one had to take it up with his teeth and empty it and then throw it over his head so that it came down behind him. If the bowl came down bottom upmost the thrower's was a forfeited life, and he must die within the ensuing year.

4. Whether the sign against the 11th of Jan. is, in consequence of Dec. 31 being omitted, meant really for the 10th,



and thus for Paul the first Hermit (circa A.D. 287), or for St Hyginus, to whom 11th Jan. belongs, I would not venture to decide, as the emblem itself gives no clue even to its own meaning.

5. Again, whether the 14th of Jan. here is really meant for the 14th, or, in consequence of the oft-mentioned omission of Dec. 31, for the 13th, or St Hilary's day, might seem doubtful. I am inclined to think, however, that the rune-carver meant by the emblem to signify the 20th day after Christmas day, irrespective of the day of the month, because the emblem seems to agree with that which is generally found against this day on Northern rune-staves, indicating logs of firewood. This day was a great festivity very early among the Northern nations, and it seems that beacon-fires were lit on it in commemoration of the Yule season. Indeed it seems that in Sweden the Yule season lasted for 20 days from Christmas. The name of this day was, as early as the 12th century, known in the North as Geisladagr, or Beamday, a name of uncertain origin. It might be supposed that it drew its origin from beacon fires lit on that day; or that the name was really gisladagr, day of hostages, gisl = hostage, from heathens and Christians, spending Yuletide together, having given mutual hostages for the ensurance of mutual peace, to be exchanged on the last day of the festivities. Some have connected the name with gisl or gils, the name of one of the horses of the Æsir, enumerated in Edda (Sn. E. i. 70), or with Gler, a name of another of the Æsir's horses, and found in the latter a parallelism to the German *Glaristag*. But with neither of these horses is a myth connected to warrant the inference, and Glaristag is clearly nothing but a gutturalized corruption of Hilariustag, or Hilaristag.

6. The emblem for St Henry's day, Jan. 19th, should, and probably does, mean a ship with rowers seated alternately along either gunwale. St Henry, the Apostle and patron of Finland, suffered martyrdom 1150, and was canonized 1158.

7. The Conversion of St Paul, Jan. 25th, has an emblem to it, which seems to be significant of two persons. It appears to represent a sword, the common emblem of the apostle, as the persecutor of the Christians, or as having been beheaded by a sword, and combined with it a bow, the emblem of Paul the archer, Páll Skyttari, a mighty warrior, of whom Northern legends tell that he would fight dauntlessly through the former half of the day, but spent the latter half of it in devotions.

8. The Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, or Candlemass, Feb. 2nd, has a branch-candelabrum for emblem, indicative not only of the old custom of illuminating churches on that day, but also of consecrating on that day the wax-candles which were to be used in the church, and of consecrating also for lay folk wax-candles which they used to keep in their own houses for the purpose of driving away the baneful influences of evil spirits.

9. St Sigfrid's day, Feb. 15th, shows his usual emblem, a sword. St Sigfrid was one of the early missionary bishops of Sweden. Died about 1030, and was buried at Vexjö; he was canonized in 1158.

10. St Peter's chair, 22nd Feb., is marked by an emblem, which seems to signify the cross on which tradition says the apostle suffered his martyrdom. But it might almost equally plausibly represent a key, which in runic staves and clog-almanacks is the common emblem of the day. Worm quotes, in his own Latin, this, as a common weather prognostic of the day :

*In Petri cathedrâ glacie si stringitur unda,  
Non perit ante dies hæc quater atque decem.*

11. The emblem of St Matthias' day, Feb. 24th, is probably meant for a hatchet or some similar instrument or weapon. Otherwise his emblems are a stone, an egg or three eggs, an axe, a fish, &c. The interpretation of the present sign seems to agree very well with the Saint's chief function

in relation to domestic and economic life which is expressed in the following weather prognostic of his day, as given by Worm in his *Fasti Danici* :

Matthias glaciem frangit, si invenerit illam,  
Ni frangat, magis ut firma sit illa facit.

12. The emblem for St Gregory's day, March 12th (A.D. 604), is usually, either the figure of a schoolmaster with a rod beside him, or even the rod alone, and on Norwegian staves especially the figure of a crow. The sign in our calendar can hardly be meant for either, unless, indeed, it is a crow! The former sign is given to the Saint as the protector of schools and scholars. In a most instructive, but as yet only half finished, treatise by Mr Jón Sigurðsson in *Almanak hins íslenzka þjóðvinafélags* for 1878, on feast-days and Saints' days, he mentions as a common Norwegian custom of old that, from the 1—12th of March, poor children, especially girls, used to dress in fantastic costumes and go begging from house to house, calling themselves Gregory's brides and Gregory's swains. A custom which, no doubt, sprang out of that fine legend of Bede's about Gregory and the blond British youths in the slave market in Rome.

13. The sign against the Annunciation of the Virgin, March 25th, as against every day assigned to her, signifies a triple crown, she being the thrice adored Regina Cœli.

14. The emblem for Tiburtius' day, April 14th (circa A.D. 174?), common in Norwegian and Swedish rune-staves, is meant for a budding tree. This day was formerly, and is still probably among the rural population, in Norway called the first day of summer, hence the emblem. How this day was observed is already mentioned, p. 81.

15. In runic staves the sign for St Mark's day, April 25th, is generally a cuckoo, indicative of the season having commenced for that harbinger of spring to make his appearance. It seems most probable that the emblem in our calendar is indicative of

a flight of these birds. But it is also possible that it may have reference to the rogation processions which took place on this day, called in the North the great Rogation-day, and that it may really signify a procession.

16. The emblem for St Philip and St James' day, May 1st, betokens here, no doubt, as generally, a sprouting beech-tree.

17. The sign for May 3rd, the Invention of the Holy Cross, is self-evident.

18. The sign against the 18th of May agrees with that which in Northern runic staves is given to St Eric, King of Sweden and Martyr, and signifies a crown, closed at the top, to distinguish it from the crown of the Virgin (*coronâ superius clausa, ad distinctionem dierum D. Virgini deputatorum.* Worm). St Eric was killed in 1160.

19. The emblem for St Eskill's day, June 12th, is probably meant for an executioner's or a battle axe. St Eskill was one of the early missionary bishops of Sweden, and had chosen for his see Fors in Södermanland, when, on hearing that Blot-Sven or Sacrificing Sven, the Christian king Inge's own brother-in-law, had been chosen king for the purpose of supporting paganism against the innovating tendencies of king Inge, he hastened to a heathen sacrificial gathering at Upsala, where, at Blot-Sven's command, in reply to his remonstrances to the pagans, he was stoned about 1063.

20. If the emblem for St Botolf's day, June 17th (*flor. A.D. 654*), really is that which on Swedish runic staves is current for that day, it should mean an open book. But the one exhibited in our calendar seems scarcely to be capable of such an interpretation. Yet I know not what to suggest instead of it.

21. The emblem attached to June 22 is, without a doubt, I think, meant for the sword of St Alban, the protomartyr of England, A.D. 303. I have consequently put that Saint's name against the day in the unravelled calendar. In assigning this

day to the Saint this calendar agrees with the old English calendars, none of which agree with the Prayerbook in assigning June 17 to St Alban.

22. What the emblem for St John the Baptist's day, June 24th, may be meant to signify here I cannot pretend to settle. No doubt it refers to some of the multifarious out of door observances which in the North, as elsewhere, were connected with this the sunniest day in the year. Had the calendar been heathen I should have been inclined to connect the emblem with a Balder's temple. The usual emblem is a lamb on Swedish and Danish rune-staves, on Norwegian ones sometimes the image of the radiant sun on the top of a pole.

23. The sign for the day of St Peter and St Paul, June 29th, is generally a key, or a key and a sword combined. I much doubt that the sign given to the day in this calendar is intended as a representation of either. Yet I have no suggestion to offer. One might almost be inclined to imagine that the emblems for June 24 and June 29 had interchanged by some chance, because that of the former, part of it at least, is rather suggestive of a key, while the latter might very well suggest a budding or flowering herb.

24. It is to be noticed, that the crown-emblem for the Virgin Mary given here to the 2nd of July betrays some peculiarities, by which it differs distinctly from the rest of the emblems of the Holy Virgin in this calendar. Chiefly in this, that the side-strokes to the main stem, which in the other emblems are very distinctly three on either side, are here only two on one side, and on the other three, but made as if the rune-carver was not certain whether there should be two or three; or that he had first made two, and afterwards added a third. This is all the more noticeable, as this is a very late feast-day in the Church. It was indeed originally instituted in 1263, by Pope Urban VI., in commemoration of the visit of the Holy Virgin to Elizabeth up in the moun-

tainous regions of Judea (Luke i. 39, 40). But it is quite certain that this festival did not come into common observance in the Catholic Church, least of all in the North, till after the council of Basel in 1431 had ordered, on the very ground of its sporadic and irregular observance, that it should be observed throughout the Western Church. And as a matter of fact it was not generally observed till some considerable time afterwards; in Iceland as late as 1472.

25. To July 15th being assigned in Church calendars the translation of St Swithun, I have entered his name against the day. But what the emblem may signify in connection with that saint I cannot suggest. It will be noticed that it is identical with that to which attention is called under No. 5 against the 14th of January.

26. The emblems given here to St Margaret's and St Mary Magdalen's days, July 20th and 22nd, are identical in form, and suggest a crown, lower in dignity than that of the Virgin Mary by two degrees. Generally the runic emblems are a rake in the one case, suggestive of hay-making work, a scale, or ladder, or a chair in the other, which probably refer to the legend of Mary Magdalen's assumption and reception by the Queen of the heavens.

27. The common emblem on Northern runic staves for St James' day, July 25, is a hat, or a pilgrim's staff: I do not see how the emblem in our present calendar can bear any interpretation in that direction at all. I cannot identify it either with any other of the known emblems of this Saint, such as a book, a wallet, a shell, or any combination of these.

28. The two feasts of St Olaf, the patron saint of Norway, July 29 and Aug. 3, are marked in the usual way, each with a battle axe. Olaf Haraldson became king of Norway, 1015, and fell in the battle of Stiklastad, 1030. It is not uninteresting to notice, that in the date of the death of this Saint we have one more instance of current chronology being cor-

rected by astronomical science. From an eclipse of the sun which took place in the middle of the battle it has been verified to have taken place two days later than the calendar records it, or July 31st, 1030.

29. The emblem for St Laurence's day, Aug. 10th (A.D. 258), represents, no doubt, the gridiron on which the legend says the Saint was roasted to death.

30. The common emblem for St Bartholomew's day, Aug. 24th, is a flaying knife, with which, according to tradition, he was flayed alive. Possibly the sign here is meant for that instrument.

31. On Northern rune staves the sign for St Giles' day, Sept. 1 (A.D. 725), is universally a pair of sheep-shears, and the sign here seems to represent a part of the instrument, the handle or the hole through which the shearer's finger is passed while working it.

32. The sign for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Sept. 14th, is no doubt meant for an elevated cross, but is, like so many emblems in the calendar, rude and unsuggestive in the extreme.

33. The general emblem on Danish rune staves for St Matthew's day, Sept. 21st, is an angel, but on Norwegian and Swedish ones, a wood axe, and in our calendar that may be what the emblem means, unless indeed it is meant for the leafy bough, for the cutting of which the axe was employed.

34. What may be meant by the sign for St Michael's day, Sept. 29th, I am unable to suggest. The common signs on Northern rune staves are a trumpet, or a pair of scales; I do not discover either in the sign before us.

35. The common sign for St Francis' day, Oct. 4th (A.D. 1226; canon. 1228), on Swedish rune staves is a fish and an open book, on Danish staves a cross. I see nothing of these in the sign in this calendar, and have no suggestion to offer as to its meaning.

36. Oct. 7th is the feast of the Swedish St Bridget, who was canonized in 1391. The emblem of the day is generally on Danish and Swedish staves a fuller's heckle or card, on Norwegian ones a bush, the former indicative of the commencement of the season when the domestic industry in woollen fabrics began, the latter of the bear preparing his lair for winter-dormitation. The emblem before us seems suggestive of none of these things. On the contrary, it seems to be a regular 15th century representation of a crown, and as such the most artistic, indeed strikingly so, of all the emblems in this calendar. And a crown is one of the attributes of St Bridget, with which she is frequently met in ecclesiastical art.

37. St Calixtus' Day, Oct. 14th, has from of old marked a turning-point in the season in the North; by the Norwegians it was called the first night of winter. It is with reference to this fact, no doubt, that the emblem given in the North to this day is peculiar to the North, being a mitten (with one thumb sticking out), suggestive of cold approaching, and this protection of the hand being required.

38. The common emblem for St Ursula, Oct. 21st (A.D. 383), in the North as elsewhere, is an arrow, or a couple of arrows. I think the emblem in our calendar is fairly suggestive of the latter.

39. The emblem of St Simon and St Jude, Oct. 28th, is appropriately suggestive of the ship, for which it is meant to stand, a ship with its mast rising from the middle.

40. Likewise, the emblem for All Saints' Day, Nov. 1st, which should represent a temple, seems only to suggest such.

41. The emblem for St Martin's day, Nov. 11 (A.D. 397), should be a goose (or a pig), but I cannot see the connection between the sign and the thing.

42. St Clement's day, Nov. 23rd (A.D. 100), has here, as usually, an anchor for an emblem, which Northern interpreters



of runic staves explain as indicative of ships being in harbour for winter quarters, cf. p. 17. And indeed the day corresponds well with the season, when shipping ceases in Scandinavia. This meaning of the anchor is still further borne out by the name given to this particular feast-day in early Northern (Swedish) Breviaries, where it is called *festum terræ*. This day is only one more instance, and an interesting one, of the singular manner in which legendary signs and types become accidentally associated with circumstances with which, in their origin, they had not the remotest connection. For the anchor of St Clement is, in Scandinavia as in Greece, in reality, the anchor with which attached to his neck the saint was cast into the sea, in evidence of which legend I content myself with adducing the following punning epigram out of the metrical Greek martyrology (Siberus, *Martyrol. metricum*):

Ὡς κλῆμα Χριστοῦ τῆς νοητῆς ἀμπέλου  
Γέγονας, Κλήμη, οἶνον θεῖον προχέων.  
Βληθεὶς ὁ Κλήμης εἰς βυθὸν σὺν ἀγκύρᾳ,  
Πρὸς Χριστὸν ἤκει, ἄγκυραν τὴν ἐσχάτην.

43. The emblem for St Katherine's day, Nov. 25th (A.D. 307), is, no doubt, intended for her wheel, as

44. That for St Andrew's, Nov. 30th (A.D. 70), is meant for the cross which is the common attribute of that saint: only it assumes here the shape of the gallows.

45. On Northern runic calendars the emblem for St Nicolas' day, Dec. 6th (A.D. 326), is a bishop's staff. The one before us seems not altogether incapable of such interpretation, only there seems to be implied in it a good deal beside the staff, but what that may be, I am unable to divine.

46. The emblem against the 9th of Dec. is probably intended to signify the day of St Anne, the mother of the Virgin; and I think its real meaning may be a demi-crown, to signify the difference in the dignity between mother and daughter. Otherwise the day's emblem is generally a pot or tankard, in-

dicative of beer being brewed on this day for consumption during the ensuing Christmas time. As early as A.D. 1425 we find this feast officially sanctioned for Denmark at a provincial Synod at Copenhagen: Item statuimus quod festum Sanctæ Annæ matris genetricis Dei beatæ Mariæ quolibet anno in crastino conceptionis ejusdem beatæ Mariæ virginis per totam nostram provinciam in posterum celebre habeatur. Hardouin, *Concilia*, Tom. VIII.; inofficially it had been current in the Northern Churches, no doubt, for a long time before this date, as it had been from very early times both in the Eastern and the Western Church.

47. Against the 15th of Dec. is a sign of which I can make nothing, nor can I even mention a saint to whom a Northern calendar would assign such a conspicuous attribute on Dec. 15th. But St Lucy, Dec. 13th (cca A.D. 304), who is a well-known saint in Northern calendars, having no place in this one, possibly the emblem intended for her might have been misplaced by two days by the rune-carver; and yet it is difficult to see how the emblem here can mean either the cloven foot of an ox, or a flaming fire, or a blazing torch, all of which are met with as St Lucy's emblems in the North. Anyhow, whatever the emblem before us may mean, it is, if it is a saint's emblem, misplaced; if it is an emblem of domestic or economic import, I confess I know not what it may be meant for.

48. The last saint's day in our calendar is that of the Apostle Thomas, Dec. 21st; the emblem represents, I think without doubt, a wheel, indicative of the orb of the sun turning the solstice point, which is the emblem for this day met with most frequently on the earliest rune staves of Sweden. Otherwise the emblem of the day, especially among Norwegians, is a large jar, and in domestic parlance the saint figures as Thomas the Brewer, Thom o' the pot, which refers of course to the beer-consumption of Yule-tide.

From this list of Saints' and feast-days it will be seen,

that the local saints all belong to the Swedish Church, with the exception of St Olaf, who, though a Norwegian saint properly, is a common Scandinavian saint, and as such really as much Swedish as Norwegian. The nationality of the local saints settles the nationality of the calendar. And the present is, without doubt, of Swedish origin. In order to get an idea of the age of the calendar it is necessary to ascertain the latest dates of the saints contained in it local and general. Of the local saints the dates are: St Olaf 1031, St Eskill 1063, St Henry 1158, St Sigfrid 1158, St Eric 1160, and—St Bridget 1391. Of the general saints the latest is St Francis, 1228. It is a point which must not be overlooked, that from 1160—1390, or for a period of 230 years, not one local saint has found a place in this calendar, although that period is rich in saints, some of which enjoy the adoration of the whole Western Church. As I said before, the sign for St Bridget's day is a distinct 15th century sign both as to the type of the crown and the execution of it. But no other sign in this calendar could be placed so far down in time. And I cannot help thinking that the crown of St Bridget was added to the calendar a long time after it was first carved. For how could a calendar of the 15th century leave out such saints, *e.g.* as St Thomas of Canterbury, 1170, who enjoyed at that very time perhaps higher adoration in the North than any other saint? It also would be something very incongruous to see a 15th century calendar without giving St Benedict a day in it, houses of whose rule abounded throughout Sweden. It is to no purpose to swell the enumeration of omitted famous saints; the list would be too long, but no more convincing through its greater length. But it is worth while to notice that a runic calendar, printed in Worm's *fasti Danici* from a vellum dating from 1328, contains no less than 171 saints' days, while this has only 50; for it will, as a rule, hold good, that the fewer the saints' days, the older is the calendar.

Just as the crown of St Bridget, so also the crown of the Virgin, attached to July 2nd, or the Visitation day, is, in my opinion, of a later date than the rest of the emblems in the calendar. I have called attention to the deformed shape of the crown-emblem, and it seems to me evident that the same hand could not have wrought it at the same time with the rest of the Virgin's crowns. It is, surely, of a much later workmanship, for earlier it cannot under any circumstances be. I cannot help associating the emblems of July 2nd and Oct. 7th with a period much later than that of the rude primitive rest of the signs in this calendar, and indeed a far later period. From St Anne's day, no other inference could be drawn than that the calendar is a fourteenth century production.

Considering the heathen tradition preserved in this calendar in the number of days given to the year, and in the date given to the commencement of the year, in which it stands unique; and bearing in mind that from the interval between 1230 and 1390, *i.e.* out of 160 years rich in famous local and famous general saints, not one should be recorded here; that saints of universal adoration in the Catholic Church, such as St Thomas of Canterbury, St Benedict, &c., should not have a place here; we cannot escape referring it to an age when it may be fairly supposed, that these heathen traditions were still believed in by at least some considerable number of the community. There is nothing improbable in their having been in common vogue in the 13th century, but there is every improbability against their being commonly alive at the end of the fourteenth century. And as I am convinced that St Bridget's crown is of different date and artistic treatment to every other sign in this calendar, I feel inclined to assign to the calendar an earlier date than 1391. But anterior to 1230 it cannot be; long posterior to that date, however, I scarcely think it can be, all things considered.

This must be a layman's calendar, since it exhibits no golden numbers, and gives, consequently, no clue to the paschal

cycle or the moveable feasts. It is a very valuable piece of antiquity, and ought to be well taken care of.

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P.S. It is, perhaps, not a mere chance that it should have fallen to the lot of Thorstein the Swarthy to correct the Icelandic Calendar. He descended from a family which had been once settled in Ireland, and had extensive connections in that country as well as in the Hebrides and Scotland. His great grand-parents were Oleif the White, king of Dublin, and Aud the Deepminded, the latter of whom, after various vicissitudes, came to Iceland "a good Christian," about A.D. 892. She "performed her prayers at Cross-Knolls," says Landnáma; that means, that she had her Breviary, and must have had in it some clue to the moveable feast-days of the year. The family continued to be Christian after its settlement in Iceland, so there is every probability of Aud's Christian Library having remained, at least in statu quo, in the family, even if it did not multiply in copies, considering the unlettered state of the country at the time. When a computistic puzzle arose of such a nature as was the Icelandic which Thorstein the Swarthy had to deal with, it was only too natural that those who had some acquaintance with the Christian computation of the year and its seasons should come forward, or be called upon, to settle the difficulty. Thorstein, having undoubtedly been a Christian, it is no stretch of imagination to assume that, in consequence, he was able to give a partial solution of a question on which his Christian calendar would throw some light, at all events.

On the passage quoted above, p.70, note 1, Mr Jón Thorkelsson, the Rector of the "Latin School" of Reykjavik, sends me the following valuable contribution: "As to the passage in *Íslendingabók*, ch. 4, I agree with you, that in the old computation, according to which 364 days are counted in the year, no leap-years have a place. I venture not an opinion as to whether the words, *At réttu tale* ... to the end of the chapter

are by Ari himself or not. Certain it is, that they may go out without the thread of the narrative being disturbed in the least in consequence of their removal. The words, 'Enn þá es ayksk at oro tale et siaunda hvert at viku, en öngo at hino, þá verþa siau ór saman iamalöng at hvórotveggia,' are inexact, in so far that the author has not included in his calculation the bissextile day or days which fall in every seven years; but taking four times seven, = 28, years with five 'sumaraukar,' and four times seven, = 28, years with 365 days each, and seven bissextile days, we find that both periods of 28 years are equally long; for 5 sumaraukar make 35 days, and 28 days + 7 bissextile days make 35 days; and both periods have thus 35 days beyond 28 years, each counting 364 days. Yet it is not certain that the author went to this depth into the matter; and the most probable thing is that he forgot to count the bissextile day or days.

"Then there remain the words, 'En es hlaupór verþa tvau á miple þeira es auka skal, þá þarf auka et sétta.' Sense may also be made of these words, if it is assumed, that Ari, or who-soever the author may be, counted the time as the Greeks and the Romans did. The Olympian plays were held every fourth year, but the Greeks say they were held every fifth year (*διὰ πέντετων έτους*). Between the years on which the Olympian plays fell there always lapsed three playless years; these three years the Greeks counted, and, beside, the year preceding and the year succeeding them, and in this way they got five instead of four years. Between *nonæ* and *idus* with the Romans there were in reality eight days, but the Romans counted them as nine, whence *nonæ*. The same method of calculation Ari has, in all probability, followed. He has included in his calculation the 'Sumarauka'-years on both sides of the years which had no 'Sumarauki,' the consequence is that he mentions the *sixth* instead of the *fifth*. The period, then, is five years. Five times 365 days + 2 days = 1827 days; and five times 364 days + 7 days = 1827 days."

