

1

ROYAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ANTIQUARIES

AT COPENHAGEN.

GENERAL ANNIVERSARY MEETING, JANUARY 31st 1840.

The PRESIDENT, M. Mösting, one of His Majesty's Ministers, opened the proceedings with a speech, in which among other things he remarked "how gratifying it was to observe the constantly increasing interest awakened by the great monuments of the olden time of the North, and the augmented number of those who devote their attention to the fosterland of our earlier history — to that remarkable rocky isle, situate far remote in the northern ocean, where the old Danish tongue has been cherished and preserved unaltered for centuries down to the present time."

Having then noticed the numerous and valuable proofs of favor and interest received by the Society from our lately departed monarch FREDERIK VI, he announced that His present Majesty, King CHRISTIAN VIII, who at an earlier period by several antiquarian communications gave the Society proofs of his approbation of their views, had in the most gracious terms promised the Society a continuation of his favor and patronage.

By the publication in the year before last of Professor Rafn's *ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ SIVE SCRIPTORES SEPTENTRIONALES RERUM ANTE-COLUMBIANARUM IN AMERICA*, the Society endeavoured to contribute to the elucidation of the history of the earliest discovery of the western hemisphere. This work has again been the means of eliciting several communications.

Dr. Webb of Boston communicated in a letter to the Secretary a description of the ruins of an *ancient building* at NEWPORT IN RHODE-ISLAND, which has been for a long time an object of wonder to the beholders, and awakened in every visitor of the place a desire to know its origin, but concerning which even the oldest inhabitants are unable to give any satisfactory account. No similar building for whatsoever purpose, of an earlier or later date, is to be found in the neighbourhood or in any other part of the country. The description is elucidated by drawings, viz. a view of the ruins seen from without (Tab. III) and of the interior (Tab. IV), besides a section and ground plan of the building (Tab. V), both from actual measurement. A is here a fire place, B, B recesses or cupboards in the wall, C the section of a window, and D, D hollow places above the columns, wherein it is conjectured were inserted the ends of beams serving to support a floor. These are presumed with reason to be alterations made at a subsequent period on the building, which was at one time employed as a haymagazine, and at an earlier date may possibly have served for other uses. The building is constructed of rough stone (gray wacke which is found there in abundance) laid in courses and strongly cemented by a mortar composed of sand and gravel, which must have been of a most excellent quality, as it has become almost as hard as the stone itself. Nothing is left but the bare walls, there being no vestige remaining either of a roof or of the internal arrangements.

This communication induced Professor Rafn to annex to the Society's Memoirs for 1836—1839, in which it was inserted, a SUPPLEMENT TO THE ANTIQUITATES AMERICANÆ. For the purpose of instituting a comparison with this ancient building he has given representations of parts of WESTERWICK CHURCH on the western inlet of Liimjord (Tab. VI) originally belonging to the Augustine Monastery there situated, which was founded about the year 1110 in honor of St. Thøger (S tus

Theodgarus of Thuringen), chaplain to St. Olave, who after the fall of that monarch came to Denmark; of the **CRYPT IN WIRORG** (Tab. VII), built in the reign of King Nicolas about 1128; and of **BIERNEDE CHURCH** near Soroe in Sealand (Tab. VIII), erected by Archbishop Absalon's kinsman Sune Ebbason, the hero celebrated in the Knytlinga Saga, who in the expedition to Rugen in 1168 was despatched by Waldemar I to the castle of Arcona for the purpose of demolishing the idol of Svantevit. The Roman, or Ante-Gothic style of architecture, which predominated in the west and north of Europe down to the close of the 12th century, cannot be mistaken both in the two first-mentioned buildings especially, and also in that at Newport, which, it is to be presumed, must have been erected decidedly not later than in the 12th century. In **GREENLAND** are found the ruins of three round buildings, two of them about 150 or 220 paces east of the churches of Igalikko and Kakortok, having been in all probability *Baptisteries*, which in ancient times were often situated outside the church within whose walls no one was considered as entitled to enter until first initiated by the rite of baptism. Such also, it is presumed, the destination of an octagonal building belonging to **MELLIFONT ABBEY IN IRELAND**, founded in 1141, and supposed to be co-eval with the foundation of the abbey itself; and in all probability the ancient building in Newport, which in the peculiarity of its architecture corresponds so strikingly with the last mentioned edifice, was also a **BAPTISTERY**, founded perhaps by Bishop Eric, who in 1121 repaired to Vinland, for the purpose doubtless of making new converts among his countrymen, and of confirming in their faith such of them as had already embraced Christianity.

Auditor Fugl, who had made a journey during the autumn of last year in the United States of America, communicated some observations on the *wild vine* of Rhode Island, and the grapes which it bears. Dr. Paulsen, of Sleswick, presented to the Society an account from Mr. Richter of some remains of ramparts and buildings in the district of Huron, which he (Mr. Richter) conjectured might be of Scandinavian origin. M. Aubin, of Mexico, transmitted extracts from **OLD MEXICAN MSS** in confirmation, as far as concerns Mexico, of the unquestionable facts of there having been in several parts of America a white population before Columbus rediscovered that quarter of the world, and that traces are to be found of Christianity long before the arrival of the Spaniards. He shews, with respect to Mexico, how these two facts are as it were combined in the person of Quetzalcohuatl, and he adds, in illustration thereof, some contributions to the history of the civilization of ancient Mexico and of the religious notions which prevailed there.

Joshua T. Smith Esq. of Roxbury in Massachusetts sent his work *The Northmen in New England, or America in the 10th century*, published in Boston in 1839, for the ground-work of which he has taken the *Antiquitates Americanae*, and he subsequently transmitted to the Society another edition of the same work which appeared in London, entitled *The Discovery of America by the Northmen in the 10th century*. M. Bernardin Biondelli of Milan a treatise based on the same work entitled *Scoperta dell' America fatta nel secolo X da alcuni Scandinavi*. Milan 1839.

M. Sjögren sent a **RUSSIAN** translation (which appeared in St. Petersburg in 1839) of Rafn's Historical Memoir of the discovery of America in the 10th century. *Объ Открытiи Америки въ хѣвѣкѣ*. Сочиненiе К. Х. Рафна. Count Gräberg of Hemsö sent a **ITALIAN** translation of the same work, published by him at Pisa, *Memoria sulla scoperta dell' America nel secolo decimo*. Dr. Joseph Vargas, formerly President of the Republic of Venezuela in South America, sent a **SPANISH** translation of the same Memoir published at Caracas, *Memoria sobre el descubrimiento de la America en el siglo decimo*. Dr. Budding of the Hague, *Ontdekking van Amerika en herhaalde Zeereizen daarnaarts in de X. XI.*

XII, XIII, en XIV Eeuw, (volgens het Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap van Koppenhagen te 'sGravenhage 1838.

A letter from his Excellency Edward Everett, Governor of Massachusetts, announced his accession as a Member of the Society's Committee for the Ante-Columbian history of America.

The antiquarian researches undertaken by direction of the Society in GREENLAND, the results of which will be detailed at large in the work now under course of publication entitled GRÖNLANDS HISTORISKE MINDESMERKER, were successfully prosecuted in 1839. The Rev. Mr. Jürgensen, Missionary at Julianehaab, communicated a preliminary account of a fresh excavation made by him in the churchyard on the northern arm of the IGALIKKO FIRTH. By digging to a greater depth than had been done in the previous researches, they came, at the depth of 3 or 4 ells beneath the surface of the ground, to whole rows of coffins and stone-cased graves containing skeletons. The account of this remarkable discovery was accompanied with specimens of garments found on the bodies, and with other articles, all of which bear incontestible evidence of a previous European population in this part of Greenland.

The critical edition of the *Historical Sagas of the North* respecting events that have happened in *Norway, Sweden and Denmark* was in 1836 so far advanced that the complete series of 12 volumes was published both in the Icelandic, or Old Northern original text, FORNMANNA SÖGUN, and also in the Danish translation, OLDNORDISKE SAGAER. There were besides published 7 volumes of the Latin translation of the same, executed by Sveinbjörn Egilsson, to which there have been further added in 1839 the two following, viz. SCRIPTA HISTORICA ISLANDORUM, Vol. VIII & IX, containing the history of the kingdom of Norway from 1184 to 1240.

A critical edition of the original Old-Danish or ancient Icelandic text of the large collection of Sagas relating to ICELAND itself, and to the EXPLOITS OF THE ICELANDERS AT HOME AND ABROAD, is one of the most considerable and important of the works which the Society have in contemplation to publish. The preparations for this edition were commenced some time back and were continued in the year 1839. From the Society's Old-Geographical Committee for Iceland have been received several corrections and additions to the Map of ancient Iceland. In order to diffuse the knowledge of these remarkable works among a wider circle of readers, the Society is preparing to publish separately, in Danish, an extract by N. M. Petersen of the most important and interesting of their contents. The publication of this separate work was commenced in 1839 with HISTORISKE FORTÆLLINGER OM ISLÆNDERNES FÆRD Vol. I. i. e. Historical Sagas of the exploits of the Icelanders Vol. I., which in addition to an introductory essay, a brief view of the chief districts of Iceland and of the chief events of its earlier history, contains the Saga of Egil Skallagrimson.

The Society has published *Historical and Antiquarian Disquisitions* in the 2d vol. (for 1838 § 39) of the periodical entitled ANNALER FOR NORDISK OLDKYNDIGHED, and also in the 2d No (for 1838 § 39) of its MÉMOIRES, a work destined for similar communications in *French, English and German.*

M. P. A. Brandt of Lagoa Santa in the Brazils sent *Views in Norway of places remarkable in history*; The Rev. Mr. Helgason of Reykholt in Iceland: *Elucidations respecting some Runic stones lately discovered in Iceland*; Dr. Clement of Amrum: *Drawings of some antiquities in the Orkney Isles*, Professor Zipser of Neusohl *Account of bronze antiquities found in the North of Hungary.*

The Committee of Antiquities announced that during the year 1839 the MUSEUM OF NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES had received an increase of 415 Numbers. We must here restrict ourselves to specifying some of the stone articles, and making mention of two discoveries of a more recent date. The point of a javelin found in a turf bog at Farum in Sealand,

and which is made of bone with small lamina of flint cemented at the sides, ranks among the rarest specimens from the stone age. For comparison with the more common weapons and implements of that period we may mention 14 different articles of stone from Ohio presented by J. F. Woodside Esq., Chargé d' affaires of the United States of North America, and likewise two stone wedges and three flat stone knives, denominated Pict Knives, from the Shetland-Isles, presented by Consul C. Ogilvy of Lerwick, and transmitted by M. Plöyen, High Bailiff of the Faroe-Isles. In a bed of gravel in the parish of Nörrebroby in Funen was found a considerable collection of Antiquities, thereamong *several articles indicating a Roman origin*, such as, a small circular metal mirror made of some metal blended with zinc (3 inches in diameter); the front, which was used as a looking glass, being polished, round the edge a twisted border with a row of perforations, the back elegantl. turned in circles. A sacrificial vessel with handles terminating in two animals' heads, a metal utensil in the form of a saucan, in appearance entirely Roman, internally coated with a compound of zinc; the handle of a metal strainer, on which is impressed the stamp of the Roman manufacturer with the following inscription DISNCVS E. At Mjødal in Iceland, in a small earthen barrow there were found, in connexion with two oval buckles of bronze, a number of glass beads, some glass mosaic and burnt clay, and fragments of an iron sword, two *Cuffish coins* struck by the Samanide *Hasan Nasr ben Achmed* in *Schash*, the one A. D. 917, the other 926.

At the April Meeting M. Thorwaldsen, the sculptor, exhibited a number of *ancient articles of bronze found in Italy*, consisting of chisels, lance heads, armlets, fibulæ and other buckles, and several other articles bearing a striking resemblance to our northern ones. Major Fasting, Governor, of North Greenland, read some *Popular Legends of Greenland*.

At the July meeting M. Thomsen exhibited sundry *Stone Implements and Weapons of savage nations* with the handles thereunto appertaining, for the purpose of explaining the manner in which several of the stone articles of northern antiquity were fastened to or inserted in handles, in order to fit them for more convenient use.

At the meeting in October the Directors announced that His Majesty the KING OF DENMARK had presented to the Society an additional collection (being the 7th) of transcripts made at His Majesty's expense by Professor Voigt of Königsberg; being transcripts of *Documents relating to the History of the North* contained in the archives of Königsberg.

Several valuable donations were received for the public LIBRARY OF THE SOCIETY. In the Report published in Danish will be found a list of the Books with which the Library has been augmented, and also of the names of the Donors. Of peculiar importance were the works presented to the Society by their Majesties the EMPEROR OF RUSSIA, the KING OF THE NETHERLANDS, the KING OF THE FRENCH, and by General Rosas in Buenos Ayres, and the Royal Geographical Society of London.

New Members were elected.

* * The Society has made arrangements that the Books presented to its Library shall be rendered as extensively useful as possible. The Society will gratefully accept BOOKS IN ALL BRANCHES OF SCIENCE AND LITERATURE, whether of earlier or more recent publication. In the case of duplicates, one copy of such works as the Managing Committee may find suited for that purpose, will be sent to the PUBLIC LIBRARY in ICELAND, founded in 1818.

* * All communications are to be addressed TO THE SECRETARY, PROFESSOR CHARLES C. RAFFN, 40 CROWN-PRINCE-STREET, COPENHAGEN.