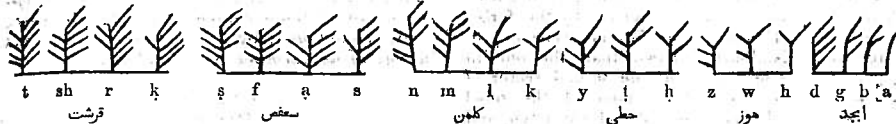


stani literature. They are taken from a Tazkira by Nassakh, recently published at Lucknow. Happily many of them have probably never written anything beyond a few fugitive verses; but the list would be certainly alarming, if there were any fear of many of their works being brought to England.

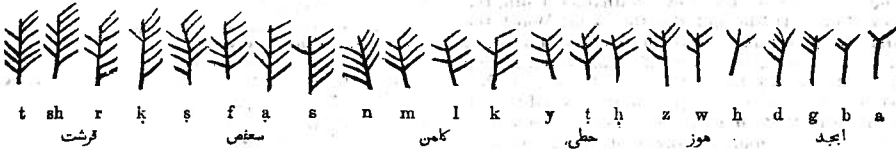
THE OGHAM CHARACTER.

THE revival of interest in the "Ogham" character, which the last generation attributed to the quasi-mythical Tuatha de Danaan, and which Dr. Graves, Bishop of Limerick, has very justly reduced to the rank of a comparatively-modern cryptogram, makes me hope that these lines will not be without interest to your readers.

EL-MUSHAJJAR applied to Arabic (read from right to left).



EL-MUSHAJJAR applied to old Persian, or Pehlevi (read, as above, from right to left).



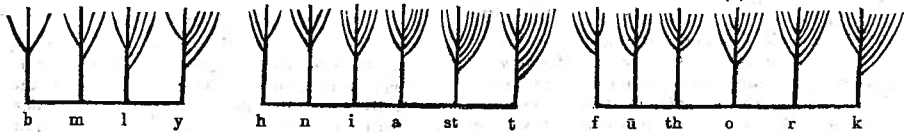
The late Mr. Petrie, of Kirkwall, who kindly accompanied me to Maes-Howe, applied the "Mushajjar" with complete success to the

"Futbork" or old Scandinavian Alphabet, so called, like "El-Abjad," from the letters which begin it.

(1)

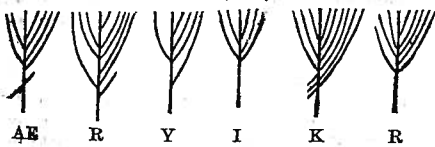
(2)

(3)



IRLANDIC.

Acutely remarking that one of the "trees" had a cross-bar which does not appear in the others, Mr. Petrie determined it to be the Key of the Cypher, representing the first letter A, or the dipthong Æ. He was thus able to read Inscription No. 1 as "Aeryikr" (Eric).



The second, in which the branches to the left of the stem-line are bent downwards, instead of upwards, was equally amenable to treatment, and yielded "Thisar Rúnar" (these Runes).



Thisar Rúnar

The subject acquires a permanent interest at the present moment when Dr. Samuel Ferguson is editing, for the Royal Irish Academy, a series of Ogham inscriptions. I see nowhere in the papers which notice the publication, the least allusion to El-Mushajjar, and I venture to hope that the *Athenæum* will render such neglect unpardonable.

RICHARD F. BURTON.

CHAUCER.

April 2, 1877.

THE first sentence in Mr. Furnivall's lively attack on my article on Chaucer in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' rather took me by surprise. "When my friend Mr. Skeat and I," Mr. Furnivall

Of the Limouna or Lim Rúnar, i. e., limb or branch-Runes, also called "Palm Runes," I have already treated in 'Ultima Thule' (I. 285-7); and the mob of gentlemen who criticize with ease has not, in a single case, at least that came under my notice, remarked the curious discovery of a Scandinavian *graffito* in an Arabic character. It is evident that this alphabet, called by the Arabs El-Mushajjar (المشجر), or the tree-formed, explains not only the branch Runes, but the once mysterious Ogham.

Subjoined is the scheme, which is double; that applied to Arabic affecting the base-line, which the Persian ignores. In both cases the ancient order of the letters, corresponding with the Hebrew and still used, under the name of El-Abjad, for chronograms, is preferred to the modern or longer list.

Mr. Furnivall's forgetfulness is worth mentioning, because it throws light upon the spirit of his letter. He professes to prove that in the aforesaid article I have "imagined my facts, my arguments, and my conclusions"; and in support of this position he adduces—what? The flaw which, in Mr. Furnivall's opinion, "turns my whole article into a practical joke," and makes the 'Encyclopædia' "a dangerous rival to *Punch*," is that I spoke of Chaucer's father as being abroad with Edward the Third's army in one expedition when really it was another. So easy is it to tickle these light-hearted antiquarians! There is a joke of an equally delicious description in Mr. Furnivall's own letter, no doubt put in for his own private amusement. "Mr. Minto . . . annihilates one hundred and thirty years. He takes the 'Court of Love,' which Mr. Skeat and I have shown . . . is near the end of the thirteenth century, and decides that it is Chaucer's, soon after the middle of the fourteenth century." How many years does Mr. Furnivall, funny fellow that he is, here annihilate?

All the other points on which I "confuse chronology" and "mix genuine works with spurious" are matters of opinion, in which I do not agree with Mr. Furnivall, with all my respect for his authorities. I have given my reasons twice over, in my book and in the 'Encyclopædia,' for not agreeing with Mr. Furnivall, and I shall not trouble you by repeating them. Suffice it to say, that they are not the reasons Mr. Furnivall puts into my mouth in his lively letter, as anybody who is interested in the question may see by comparing them.

One thing I may be allowed to say—that I am perfectly open to conviction as regards the authorship of the 'Court of Love.' I am simply in this position, that I have not yet seen any evidence against its being Chaucer's which seems to me to be conclusive. I hope I shall lose neither my memory nor my temper if Mr. Furnivall should prove that it was written in the latter end of the nineteenth century by himself and Mr. Skeat. It matters very little either way; it does not affect Chaucer's position in literature, nor any critical judgment on the character of his mind or the qualities of his poetry. W. MINTO.

A MS. OF DANTE IN THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY, OXFORD.

St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

In the *Athenæum* of August 21st, 1875, it was announced that Dr. Greg. Palmieri, of Rome, while studying the valuable collection of MSS. of Dante in the Bodleian Library, had discovered in one of them the following six *terzine*, which occur after line 90 of canto xxxiii. of the *Inferno*:—

Quando cussi parlato lastriffa
guarda dalaltro canto eridit un frictio
lo qual piangea tremádo la corstia;
Et lo lídissi perche setu costi ficto
io te cognosco ben che se lussese
qual fallo ti reco cussi confictio
Et egli ame poy che tu say mie onfese
perche pur mi molesti va ala toa via
se torni may inau nel bon paese
Io nó mi partiro alul díalo pria
senó mi conti perche se qua, dent
che nó po esser tenza gíah follia
Poy che ti piace dico for talento
che per longauo chio aigrandi usay
chal populo íson mest atradimento
Lonferno mi receve sempre may
vane enó portar dime ambasciata
perche qua dentro tu trovato may

These lines had never been noticed before, and, as far as Dr. Palmieri's subsequent researches have gone, they have not been found in any other MS. He informs me that he has already examined more than a hundred MSS. in search of them, including all those in the Bodleian and British Museum Libraries, and those in the magnificent collection of Lord Ashburnham. Even granting that the fragment may be a forgery (which seems most probable), yet its antiquity imparts a certain interest to it. I will first describe the MS. in question, and then add a few remarks on the fragment itself.

The MS. is that which is marked 103 in the Italian Canonici Collection of the Bodleian Library, and numbered 489 in the catalogue of

says, "were writing to the *Athenæum* lately about the spuriousness and late date of 'The Court of Love,' in which we both agreed,—thus confirming the long-settled judgments of our best authority in matters Chaucerian, Mr. H. Bradshaw, and of Prof. Ten Brink,—we were not aware that another critic had lately pronounced this poem as well as the 'Dreme' genuine, and generally settled, or unsettled, all the questions to which some few of us have been giving the best years of our lives. But, by the kindness of a friend at the Museum, I have been able to read Mr. W. Minto's article on Chaucer," &c. Now I am not surprised to learn that Mr. Furnivall has a friend in the British Museum, nor that he has given the best years of his life to the study of the 'Court of Love'; but I must confess it does surprise me that Mr. Furnivall should pretend to have learned my views regarding the authenticity of that poem for the first time two months ago. Rather more than two years ago, when I published a book on English Poets, in which I dealt with this subject, a person using Mr. Furnivall's name, and a singularly good imitation of his peculiar style, wrote several letters to me on the very points which he now brings forward, invited me to go and see him, asked me to join one of his societies—I forget which—and when I was writing my article on Chaucer for the 'Encyclopædia,' sent me some performances of his own, saying I might find them useful. But I cannot expect these little facts to linger in a mind which has "thrown" Mr. Swinburne "heavily" on triple endings, which burns to throw him again, and whose copy of the French 'Rose' has been interleaved for seven years. Nor can such a mind be expected to remember through three columns of print that it has forgotten the existence of my little book, when it is tempted to say that in that book I am guilty of "talking nonsense."