

ART. XXVII.—*Notes upon some of the older Word Forms to be found in comparing the language of Lakeland with the language of Iceland.* By REV. T. ELLWOOD, B.A., Rector of Torver.

*Read at Coniston Hall, Sept. 14, 1887.*

I N the year 1869, and for one or two years following, Dr. Kitchin, now Dean of Winchester, took up his residence at Brantwood, the present abode of Professor Ruskin, and while there, he had in hand, as delegate of the Clarendon Press, Oxford, the proofs of Cleasby and Vigfusson's Icelandic Dictionary, which was then passing through the press. Knowing that I was a Cumbrian, he kindly asked me to look at those proofs and see whether I could suggest any affinities to our Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness dialect. I was able to point out a number of words which were identical, or nearly so in Icelandic and the dialect of Cumberland and this portion of Lakeland, but as a considerable portion of the book had passed through the press it was too late for many of the words I had noted to appear in the work. In looking over the proofs, however, and reading the exhaustive introduction to the joint labours of Cleasby and Vigfusson, those long and self-sacrificing labours in which Cleasby spent and finished his life, light seemed to be thrown upon our northern language and customs, which placed them in a very different point of view from anything I had thought of before. The language of the Northmen had, at the time of the Settlement, been carried to Iceland, and there, isolated and remote from the contact of other languages, it had in a great measure preserved its primitive grammar and vocabulary, so that the Icelandic classics of a thousand years ago could with little difficulty be read by the Icelandic peasant of the present day. It occupied, more-  
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over, much the same relationship to the Danish and other Norse tongues, as the Latin does to the Romance languages of Europe, and hence its vocabulary was the best means of acquiring a radical knowledge of them.

It occurred to me that the task of collecting such words of the dialect in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness as seemed to have identity or affinity in form and usage with the Icelandic would be the best means of tracing out the origin of this dialect, and hence, in some measure, the origin of those by whom this dialect was spoken, and as we have here words and usages almost as primitive as they have in Iceland, we could, I thought, trace the language a great way towards its original or parent stock. It occurred to me also that as many of the old customs and superstitions in Lakeland are fast dying out, just as the old Norse words that represent them have become or are rapidly becoming obsolete, it must be now or never with me in making the undertaking, if I wish permanently to note down the customs and vocables of the people amongst whom the whole of my life has been spent. I have worked at intervals at collecting these words for 17 or 18 years, and though I have doubtless in many cases done over again what others have done much better before me, yet I imagine in other instances I have unearthed and identified words and customs of the Northmen, yet to be found amongst our dalesmen, of which not any note had been taken before. In pursuing this work I have inquired incessantly amongst the dalesmen, and wandered into most of the nooks and corners of Cumberland and Lakeland. I have had the friendly advice and encouragement of the A. J. Ellis, Esq., of Professor Skeat, and above all, of the Dean of Winchester, whose kind advice and encouragement, as it first started me, so it has in the end brought me to the final issue of my work.

It seems, in many instances, to be the idea formed by the philologists who have treated upon our dialect, as  
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derived from the Northmen, that as they were plunderers, that all habits and names of plundering must, in a great measure, be referred to them. A careful study, however, of the Norse words in those dialects has led me to a very different conclusion. The remarkable thing about those words is that they evince the peaceful disposition of those who first settled here and left their language. The great bulk of the words are field names and farm names, the terms applied to husbandry operations, and names applied to sheep and cattle, or used in their care and management, words applied in butter making, cheese making, knitting, and all domestic duties and concerns of every day life. Another consideration that adds interest to this study, is that the words correspond in the two languages, not only in their original idea and meaning, but in most of the secondary and consequent meanings that are derived from them, and show that we have in Lakeland retained not only many of the original vocables, but also the habits, the customs, the superstitions, and the modes of life which are common to nations of the Northern stock. I have said I commenced my work with Cleasby. Cleasby, however, is a large and expensive work, costing, I believe, something not far from £4, got up in the style, and proceeding *mutatis mutandis* upon the plan of Liddel and Scott. The delegates of the Clarendon Press, however, most kindly presented me at the outset with a handsomely bound copy of the work; and I have carefully worked through this once, and in many portions, twice, comparing it with our dialect—page for page, and word for word.

For comparing Icelandic with our local place names and surnames, the Landnama, or Landnama Bok, is indispensable. The Landnama Bok is a history of the discovery and settlement of Iceland, originally written by Frodi, who lived between 1067 and 1148. The Landnama Bok is also a sort of Doomsday Book of Iceland, and contains a roll of the names of all the original settlers in Iceland, together

together with the names of the farms which they occupied, making in all about 5,000 names. I have found also remarkable affinities between our Northern dialects and the words in the Moeso-Gothic Bible of Ulphilas. Ulphilas was a bishop of the Moeso-Goths, who lived between A.D. 311 and 381. His version, which is also very valuable as a critical evidence of the New Testament, was made about 370. All that now remains of it are fragments of the four Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul. Some of the older words in our Northern dialect seem to be identical both in sound and meaning with the words found in the existing fragments of Ulphilas. I have carefully collated what remains of Ulphilas with the words to be found in our dialect, and I think I shall be able to prove, before I conclude this paper, that we have words in every-day use here in High Furness identical both in form and meaning with the words used by Ulphilas in his translation 1,500 years ago. And this is more remarkable, as Ulphilas had in some measure to reduce a spoken language to a written one, and had himself to frame the characters by which he represented the words.

With all these helps, however, I have always had an idea that the best method of comparing the language of Lakeland with the language of Iceland was to get a Lakelander and an Icelander *vis-a-vis*, and in this way to let them collate the older meanings and usages of words in Lakeland and Iceland, and to note all the points of affinity they may be found to possess. This, I imagine, I have been enabled to do, for, during a few weeks' residence at Cambridge in the present summer, I made the acquaintance of one of the University librarians, Eric Magnussen. I made his acquaintance first in my search for the Landnama Bok in the University library, and found that, though he was now a graduate and University librarian in an English University, he was a native Icelander, and had been born and spent most of his life upon a lonely  
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farm in that remote and isolated land. He entered most cordially and ardently into the work of comparing our respective dialects—lent me the Landnama Bok, which I still have—went carefully through the 500 or 600 Norse words which I had collected from the dialect of the Lake country, and wrote notes, in some instances long notes, upon more than 100 of them, showing how in many instances in Iceland and Lakeland the very same words in the very same meaning are still used by the shepherd and the farmer. It is to words of this class I shall confine my attention in the few names I have chosen to illustrate what I have said.

The word used to name mountains or unenclosed mountain land is in both countries essentially the same, for, I take it, there is no difference between the Fjall of Iceland, and the Fell of Lakeland; as we have a corresponding name for the hills, so also have we one for the valleys, for Dale, or rather Deedal, of Lakeland is exactly like Dalr of Iceland in its general and applied meanings. Here, as there, the people who live amongst the mountains are called dalesmen. Here we have Crossdale, Broaddale, Deepdale, and Langdale—there they have Thver dalr or Crossdale, Breid dalr, Djupr dalr, Langidalr in the very same meaning; and their term *dala drog* corresponds exactly in meaning with our own term *deedal head*. Many of the names of the peaks of mountains are almost the same in sound and meaning in both countries, as *knab*, Icelandic *knapper*, a button-shaped peak. *Knot*, Icelandic *knut*, is of frequent occurrence in Lakeland, Iceland, and Norway, and is applied to mountains, as Hardknot in Eskdale, Harteknot or the hard knot in Norway, and this idea in both cases is taken from the close resemblance the form of some mountains bears to the round of the knuckles. Of the mountain peaks signified in Iceland by *knab* and *knot*, Mr. Magnussen made me drawings, which I here produce, and you will see that they convey the same ideas as the names do here.

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With regard to the names used for mountain paths in the Lake country the word *Rake* was applied generally to the narrow paths along which sheep are driven to the fell. It is also used in the same acceptation in Yorkshire. It comes from Icelandic *reka*, past, *rak*, to drive. Ulphilas has *wrikan* as the same word to drive, English *wreak*. *Outrake* corresponds in sound and meaning with Norse *ut reka*, to drive out (Icelandic Bible Joshua iii., 10, *ut reka* Cananita, *drive out* the Canaanites), and this *outrake* in the Lake District was a path by which sheep were *driven out* to the fell. There is one so named on Black Combe, one at Torver, one at Coniston, and there seems to have been one or more in most of the valleys in Lakeland, which were spoken of as *The Rake*. There are also several farms called *The Outrake* in this district, and I have observed that these farms mostly stand at the entrance to a rake or fell drive. The Norse verb *vreka* or *wreka* also means to drive or drift, as the tide does, and we have this name, I think, in the proper name of Wreak's End, near Broughton-in-Furness, as a point in the stream which marks the end of the tide flow or *drift* in that direction. On Yorkshire moors sheep are said to *rake out* when they go or are driven out in single file. Ulleraker, wool rakes or sheep rakes, was formerly a realm of Sweden, in the present province of Westmanland. "*Rake*," often used here as the name of a sheep dog, is, I think, from Norse *Reka*, to drive; or, as Mr. Magnussen suggests, is Iceland *Reki*, a driver.

Speaking about the Icelandic field or farm names there is probably no word that has left its mark more evidently in the towns and villages of Cumberland than the word *tún toun* or *ton*. Upon both the Cumbrian and the Scottish side of the Border *tún* is applied to a single farm-house, with its out-buildings, &c. Originally this word meant a field surrounded by a hedge, and in this sense Wycliffe translates Matt. xxii., 5—But thei dispisden, and wenten  
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forth—oon into his town (field), another to his merchandise. In the Waverley of Sir W. Scott, *toun* or *tun* is applied to a single farm upon the Border. “He hes dune neathing but dance up an’ down the toun.” This application might be indefinitely extended upon the Border, where every farm is called a *toun* or *tùn*, and the Whamtun, Uppertoun, Bartiestoun, are either single farm-houses or hamlets with three or four houses. Lowthertoun, Longtoun, are larger villages, but still from the same derivation, and so on with the other tons of the country. *Tun* corresponds with the Icelandic *tùn*, properly a hedge; then a hedged or fenced plot, within which a house is built; then the farmstead, with its buildings—the homestead. In Norse deeds each single farm is called *tùn*, and the Icelandic phrase, *tùn fra tùi*, means from house to house. The ancient Scandinavians, like the other old Teutonic peoples, had no towns. Tacitus says: “Nullas Germanorum populis urbes habitari, satis notum est; ne pati quidem junctas sedes. Colunt discreti ac diversi, ut fons, ut campus, ut nemus placuit.” And with regard to Iceland those words of Tacitus, “Colunt discreti ac diversi,” still apply, for excepting the capital, which is but a village, all the other so-called *tùns* are single farms.

Another word which we hear very commonly used as the name of farms in Furness and some adjoining portions of Westmorland is *Grund*; or more modern, ground. The word is *grundas* in Ulphilas, and in the Landnama it is applied as a farm name in Iceland. Cleasby says that *grund vollr* is the ground marked out for a building. From this root doubtless we have *ground*, always pronounced *grund*, applied to so many farms in Furness—Atkinson Grund, Brockbank Grund, Sawrey Grund, &c. An inquiry which a friend of mine, Mr. Swainson Cowper, lately made to find out the farms called *grund* or *ground* in Furness, or near it, produced a total of 47.

Dealing with the subject of farming, and reading my paper here at Coniston Hall, which forms, as I may say,  
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one of the great sheep centres of High Furness, I may refer to some of the many words that we get from Iceland to apply to sheep. *Twinter*, as sheep of two years old, and *trinter*, a sheep of three years old, are applied almost exactly in the same way in Iceland. *Twinter*, really means two winters, and this custom of reckoning age by winters is found in the Bible of Ulphilas, where the girl of 12 years old is said to be *twalib wintrus*—twelve winters. Here we have *gimmer lamb* for the female lamb. In Icelandic *lamb gymber* is used in exactly the same meaning; while the Danish term is nearer still—*gimmer lam*.

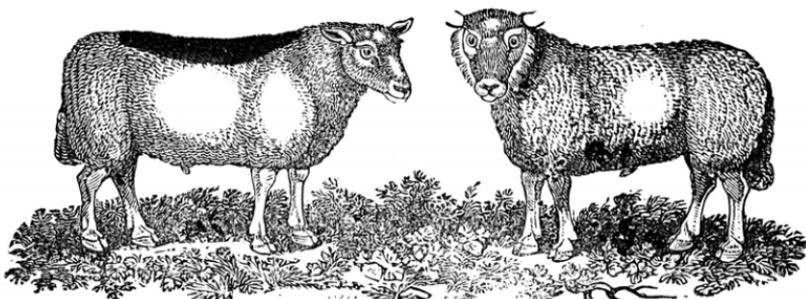
As is well known, every farmer in Lakeland has his peculiar mark, which he puts upon his sheep. This is well known and published in a book, which I have here with me; in it figures of the sheep are engraved and marked with the distinctive marks of each farm. I have procured since a *Shepherds' Guide*, that I might bring it here to show you. This red distinctive mark is called the *smit*.\* Lambs are so *smitted* when first put on the fell, and sheep at clipping time. Each farmer has his own distinctive *smit* or brand, which are carefully noted in this *Shepherds' Guide*. This very word "*smit*," is found in the Bible of Ulphilas, in the sense of smear or anoint, and comes from the verb *smeitan*, and it is found in Iceland as *smyrja*, to smear. You will observe, in looking at those sheep as figured in the *Shepherds' Guide*, that besides the "*smit*" there is another distinctive mark,† viz., a small piece cut out of the sheep's ear,

\*The *Smit* given upon the left hand figure in the engraving is the Coniston Hall *Smit*, and is described in "the *Shepherds' Guide*" as "The *Chine Smit* down the back."

†The ear-mark given in the right hand figure in the engraving is technically called the "forked" ear-mark. It is the ear-mark or lug-mark rather than the *Smit* which is usually put forth as the *legal* mark and sworn to in proof of ownership. In the *Shepherd's Guide* now before me, I find nearly 600 different ways in which the sheep's ear is bored, slitted, indented or partly cut off to distinguish the various ownerships in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness, and no two marks appear to be exactly alike. Boring the ear is spoken of as a mark of ownership in Exodus xxi, 6.

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differing for different farms. This is generally called *the lug mark*, and, as in Cumberland, we often call the ear the lug, as being that by which an animal may be handled or lugged, I used to think that lug-mark was equivalent to



FROM THE SHEPHERD'S GUIDE.

ear-mark. Now, however, I hardly think this is the case. In Iceland they have lug-mark for this distinctive mark of the sheep belonging to the various farms. The word appears there, however, as *lögg-mark*; *log* is law, and hence this *lögg-mark* is explained, as the *lawful* or legal mark by which the sheep of one farm can be distinguished from those of another. With such an obvious explanation I cannot but think that our term *lug-mark* must have come from the same root, and have been *lögg-mark* at first.

One word more and I have done. I have said that some of our old words, together with the things they represented, are rapidly dying out. I will give you an instance. Perhaps in some parts of Cumberland there is not one person who knows what a brandrith\* is, and yet at one time in Lakeland the brandrith was one of the best

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\* I have instanced the word Brandrith, and I may remark generally, that the affinities between the Norse and the Language of Lakeland are very obvious and marked in the words which have relation to fuel and fire.

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known and most used of all domestic utensils. It was in the time of old hearth fires, the grate, and corresponds exactly in name and meaning with Icelandic Brandreid—a grate. It was an iron tripod held together with rims of iron, and employed in supporting the girdle plate which was used above the hearth fire for baking oat bread. You shall not remain long in ignorance of what it was for. I have brought one, and here it is. The word has a local significance, as I find the term to describe the point where the boundaries of three parishes met was a brandrith. A mountain near the Great Gable, which reminds one of a tripod, is called The Brandrith; and finally, the three shire stones upon the top of Wrynose, near the source of the Duddon, are called the Three-legged Brandrith, because a person might there at the same time place each of his feet in a separate county, viz., Westmorland and Cumberland, and his hands in a third, Lancashire. At that point the Brandrith represents the union of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Furness, the districts wherein the dialect is spoken which I have named as the language of Lakeland. Your Society unites them in that it carries on its labours in every one of them. With such a word, then, and wishing you every welcome to this portion of your district, I may well bring my paper to a close.

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