ART. XXII.—*Illustrations of Tuetonic Mythology from early Christian Monuments at Brigham and Dearham.* By the REV. W. S. CALVERLEY.

Read at Egremont, August 30th, 1881.

AT the request of the Society, I lay before you drawings and rubbings of the designs sculptured on the top, and on three of the sides of a cross socket at Brigham Church, and also of the head of a cross now placed over the vicarage porch at Brigham.

I desire, moreover, to refer you to Nos. 1 and 2 in the plate of "Antient Crosses at Dearham Church," placed before Art. XVIII., part I, vol. V, of your *Transactions*, being the last volume, and to the drawing of the Dearham Font, figure 1, opposite page CXCIV, in Lyson's Mag. Brit. vol. iv, Cumberland.

The Brigham cross socket is a peculiarly interesting fragment, and associated with other early monuments, may be of value in the reading of one page of our history. The stone is of light-coloured sandstone, and measures two feet ten inches by two feet six inches, with a thickness of one foot. It is cracked through the middle longitudinally.

The top of the socket (II) has a cable moulding running round it, similar to the one round the pedestal of the Dearham Font.

The place (a) for the reception of the cross stem has a raised edge, and measures sixteen inches by eight inches, perforating the stone. Around it coils the serpent, with wolfish mouth (b) and teeth and swollen throat, the tail of whom, after many windings and wanderings, finds refuge only in its own mouth. On the shortest of the three sculptured sides of the socket (III) is a strange figure, composed of a wide distended throat, (c) over whose cavernous

cavernous depths fang-like limbs appear to close with ominous strength, and the twisted tail of the serpent, which is partially restrained by an eight-shaped knot or bond. (f)

On another side (IV) the head of a horse (h) takes the place of the wolfish head and wide throat of the two figures which I have already noticed, and the serpent-like intertwinings seem to consist of two bodies issuing from the neck of the horse, (l) and becoming incorporated each with the other. These are also bound by a knot. (d)

I have endeavoured to distinguish the bonds from the bodies themselves by means of lighter shading. The stone is damaged about the neck of the horse, but the representation of the intertwinings is, I believe, faithful.

On the other side of the socket (V), part of which has crumbled away, there still remains the head of a wolf, nose resting on tail, which is curled round (e), not rampant, shewing teeth and claws, and having tail erect, as on the Dearham Font, yet certainly not dead, though calm, and under subjection. All the designs on this socket shew vigour, and at the same time restraint.

The cross head (now over the vicarage porch) is of red sandstone, and measures one foot nine inches across the arms, and one foot five inches from the top to the fracture at the waist of the figure. It is sculptured on both sides and at the ends. The front (I) shews the head and body of a man having long wavy hair, and grasping with his right hand a serpent, whose body is coiled around his waist, and twisted into the usual knot in the opposite arm of the cross; above this knot the left hand of the figure is raised with open palm in an attitude of victory.

On the reverse seven small bosses, within a circle, a head and two patterns of knot work.

On the ends of the arms knots.

Extracts from Grimm's Teutonic Mythology, Stallybrass, vol. I:—

P. 244.

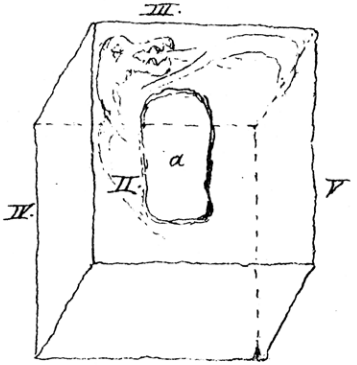
I.

WS 1882.

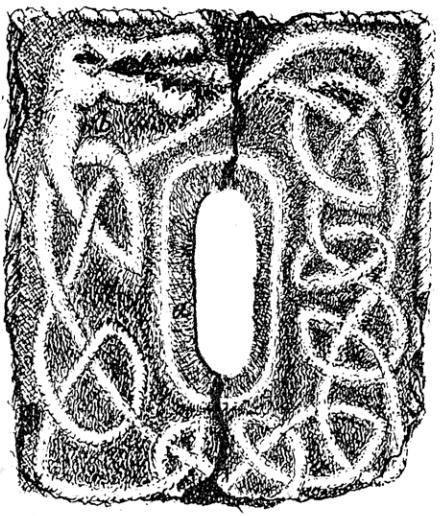
VI.

CROSS HEAD. BRIGHAM.

III.



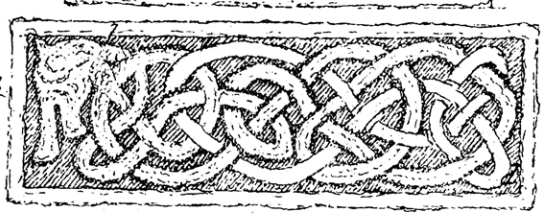
SOCKET.



II.

ms 1882.

III.



IV.

V.

CROSS SOCKET. BRIGHAM.

P. 244. "Loki, in punishment of his misdeeds, is put in chains; but he is to be released again at the end of the world. One of his children, Fenrir, *i.e.*, himself in a second birth, pursues the moon in the shape of a wolf, and threatens to swallow her."

P. 312. "Hel is no other than Loki's daughter, and like him a dreadful divinity. Rân receives the souls that die by water, Hel those on land, and Freyja those that fall in battle.

The ON. Hel gen. Heljar shows itself in the other Teutonic tongues even less doubtfully than Frigg and Freyja; only, the personal notion has dropped away, and reduced itself to the local one of halja, hellia, hell, the nether world and place of punishment.

Originally, Hellia is not death nor any evil being, she neither kills nor torments; she takes the souls of the departed and holds them with inexorable grip. The idea of a place evolved itself; the converted heathen applied it to the Christian underworld, the abode of the damned; all Teutonic nations have done this, from the first baptized Goths down to the Northmen, because that local notion already existed under heathenism.

In the Edda, Hel is Loki's daughter by a giantess, she is sister to the wolf Fenrir, and to a monstrous snake (the serpent Jörmungander, which lies coiled around the world ash Yggdrasill.)

Her dwelling is deep down in the darkness of the ground, under a root of the Tree Yggdrasill, in Niflheim, the innermost part of which is therefore called Niflhel, there is her court (rann), there her halls. Her platter is named *hûngr*, her knife *Sultr*, synonymous terms to denote her insatiable greed. The dead go down to her, *fara til Heljar*, strictly those only that have died of sickness or old age, not those fallen in fight, who people Valhalla.

The unpitying nature of the Eddic Hel is expressly emphasized; what she once has, she never gives back. She is of wolfish nature and extraction; to the wolf on the other hand a *hellish throat* is attributed.

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In the Danish popular belief Hel is a three-legged horse, that goes round the country, a harbinger of plague and pestilence. Originally it was no other than the *steed* on which the goddess posted over land, picking up the dead that were her due.

A passage in Beowulf shows how the Anglo-Saxons retained perfectly the old meaning of the word. It says of the expiring Grendel, "the old heathen goddess took possession of him."

In Germany, too, the Mid. Ages still cherished the conception of a voracious, hungry, insatiable Hell. It sounds still more personal, when she has *gaping yawning jaws* ascribed to her, like the wolf; pictures in the MS. of Cædmon represent her *simply* by a wide open mouth (III.K.)

"The raging tyrant
he was like the Hell
who the chasm (steep descent)
be—yawneth with her mouth
from heaven down to earth.
And yet to her it cannot hap
that she ever become full;
She is the insatiable cavern,
that neither now nor ever said
'that is what I cannot (manage.)'"

NOTE.—There is such a representation in one of the windows of the Carlisle Cathedral. Also such representations were usual in the miracle plays of Mediæval days.

I leave this set of sculptured stones:—

No. 1, Art. XVIII., of your last *Transactions*, having little symbolism but that of the Holy Trinity:

No. 2 of the same Article, having upon its stem the great world ash Yggdrassil, over which shines the true sun God, which in the teaching of the missionaries was the Christ.

Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, of this Article, being the Brigham cross socket now noticed for the first time, and having upon it

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a full representation of the incarnations of Loki, Fenrir, the Midgard-Snake, Hel, and the horse, all under bonds. And the cross-head at Brigham, No. 1 of this Article, representing the victory over the powers of evil to tell their own story for the present.

I beg respectfully to call your attention to the note by Dr. George Stephens, of the University of Copenhagen, at the end of your last volume of *Transactions*, and to express a hope that careful examination and study of this subject may be found especially interesting to members of this Society, who live in a country abounding in strong testimonies to the untiring zeal and hardihood of faithful bands of Christian missionaries, whose glorious privilege it was to lift up the cross and proclaim a new sun, even in "*The twilight of the Gods*" of our northern heathendom.

NOTE.—I have hopes that the Gosforth cross, which we have seen to-day, will lend us something of interest on this subject, and I am pleased to hear from Dr. Parker, of Gosforth, his willingness to assist in making its story clearer by means of photographs, &c.