

V. *A Letter from Dr George Hickes, dated May the 22d, 1700. to Dr Sloane, concerning the Saxon Antiquity, mentioned N. 247. of these Transactions. With an account of his Book now in the Press at Oxford.*

S I R,

AMONG many other happy accidents, that have attended me in my undertaking, to lay open the ancient *Septentrional* languages, and what hath been written in them, I cannot but reckon this for one, that by your means I came to the knowledge of that curious piece of *Saxon* antiquity, which is in the possession of that worthy and honourable Gentleman Sir *Nathaniel Palmer*, of *Fairfield* in *Somersetshire*, which Country he hath the honour to represent in this present Parliament. Of this *antiquity* you gave the world some account the last year from the learned Dr *Masgrave*, in the *Philosophical Transactions*, N. 247. with the Sculpture of the upper side of it, and the *Saxon* Inscription about it. I was writing the xxii Chap. of my *Saxon Grammar de dialecto Normanno-Saxonica*, when those *Philosophical Transactions* came out, and as I happened to impart the design of it to a Gentleman, who hath studied the ancient Northern languages, he told me of that antiquity in them, and when I came to view the Sculpture of it, I presently observed how useful it would be to me in one part of that Chapter, wherein I give an account of the alteration that *K. Alfred* made in the *Saxon* hand. Upon this, Sir, I made bold to
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apply my self to you for a further account of *the antiquity*, for which you referred me to Dr *Musgrave*, to whom by your encouragement I sent a Letter of *Queries*; to which he did me the favour to send a full answer, the substance of which I have printed in the Chapter of my Book above-mentioned, with two of the three draughts he sent me of it, and with an explication of that Inscription in the *Saxon* tongue. There you will also find my Conjecture about the Picture, which is surrounded with the Inscription that in the *original* shines in Letters of Gold. The air, the shape of the face, and the two united Scepters in each hand of it, made me then think that probably it might be that of our *blessed Lord*, but having since seen a Picture of St *Luke* in a most ancient *Latin* MS. of the Gospels, all written in Capitals, with such like Scepters in each hand, I am inclined to think that this was the common way in those times of drawing, or representing *Saints* among the *Saxons*, and that the Picture in *K. Alfred's* antiquity (for so I now call it) might be the Picture of his Patron St *Cuthbert*, whom he, and his Mother both in one night dreamed they saw, and heard speak the same words, in which he told them he should conquer the *Danes*, and be a great King, and bid him be of good courage. This vision of St *Cuthbert* happened to him after he was beaten by the *Danes*, and had retired in great distress into *ATHELNY*, where this Antiquity was found, and he was so affected with it, that he afterwards used to tell it all his life long, and ascribe his success over the *Danes* to the merits of St *Cuthbert*; and upon second thoughts this inclines me rather to believe that it may be the Picture of that Saint, who of all others of their Country shined brightest in the *Saxon* Calendars, and I shall give an account of this second conjecture in the Preface to my Book, with a Sculpture of St *Luke's* Picture, in that MSS.

which belongs to the R. the Dean and Chapter of *Lychfield*; and which for its great antiquity is commonly called *St Chads book*. This story of *St Cuthbert's* appearing to K. *Alfred* is at large in *William of Malmsbury*, to whom I refer you for further information; and as the King used to commemorate the vision he and his Mother had of him, so it is very likely he ordered his Picture to be made in the manner it is represented in my Book, to hang down by a string upon his breast, for a constant memorial of the Saint, who appeared to him, to bid him give the *Danes* Battel in a time of great despair, when he looked upon himself as conquered, and thought his Kingdom almost lost. That he caused the Picture to be made is plain from the *Saxon* Inscription.

AELFRED MEꝛ HETT GEWYRCAN
Aelfredus me iussit fabricati.

And that it was made to hang down upon his breast, is plain from B, the cone or *apex* of Fig. 1. where the Golden Pin is represented in a manner different to what it is in Fig. 3. on purpose to shew that the *original* was made to hang in a String. And that the original is a *true* and *genuine* piece of Antiquity is also clear beyond all reasonable doubt, not only from the place where it was found, the place of K. *Alfred's* retreat from the *Danes*, which he fortified in time of War, and where he built a Monastery in time of Peace, but also from the Inscription, which is all, except *two*, in *Roman*, or *Gallo-Italick* Letters, which the King, who was bred at the *English* School in *Rome*, preferred before those of the *Saxon* duct; and when he came to be King, as *Ingulph* testifies, he brought them into use. Some I hear have suspected this Antiquity, because of its extraordinary artifice, which they think too fine for that age. But it is not to be doubted, but that K. *Alfred*, who
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was so great a Prince, could easily procure the best Artists of all sorts from foreign parts; as from *Rome*, where he had his education, and whither the best Artists resorted from *Greece*, and all other Countries, or from the Courts of the Eastern and Western Kings of *France*, in which he was in great esteem, or indeed from any other parts of the Christian World, by the correspondence, and interest which he had at *Rome*. I have now, Sir, as you desired, given you my thoughts of K. *Alfred's* antiquity, which I pray you to impart to the worthy Dr *Musgrave*, to whom I think my self much obliged for his excellent answer to my Letter. And I should also proceed to give you some account of my Book, which is now in the Press at *Oxford*, under the care of a very ingenious, and virtuous Gentleman, who to his exact skill in the learned languages, hath added the knowledge of the ancient Northern tongues, and is a great and successful promoter of both among the happy youth, that are under his care. But, Sir, I must entreat you to accept of a short general, instead of a more particular, and longer account of it, which perhaps I may give you another time.

The Title of it is as follows.

LINGUARUM VETT. SEPTENTRIONALIUM
 THESAURUS GRAMMATICO-CRITICUS
 ET ARCHÆOLOGICUS.

Accedit

Catalogus librorum Veterum Septentrionalium, tam eorum qui excusi sunt, quam qui in Membris Scripti nondum eduntur, quam fieri licuit, locupletissimus.

I need say nothing to you of the reason of this Title, who in one Chapter have seen besides K. *Alfred's* Antiquity, and three curious *Runic* Alphabets, whereof

two are explained in *Saxon*, above ten other Sculptures, with about thirty *Saxon*, *Dano-Saxonick*, or *Normanno-Saxonick* Charaters, never before printed, which are all produced to shew the changes and alterations of the *Saxon* Tongue, in its Writing, Words, Phrases and Syntax.

The Catalogue mentioned in the Title, will be made (God willing) by the most skilful person, I think, in the World; who hath done me and the publick the favour to promise me to finish that part of my undertaking; and in order to it, he hath already been at *Cambridge*, and taken a Catalogue of all the *Saxon* MSS. there, to my perfect satisfaction; and now by the favour of his Superiours, is doing me the same service in the Library of Sir *John Cotton*. But besides all that which the Title imports, I am now making a dissertation of the usefulness of those languages, which will furnish me with many theories, and in which I shall print many originals, of which some are prepared, and others preparing for the Press, by some of my Learned friends and acquaintance, who are so generous as to assist me in this work. The series of *Saxon* Coins in Sculpture, with explications which an honourable person gave me leave to promise the world in his name, will also make part of that dissertation, of which I have already written twelve large sheets; and I receive great encouragement to proceed in it from the free communication of MSS. from several Worthy Persons and Societies, which indeed makes my Book rise to a greater bulk than I at first expected, and very much encreases both my pains, and the cost. But as I have in a manner devoted my self to this work, so I am content to take any pains to illustrate the Northern Languages and Antiquities, which have not yet been set in their true light; and I hope thereby to bring the *Northern & NorthWest* parts of *Europe* to a correspondence in Antiquity, which, I hope, will be one good effect of my
Book,

Book. Some learned *German* Gentlemen, as Mr *Palthenius*, and *Schilter* Syndic of *Strasbourg*, are already very inquisitive after it, and some learned *Danes* and *Swedes*, who have seen it at *Oxford*, have already given me thanks for it; and their encouragement, with that I have met with at home, and hope still to meet with, inspire me with vigour in my undertaking, which I hope in due time to bring to an happy end. There are already above XC Sheets printed off, and no diligence is wanting to dispatch it, as soon as it can be done. I have already mentioned how much I am beholden to some excellent Persons and Societies for the free communication of their MSS. to whom I shall make my acknowledgments, with all respects, as publick as my Book; and I entreat you, Sir, from whose care and culture all sorts of Learning receive great advantage, that if you hear of any persons who have any *Saxon* MSS. or any *Normanno-Saxonick* Monuments of Antiquity till the Reign of *Hen. II.* you would entreat them to communicate them to me. And because you tell me some curious persons of your acquaintance desire to have a sight of my Book, I entreat you to tell them, that to oblige them, I intend e're long to have as much of it as is printed sticht upon bands, and lye in Mr *Keeble's* Shop, at the *Turks-head* in *Fleetstreet*, that it may be seen by them, and all other curious persons who have a kindness for that sort of Learning, and have a mind to know what I am a doing towards the promotion thereof. I thank you, Sir, most heartily, for all the encouragement and assistance you have given me, and with a very great sense of my obligations to you, I take leave, and subscribe, Sir,

Your most Faithful Humble Servant,

George Hickes