

II.

NOTES ON SOME SCOTTISH MAGICAL CHARM-STONES, OR CURING-STONES. BY PROFESSOR J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D., VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

Throughout all past time, credulity and superstition have constantly and strongly competed with the art of medicine. There is no doubt, according to Pliny, that the magical art began in Persia, that it originated in medicine, and that it insinuated itself first amongst mankind under the plausible guise of promoting health.¹ In proof of the antiquity of the belief, this great Roman encyclopædist cites Eudoxus, Aristotle, and Hermippus, as averring that magical arts were used thousands of years before the time of the Trojan war.

Assuredly, in ancient times, faith in the effects of magical charms, amulets, talismans, &c., seems to have prevailed among all those ancient races of whom history has left any adequate account. In modern times a belief in their efficiency and power is still extensively entertained amongst most of the nations of Asia and Africa. In some European kingdoms, also, as in Turkey, Italy, and Spain, belief in them still exists to a marked extent. In our own country, the magical practices and superstitions of the older and darker ages persist only as forms and varieties, so to speak, of archæological relics,—for they remain at the present day in comparatively a very sparse and limited degree. They are now chiefly to be found among the uneducated, and in outlying districts of the kingdom. But still, some practices, which primarily sprung up in a belief in magic, are carried on, even by the middle and higher classes of society, as diligently as they were thousands of years ago, and without their magical origin being dreamed of by those who follow them. The coral is often yet suspended as an ornament around the neck of the Scottish child, without the potent and protective magical and medicinal qualities long ago attached to it by Dioscorides and Pliny being thought of by those who place it there. Is not the egg, after being emptied of its edible contents, still, in many hands, as assiduously pierced by the spoon of the eater as if he had weighing upon his mind the strong superstition of the ancient Roman, that—if he omitted to perforate the empty shell—he incurred the risk of becoming spell-bound, &c.? Marriages seem at the present day

¹ Natural History, Book xxx. chapters i., ii.

as much dreaded in the month of May as they were in the days of Ovid, when it was a proverbial saying at Rome that

“Mense malas *Maio* nubere vulgus ait.”

And, in the marriage ceremony itself, the finger-ring still holds among us as prominent a place as it did among the superstitious marriage-rites of the ancient pagan world. Among the endless magical and medical properties that were formerly supposed to be possessed by human saliva, one is almost universally credited by the Scottish schoolboy up to the present hour; for few of them ever assume the temporary character of pugilists without duly spitting into their hands ere they close their fists; as if they retained a full reliance on the magical power of the saliva to increase the strength of the impending blow—if not to avert any feeling of malice produced by it—as was enunciated, eighteen centuries ago, by one of the most laborious and esteemed writers of that age,¹ in a division of his work which he gravely prefaces with the assertion that in this special division he has made it his “object (as he declares) to state no facts but such as are established by nearly uniform testimony.”

In a separate chapter (chap. iv.) in his 30th Book, Pliny alludes to the prevalence of magical beliefs and superstitious practices in the ancient Celtic provinces of France and Britain. “The Gallic provinces,” says he, “were pervaded by the magical art, and that even down to a period within memory; for it was the Emperor Tiberius who put down the Druids and all that tribe of wizards and physicians.” We know, however, from the ancient history of France posterior to Pliny’s time, that the Druids survived as a powerful class in that country for a long time afterwards. Writing towards the end of the first century, Pliny goes on to remark:—“At the present day, struck with fascination, Britannia still cultivates this art, and that with ceremonials so august, that she might almost seem to have been the first to communicate them to the people of

¹ “What we are going to say,” observes Pliny, “is marvellous, but it may easily be tested by experiment. If a person repents of a blow given to another, either by hand or with a missile, he has nothing to do but to spit at once into the palm of the hand which has inflicted the blow, and all feeling of resentment will be instantly alleviated in the person struck. This, too, is often verified in the case of a beast of burden, when brought on its haunches with blows; for, upon this remedy being adopted, the animal will immediately step out and mend its pace. Some persons, also, before making an effort, spit into the hand in the manner above stated, in order to make the blow *more heavy*.”—*Pliny’s “Natural History,”* xxviii. § 7.

Persia." "To such a degree," adds this old Roman philosopher, "are nations throughout the whole world, totally different as they are, and quite unknown to one another, in accord upon *this* one point."¹

Some supposed vestiges of a most interesting kind, of very ancient Gallic or Celtic word-charms, have recently been brought before archæologists by the celebrated German philologist Grimm, and by Pictet of Geneva. Marcellus, the private physician of the Roman Emperor Theodosius, was a Gaul born in Aquitane, and hence, it is believed, was intimately acquainted with the Gaulish or Celtic language of that province. He left a work on quack medicines (*De Medicamentis Empiricis*), written probably near the end of the fourth century. This work contains, amongst other things, a number of word-charms, or superstitious cure-formulas that were, till lately, regarded—like Cato's word-cure for fractures of the bones—as mere unmeaning gibberish. Joseph Grimm and M. Pictet, however, think that they have found in these word-charms of Marcellus, specimens of the Gaulish or Celtic language several centuries older than any that were previously known to exist—none of the earliest glosses used by Zeuss, in his famous "*Grammatica Celtica*," being probably earlier than the eighth or ninth centuries. If the labours of Grimm and Pictet prove successful in this curious field of labour, they will add another proof to the prevalence of magical charms among the Celtic nations of antiquity, and afford us additional confirmation of the ancient prevalence, as described by Pliny, of a belief in the magical art among the Gaelic inhabitants of France and Britain.¹

¹ Natural History, Book xxx. § 4. Archæologists are now fully aware of "the accord" of the ancient inhabitants of Britain with those of Persia and the other eastern branches of the Aryan race in many other particulars, as in their language, burial customs, &c. According to some Indian observers, stone erections, like our so-called Druidical circles, cromlechs, &c., are common in the east. Is it vain to hope that amid the great and yet unsearched remains of old Sanscrit literature, allusions may yet be found to such structures, that may throw more light upon their uses in connection with religious, sepulchral, or other services?

¹ Grimm thinks that the formulæ of Marcellus partake more of the Celtic dialect of the Irish, and consequently of the Scotch, than of the Welsh. As one of the shortest specimens of Marcellus' charm-cures, let me cite, from Pictet, the following, as given in the "*Ulster Journal of Archæology*," vol. iv. p. 266:—"Formula 12. He who shall labour under the disease of watery (or blood-shot) eyes, let him pluck the herb *Millefolium* up by the roots, and of it make a hoop, and look through it, say-

The long catalogue of the medical superstitions and magical practices originally pertaining to our Celtic forefathers, was no doubt from time to time increased and swelled out in Britain by the addition of the analogous medical superstitions and practices of the successive Roman¹ and ing three times, '*Excicumacriosos*;' and let him as often move the hoop to his mouth, and spit through the middle of it, and then plant the herb again." "I divide," observes Pictet, "the formula thus: *exci cuma criosos*, and translate it, 'See the form of the girdle.'" After a long and learned disquisition on the component words Pictet adds—"The process of cure recommended in this formula is of a character altogether symbolical. Girdles (*cris*), which we shall meet with again in formula No. 27, seem to have performed an important part in Celtic medicine. By making the eye look through the circle formed by the plant, a girdle, as it were, was put round it; and it is for this reason that the formula says, See the form (or model) of the girdle. The action of spitting afterwards through the little ring expressed symbolically the expulsion of the pain." The so-called Celtic word-charms in the formulæ of Marcellus are usually longer than the above; as, "*Tetune resonco bregan gresso*;" "Heilen prossaggeri nome sipolla na builet ododieni iden olitan," &c. &c.

¹ On this subject I elsewhere published, two years ago, the following remarks:—"The medical science and medical lore of the past has become, after a succession of ages, the so-called folk-lore and superstitious usages of times nearer our own. Up to the end of the last century, patients attacked with insanity were occasionally dipped in lakes and wells, and left bound in the neighbouring church for a night. Loch Maree, in Ross-shire, and St Fillan's Pool, in Perthshire, were places in which such unfortunate patients were frequently dipped. Heron, in his "Journey through Scotland," in the last century, states that it was affirmed that two hundred invalids were carried annually to St Fillan's, for the cure of various diseases, but principally of insanity. The proceedings at this famous pool were in such cases an imitation of the old Greek and Roman worship of Æsculapius. Patients consulting the Æsculapian priest were purified first of all, by bathing in some sacred well; and then having been allowed to enter into and sleep in his temple, the god, or rather some priest of the god, came in the darkness of the night and told them what treatment they were to adopt. The poor lunatics brought to St Fillan's were, in the same way, first purified by being bathed in his pool, and then laid bound in the neighbouring church during the subsequent night. If they were found loose in the morning, a full recovery was confidently looked for, but the cure remained doubtful when they were found at morning dawn still bound. I was lately informed by the Rev. Mr Stewart, of Killin, that in one of the last cases so treated—and that only a few years ago—the patient was found sane in the morning and unbound; a dead relative, according to the patient's own account, having entered the church during the night, and loosened her both from the ropes that bound her body and the delusions that warped her mind. It was a system of

Teutonic¹ invaders and conquerors of our island. A careful analysis would yet perhaps enable the archæologist to separate some of these classes of magical beliefs from each other; but many of them had, perhaps, a common and long anterior origin. We know further, that in its earlier centuries among us, the teachers of Christianity added greatly to the number of existing medical superstitions, by maintaining the efficacy, for example, of a visit to the cross of King Edwin of Northumberland, for the cure of agues, &c.,—the marvellous alleged recoveries worked by visiting the grave of St Ninian at Whitehorn, or the cross of St Mungo in the Cathedral churchyard at Glasgow; the sovereign virtues of the waters of wells used by various anchorets, and dedicated to various saints throughout the country; the curative powers of holy robes, bells, bones, relics, &c.

Numerous forms of medical superstitions, charms, amulets, incantations, &c., derived from the preceding channels, and possibly also from other sources, seem to have been known and practised among our forefathers, and for the cure of almost all varieties of human maladies, whether of the mind or body. Our old Scottish hagiologies, witch trials, ecclesiastical records, &c., abound with notices of them. Nor have some of the oldest and most marked medical superstitions of ancient times been very long obliterated and forgotten. I know, for example, treatment by mystery and terrorism that might have made some sane persons insane; and hence, perhaps, conversely, some insane persons sane. Mr Pennant tells us that at Llandegla, in Wales, where similar rites were performed for the cure of insanity, viz., purification in the sacred well and forced detention of the patient for a night in the church, under the communion-table, the lunatics or their friends were obliged to leave a cock in the church if he were a male, and a hen if she were a female—an additional circumstance in proof of the Æsculapian type of the superstition. But perhaps, after all, the whole is a medical or mythological belief, older than Greece or Rome, and which was common to the whole Aryan or Indo-European race in Asia before they sent off, westward, over Europe, those successive waves of population that formed the nations of the Celt and Teuton, of the Goth, and Greek, and Latin. The cock is still occasionally sacrificed in the Highlands for the cure of epilepsy and convulsions. A patient of mine found one, a few years ago, deposited in a hole in the kitchen floor; the animal having been killed and laid down at the spot where a child had, two or three days previously, fallen down in a fit of convulsions.”—See the “Medical Times and Gazette” of Dec. 8, 1860, p. 549.

¹ See, for example, Kemble’s work on the Anglo-Saxons, vol. i. p. 528, for various Teutonic medical superstitions and cures.

of two localities in the Lowlands, one near Biggar in Lanarkshire, the other near Torphichen in West Lothian, where, within the memory of the present and past generation, living cows have been sacrificed for curative purposes, or under the hope of arresting the progress of the murrain in other members of the flock. In both these instances the cow was sacrificed by being buried alive. The sacrifice of other living animals,¹ as of the cat, cock, mole, &c., for the cure of disease, and especially of fits, epilepsy, and insanity, continues to be occasionally practised in some parts of the Highlands up to the present day. And in the city of Edinburgh itself, every physician knows the fact, that, in the chamber of death, usually the face of the mirror is most carefully covered over, and often a plate with salt in it is placed upon the chest of the corpse.

The Museum of the Society contains a few medicinal charms and amulets, principally in the form of amber beads, which were held potent in the cure of blindness, perforated stones, and old distaff whorls, whose original use seems to have been forgotten, and new and magical properties assigned to them. But the most important medicinal relic in the collection is the famous "Barbeck's bone," a slice or tablet of ivory, about seven inches long, four broad, and half an inch in thickness. It

¹ A very intelligent patient from the North Highlands, to whom I happened lately to speak on this subject, has written out the following instances that have occurred within her own knowledge:—"Twenty years or more ago, in the parish of Nigg, Ross-shire, there was a lad of fifteen ill with epilepsy. To cure him, his friends first tried the charm of mole's blood. A plate was laid on the lad's head; the living mole was held over it by the tail, the head cut off, and the blood allowed to drop into the plate. Three moles were sacrificed one after the other, but without effect. Next they tried the effect of a bit of the skull of a suicide, and sent for this treasure a distance of from sixty to one hundred miles. This bit of the skull was scraped to dust into a cup of water, which the lad had to swallow, not knowing the contents. This I heard from a sister of the lad's.—There was a 'strong-minded' old woman at Strathpeffer, Ross-shire, whose daughter told me that the neighbours had come to condole with the motaer after she had fallen down in a fit of some kind. They strongly advised her to bury a living cock in the very place where she had fallen, to prevent a return of the ailment.—A woman in Sutherlandshire told me that she knew a young man, ill of consumption, who was made to drink his own blood after it had been drawn from his arm. This same woman was ill with a pain in her chest, which she could get nothing to relieve; so her father sent off for 'a knowing man,' who, when he saw the girl, repeated some words under his breath, then touched the floor and her shoulder three times alternately, and with alleged success."

was long in the possession of the ancient family of Barbeck in Argyleshire, and over the Western Highlands had the reputation of curing all forms and degrees of insanity. It was formerly reckoned so valuable, that a bond of L.100 was required to be deposited for the loan of it.

But the main object of the present communication is, through the kind permission of Struan Robertson, Lady Lockhart of Lee, and others, to show to the Society two or three of the principal curing-stones of Scotland.

Several of these curing-stones long retained their notoriety, but they have now almost all fallen entirely into disuse, at least for the cure of human diseases. In some districts, however, they are still employed in the treatment of the diseases of domestic animals.

A very ancient example of the use of a "curing-stone" in this country is detailed in what may be regarded as the first or oldest historical work which has been left us in reference to Scotland, namely, in Adamnan's "Life of St Columba." This biography of the founder of Iona was probably written in the last years of the seventh century, Adamnan having died in A.D. 705. He was elected to the Abbacy of Iona A.D. 679, and had there the most favourable opportunities of becoming acquainted with all the existing traditions and records regarding St Columba. About the year 563 of the Christian era, Columba visited Brude, King of the Picts, in his royal fort on the Ness, and found the Pictish sovereign attended by a court or council, and with Brochan as his chief Druid or Magus. Brochan retained an Irish female, and consequently, a countrywoman of Columba's, as a slave. The 33d chapter of the second book of Adamnan's work is entitled, "Concerning the Illness with which the Druid (*Magus*) Brochan was visited for refusing to liberate a Female Captive, and his Cure when he restored her to Liberty." The story told by Adamnan, under this head, is as follows:—

Curing-Stone of St Columba.

"About the same time the venerable man, from motives of humanity, besought Brochan the Druid to liberate a certain Irish female captive, a request which Brochan harshly and obstinately refused to grant. The Saint then spoke to him as follows:—'Know, O Brochan, know, that if you refuse to set this captive free, as I desire you, you shall die before I return from this province.' Having said this in presence of Brude the king, he departed from the royal palace and proceeded to the river Nesa,

from which he took a white pebble, and shewing it to his companions said to them :—‘ Behold this white pebble, by which God will effect the cure of many diseases.’ Having thus spoken, he added, ‘ Brochan is punished grievously at this moment, for an angel sent from heaven, striking him severely, has broken in pieces the glass cup which he held in his hands, and from which he was in the act of drinking, and he himself is left half dead. Let us await here, for a short time, two of the king’s messengers, who have been sent after us in haste, to request us to return quickly and relieve the dying Brochan, who, now that he is thus terribly punished, consents to set his captive free.’

“ While the saint was yet speaking, behold, there arrived, as he had predicted, two horsemen, who were sent by the king, and who related all that had occurred, according to the prediction of the saint—the breaking of the drinking goblet, the punishment of the Druid, and his willingness to set his captive at liberty. They then added :—‘ The king and his councillors have sent us to you to request that you would cure his foster father, Brochan, who lies in a dying state.’

“ Having heard these words of the messengers, Saint Columba sent two of his companions to the king, with the pebble which he had blessed, and said to them ; ‘ If Brochan shall first promise to free his captive, immerse this little stone in water and let him drink from it, but if he refuse to liberate her, he will that instant die.’

“ The two persons sent by the saint proceeded to the palace and announced the words of the holy man to the king and to Brochan, an announcement which filled them with such fear, that he immediately liberated the captive and delivered her to the saint’s messengers.”

The stone was then immersed in water, and in a wonderful manner, and contrary to the laws of nature, it floated on the water like a nut or an apple, nor could it be submerged. Brochan drank from the stone as it floated on the water, and instantly recovered his perfect health and soundness of body.

“ This little pebble (adds Adamnan) was afterwards preserved among the treasures of the king, retained its miraculous property of floating in water, and through the mercy of God effected the cure of sundry diseases, And what is very wonderful, when it was sought for by those sick persons whose term of life had arrived, it could not be found. An instance of this occurred the very day king Brude died, when the stone, though

sought for with great diligence, could not be found in the place where it had been previously left."¹

In the Highlands of Scotland there have been transmitted down, for many generations, various curing or charm-stones, used in the same manner as that of Columba, and reckoned capable, like his, of imparting to the *water in which they were immersed*,² wondrous medicinal powers. One of the most celebrated of these curingstones belongs to Struan Robertson, the chief of the Clan Donnachie. I am indebted to the kindness of Mrs Robertson, for the following notes regarding the curing-stone of which her family are the hereditary proprietors. Its local name is

Clach-na-Bratach, or Stone of the Standard.

"This stone has been in possession of the Chiefs of Clan Donnachaidh since 1315.

"It is said to have been acquired in this wise.

"The (then) chief, journeying with his clan to join Bruce's army before Bannockburn, observed, on his standard being lifted one morning, a glittering something in a clod of earth hanging to the flagstaff. It was this stone. He showed it to his followers, and told them he felt sure its brilliant lights were a good omen and foretold a victory—and victory was won on the hard fought field of Bannockburn.



Fig. 1. Clach-na-Bratach.

"From this time, whenever the clan was 'out,' the Clach-na-Bratach

¹ In the first chapter of Adamnan's work, the miracle is again alluded to as follows:—"He took a white stone (*lapidem candidum*) from the river's bed, and blessed it for the cure of certain diseases; and that stone, contrary to the law of nature, floats like an apple when placed in the water."

² For other instances of waters rendered medicinal by being brought in contact with saint's bones—such as St Marnan's head, with St Conval's chariot, &c. &c., see Dalzell's "Superstitions of Scotland," p. 151, &c. Sibbald's "Memoirs of the Edinburgh College of Physicians," p. 39.

accompanied it, carried on the person of the chief, and its varying hues were consulted by him as to the fate of battle. On the eve of Sheriffmuir (13th November 1715), of sad memory, on Struan consulting the stone as to the fate of the morrow, the large internal flaw was first observed. The Stuarts were lost—and Clan Donnachaidh has been declining in influence ever since.

“The virtues of the Clach-na-Bratach are not altogether of a martial nature, for it cures all manner of diseases in cattle and horses, and formerly in human beings also, if they drink the water in which this charmed stone has been thrice dipped by the hands of Struan.”

The Clach-na-Bratach is a transparent, globular mass of rock crystal, of the size of a small apple. (See accompanying woodcut, fig. 1.) Its surface has been artificially polished. Several specimens of round rock-crystal, of the same description and size, and similarly polished, have been found deposited in ancient sepulchres, and were formerly used also in the decoration of shrines and sceptres.

Another well-known example of the Highland curing-stone is the

Clach Dearg, or Stone of Ardvoirloch.

This stone is a clear rock-crystal ball of a similar character, but somewhat smaller than the Clach-na-Bratach, and placed in a setting (see fig. 2) of four silver bands or slips. The following account of the Ardvoirloch curing-stone is from the pen of one of the present members of that ancient family:—

“It has been in the possession of our family from *time immemorial*, but there is no writing about it in any of the charters, nor even a tradition as to *when* and *how* it became possessed of it. It is supposed to have been brought from the *East*, which supposition is corroborated by the fact of the silver setting being recognised as of Eastern workmanship. Its healing powers have always been held in great repute in our own neighbourhood, particularly in diseases of cattle. I have even known persons come for the water into which it has been dipped from a distance of forty miles. It is also believed to have other properties which you know of.

“These superstitions would have existed up to the present day, had I not myself put a stop to them; but six years ago, I took an opportunity to do away with them, by depositing the stone with some of the

family plate in a chest which I sent to the bank. Thus, when applied to for it (which I have been since then), I had the excuse of not having it in my possession; and when the Laird returns from India, it is hoped the superstition may be forgotten, and "the stone" preserved only as a very precious *heirloom*.

"I may mention that there were various forms to be observed by those who wished to benefit by its healing powers. The person who came for it to Ardvoirloch was obliged to draw the water himself, and bring it into the house in some vessel into which this stone was to be dipped. A bottle was filled and carried away; and in its conveyance home, if carried into any house by the way, the virtue was supposed to leave the water; it was therefore necessary, if a visit had to be paid, that the bottle should be left outside."

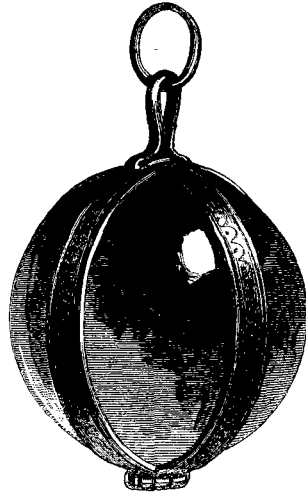


Fig. 2. Stone of Ardvoirloch.

Other charm-stones enjoyed, up to the present century, no small medical reputation among the inhabitants of the Highlands. In some districts, every ancient family of note appears to have affected the possession of a curing-stone. The Campbells of Glenlyon have long been the hereditary proprietors of a charm-stone similar to those that I have already mentioned. It consists of a roundish or ovoidal ball, apparently of rock-crystal, about an inch and a-half in diameter, and protected by a silver mounting. To make the water in which it was dipped sufficiently medicinal and effective, the stone, during the process, required to be held in the hand of the Laird. The Bairds of Auchmeddan possessed another of these celebrated northern amulets. The Auchmeddan Stone is a ball of black-coloured flint, mounted with four strips of silver. A legend engraved on this silver setting—in letters probably of the last century—states that this "Amulet or charm belonged to the family of Baird of Auchmeddan from the year 1174." In the middle of the last century, this amulet passed as a family relic to the Frasers of Findrack, when an intermarriage with the Bairds occurred.

Curing-stones seem to have formerly been by no means rare in this country, to the south also of the Highland Borders. In a letter written by the distinguished Welsh archæologist Edward Llwyd, and dated Llanlithgow, December 17, 1699, he states that betwixt Wales and the Highlands he had seen at least fifty different forms of the party-coloured glass bead or amulet known under the name of Adder-beads or Snake-stones.¹ In Scotland he found various materials used as healing amulets, particularly some pebbles of remarkable shape and colour, and hollow balls and rings of coloured glass. "They have also," he says, "the *Ombriæ pellucidæ*, which are crystal balls or hemispheres, or depressed ovals, in great esteem for curing of cattle; and some on May-day put them into a tub of water, and besprinkle all their cattle with that water, to prevent being elf-struck, bewitched, &c."

In the Lowlands, the curing-stone of greatest celebrity, and the one which has longest retained its repute, is

The Lee Penny.

In the present century, this ancient medical charm-stone has acquired a world-wide reputation as the original of the "Talisman" of Sir Walter Scott, though latterly its therapeutic reputation has greatly declined, and almost entirely ceased.² The enchanted stone has long been in the possession of the knightly family of the Lockharts of Lee, in Lanarkshire. According to a mythical tradition, it was, in the fourteenth century, brought by Sir Simon Lockhart from the Holy Land, where it had been used as a medical amulet, for the arrestment of hæmorrhage, fever, &c. It is a small, dark-red stone, of a somewhat triangular or heart-shape, as represented in the adjoining woodcut (fig. 3). It is set in the reverse of a groat of Edward IV., of the London Mint.³

When the Lee Penny was used for healing purposes, a vessel was

¹ See "Philosophical Transactions," for the year 1713, p. 98. For instances of curing-stones in the Hebrides, see "Martin's Western Isles," p. 134, 166, &c.

² I was lately told by the farmer at Nempflar, in the neighbourhood of Lee, that in his younger days, no byre was considered safe which had not a bottle of water from the Lee Penny suspended from its rafters. Even this remnant of superstition seems to have died out during the present generation.

³ I state this on the high numismatic authority of my friend, Mr Sim. Sir Walter Scott describes the coin as a groat of Edward I.

filled with water, the stone was drawn once round the vessel, and then dipped three times in the water. In his "Account of the Penny in the Lee," written in 1702, Hunter states, that "it being taken and put into the end of a cloven stick, and washen in a tub full of water, and given to cattell to drink, infallibly cures almost all manner of deseases. The people," he adds, "come from all airts of the kingdom with deseased beasts."

The Lee Penny.

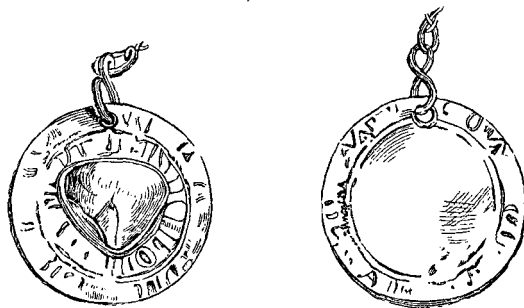


Fig. 3.

One or two points in its history prove the faith that was placed in the healing powers of the Lee Penny in human maladies of the most formidable type. About the beginning of last century, Lady Baird of Saughtonhall was attacked with the supposed symptoms of hydrophobia. But a drinking of, and bathing in, the water in which the Lee Penny had been dipped, the symptoms disappeared; and the Knight and Lady of Lee were for many days sumptuously entertained by the grateful patient. In one of the epidemics of plague which attacked Newcastle in the reign of Charles I., the inhabitants of that town obtained the loan of the Lee Penny by granting a bond of L.6000 for its safe return. Such, it is averred, was their belief in its virtues, and the good that it effected, that they offered to forfeit the money, and keep the charm-stone.

About the middle of the seventeenth century, the Reformed Protestant Church of Scotland zealously endeavoured, as the English Church under King Edgar had long before done, to "extinguish every heathenism, and forbid well-worshippings, and necromancies, and divinations, and enchantments, and man-worshippings, and the vain practices which are

carried on with various spells, and with elders, and also with other trees, and with stones, &c."¹ They left, however, other practices, equally superstitious, quite untouched. Thus, while they threatened "the seventh son of a woman" with the "paine of Kirk censure," for "curing the cruelles (scrofulous tumours and ulcers),"² by touching them, they still allowed the reigning king this power (Charles II. alone "touched" 92,000 such patients);³ and the English Church sanctioned a liturgy to be used on these superstitious occasions. Again, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Glasgow examined into the alleged curative gifts of the Lee Penny; but, finding that it was employed "wtout using onie words such as charmers and sorcerers use in their unlawfull practisess; and considering that in nature there are mony things seen to work strange effects, qrof no human witt can give a reason, it having pleasit God to give to stones and herbes special virtues for the healing of mony infirmities in man and beast, advises the brethern to surcease their process, as qrin they perceive no ground of offence: And admonishes the said Laird of Lee, in the using of the said stone to tak heed that it be used hereafter wt the least scandal that possiblie may be."

A few further remarks were made by Colonel ROBERTSON, Mr JOSEPH ROBERTSON, and Mr STUART, and the cordial thanks of the meeting were then voted to Lady Lauder, Lady Lockhart, Struan Robertson, and the other contributors of articles.

¹ Kemble's "Anglo-Saxons," vol. i. p. 527, &c.

² See a case of this prohibition in the "Ecclesiastical Records of the Presbytery of St Andrews," for September 1643. "It is manifest by experience," says Upton, "that the seventh male child by just order, never a girle or wench being borne betweene, doth heall only with touching, by a natural gift, the king's evil; which is a special gift of God, given to kings and queens, as daily experience doth witness." See Upton's *Notable Things* (1631), p. 28. Charles I. when he visited Scotland in 1633, on St John's day, in Holyrood Chapel, "heallit 100 persons of the cruelles, or kingis eivell, yong and olde."—*Dalyell's Superstitions*, p. 62.

³ See the "Charisma Basilicon" (1684) of John Browne, "Chirurgion to His Majesty," for a full and charming account of the whole process and ceremonies of the royal "touch," the prayers used on the occasion, and due proofs of the alleged wondrous effects of this "sanative gift, which hath (says Dr Browne) for above 640 years been confirmed and continued in our English Princely line, wherein is not so much of their Majesty shown as of their Divinity," and which is only doubted by "Ill affected men and Dissenters."