




SCOTTISH
WITCHCRAFT
TRIALS

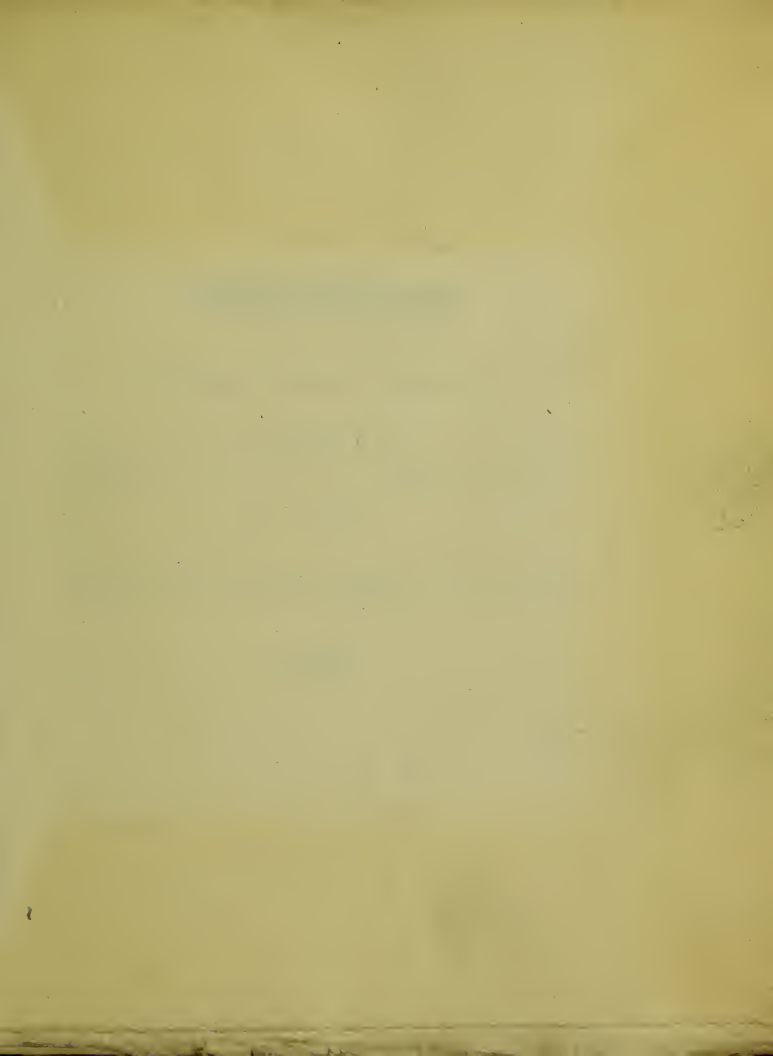
BY J. W. BRODIE-INNES
Master of the Rolls



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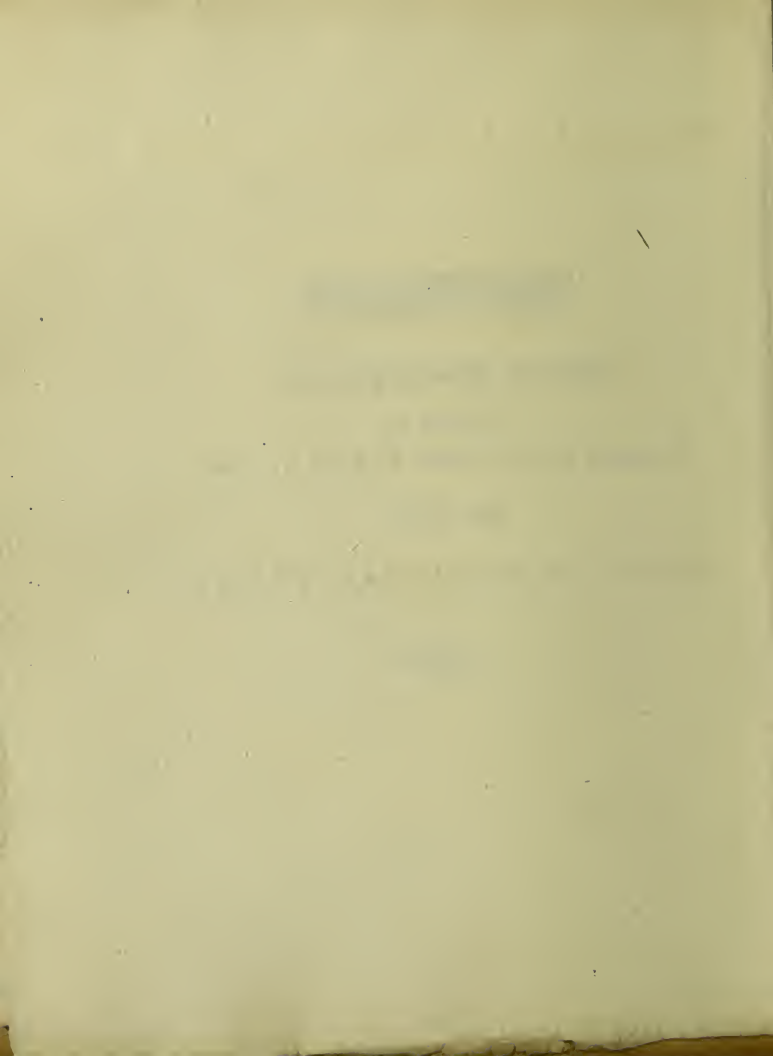
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ISSUED TO
MEMBERS OF THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

No. XXV.

SCOTTISH WITCHCRAFT TRIALS.





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Scottish Witchcraft Trials.

BY

J. W. BRODIE-INNES,

Master of the Rolls

TO THE SETTE OF ODD VOLUMES.

*Read before the Sette at a Meeting held at Limmer's Hotel,
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TO BRO. TYLER.

IN grateful recognition of the generosity which rescued from oblivion the following unworthy effort, and by presenting it to the Sette, and incorporating it with so many works of genius and graceful fancy, has conferred upon it an undeserved immortality; and as a small tribute I dedicate this little volume.

J. W. BRODIE-INNES.

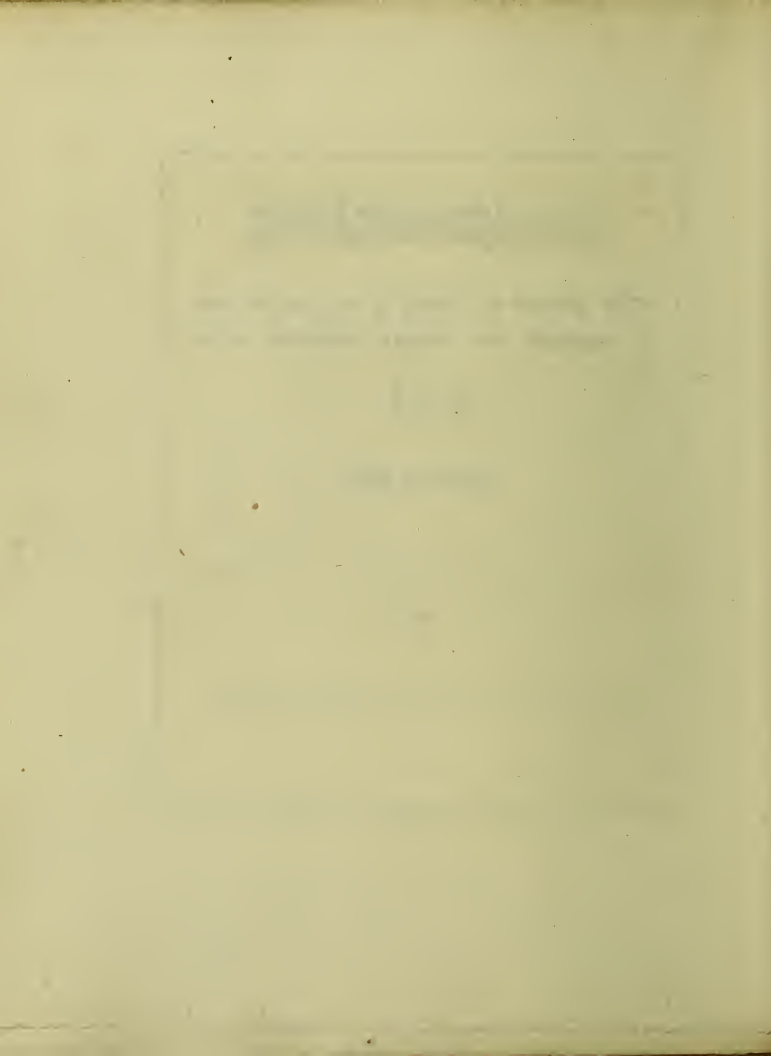


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No. 51...

Presented unto

by





SCOTTISH WITCHCRAFT TRIALS.

YOUR ODDSHIP, BRETHREN, AND GUESTS.

IT is confessedly a matter of extreme difficulty to realize fully the thoughts and motives prompting the actions of men of other times than our own. There is an apparently irresistible tendency in every man to arrogate to his own age, and probably to his own country, the pinnacle of culture and progress, and to regard all the wisdom of the past as steps leading up to that grand result, every point of

difference as evidence of ignorance happily dissipated by the sun of modern knowledge. We give, perhaps, an undue value to the art and æsthetic qualities of the past, softened as they are by the mists of time ; we may give a grudging recognition to certain ethical qualities in the ages of faith ; but that all prior ages were inferior to our own in intellect and science, and a prey to prejudice and superstition, seems firmly fixed as an article of faith of the modern thinker.

Peculiarly is this the case in regard to Witchcraft. The average modern writer on the subject seems only doubtful whether the greatest measure of his scornful pity should be bestowed on the poor silly victims of fantastic delusion, or on the grossly superstitious, ignorant, and bigotted judges who tortured and killed unfortunate persons little above the grade of idiots on account of their delusions. Yet among those witches

who were by the courts of Scotland proved and declared to be such, we find persons of high education, culture, and refinement, such as Lady Munro of Fowlis, Lady Glamis, and others ; and among judges and others concerned in the Scottish Witchcraft prosecutions, and in the seemingly brutal sentences which were often pronounced, we find some of the keenest philosophical intellects and the greatest minds of the time, men whose works and opinions on every other subject are quoted with respect to this day, of whom it is only necessary to mention the name of Sir George Mackenzie. Clearly the ignorance and superstition theory, though abundantly flattering to the vanity of this age, will not account for the Witchcraft Trials. The mind indignantly refuses to conceive even the possibility of thinking or acting in such a manner. Judges or prisoners, as described on these

lines, would be monsters with whom human nature can no more enter into sympathy than it can with the joy of the snake swallowing a guinea-pig.

Recognizing, on the other hand, as we should recognize, that the men of two or three centuries ago were very like ourselves, we might reasonably expect to find in ourselves the germs of the same ideas which bore such strange fruit in the past.

Instinctively the mind settles on the now comparatively familiar phenomena of hypnotism as affording a clue to the difficulty ; and, indeed, one of the foremost continental authorities, M. Du Prel, says plainly that a knowledge of hypnotism and somnambulism would throw a very clear light on many of the trials for witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Few, I suppose, could now be found who would deny the possibility of

some, at all events, of the alleged phenomena, hypnotism ; and the broad lines of these phenomena have been made so familiar by articles and letters in the daily papers and in popular magazines, that it will be enough to postulate a few elementary propositions, proofs of which can be found abundantly in all the scientific works on the subject.

1. The hypnotist can induce a sleep, or a trance, or a cataleptic condition, in which the subject is unconscious of all that passes.

2. Though the subject is conscious of surrounding objects, the hypnotist can induce delusions both positive and negative, causing the subject to see objects not actually there, and causing persons and objects actually before him to become invisible to him.

3. Whether these delusions are produced by suggestion, or by the mere exercise of the will

of the hypnotist, or by some magnetic or other emanation from the operator, they can be so produced that the subject shall not know from whence they proceed.

4. The hypnotist can produce post-hypnotic results, inducing the subject to experience a delusion or to perform an action at a given time long after the hypnotic trance has ended, the subject being then in a waking and apparently normal state, but quite unconscious from whence the impulse proceeds. This action may be a crime.

5. Auto-hypnosis is also possible, in which the subject generates the image himself by an act of his own will or imagination.

These, which are common and well-recognized phenomena, have stirred up a large amount of public attention at present, both here and on the continent, especially in view of the strange new possibilities of crime of which a vista is

opened ; and it is scarcely to be wondered at that from various sources we hear a demand for legislation on the subject, and for the severe punishment of those who employ the power for criminal or reckless ends.

Dr. Richardson in the "Asclepiad" has referred to what he calls the "Epidemic of Hypnotism," and though his theory is in many respects faulty, and fails to account for well-known facts, he nevertheless calls attention to an important phenomenon, viz., the periodic recurrence of a wide-spread popular interest in the subject. This seems to come at well-marked and almost exact periods of 100 years, and to coincide broadly with the closing years of each century. To take then a leap of a century backwards, over a period when little attention was excited (I am not oblivious of course of the intermediate work of Gregory, Elliotson, Esdaille, Braid, and

others ; but as a fact, valuable as it was, it roused no pronounced popular interest or excitement), we arrive at an era in this respect much like our own.

Mesmer in Paris was carrying on work of a similar kind, and attracting much the same popular interest as Luys and Charcot are doing now in the same city. And Cagliostro, who, by the way, was by no means the criminal charlatan he has been represented to be, was the exponent of the more occult and mystic side of the same class of phenomena. Another leap of a century brings us once more to a wave of popular attention to the subject. The simultaneous appearance of a number of magnetic healers in England, who worked by touching or stroking, and sometimes by passes, of whom Valentine Greatrakes of Affane was, perhaps, the most notable example ; and also of an enor-

mous crop of witchcraft trials and persecutions, and an enormous amount of literature on the subject, the ultimate result of which, in Scotland at any rate, was the final repeal some forty years later of the penal laws against witches, or, in other words, the legislation on the subject of hypnotism, which, now the period having come round again, we are once more demanding ; for these penal laws were, as I shall show presently, of a character very like what is now asked for, taking into account the difference of manners and of ideas on criminal jurisprudence. Remarkable at this time is Sir George Mackenzie's account of Witchcraft contained in the tenth title of his Criminal Law, he having a very clear philosophic intellect and discernment, both of the influence of spirits both good and evil more powerful than man, and also of the hypnotic phenomena.

“When we consider,” he says, “how the Adamant (*i.e.*, Loadstone) raises and transports the iron, and how the soul of man, which is a spirit, can raise and transport the body, and that a man’s voice or a musical sound is able to occasion great and extraordinary motions in other men, we may easily conclude that Devils, who are spirits of far more energy, may produce effects surpassing very far our understanding. And yet I do not deny but that the Devil does sometimes persuade the Witches that they are carried to places where they never were, making these impressions on their spirits and acquainting them what was done there, which is done by imprinting images upon their brain, and which images are carried to the exterior senses by the animal spirits, even as we see the air carries the species of colours upon it, though in a very insensible way ; and thus we see likewise

that the fumes of Wine or Melancholy will represent strange apparitions, and make us think them real."

This, and other passages too long to quote, show that Mackenzie understood the phenomena of hypnotism, and also that he believed, what some now are coming to think, that there are beings more powerful than man who exercise a similar force, but far more strongly.

Mackenzie, who served as one of the Lords Commissioners of Justiciary until the year 1686, was practically acquainted with his subject. He tells us elsewhere that, as Justice Depute, he went to examine some women who had confessed judicially to being witches.

Yet another century back, and we find a most extraordinary crop of witchcraft trials in Scotland, from the very remarkable case of Elizabeth or Bessie Dunlop, with its graphic details of the

“Court of Faerie,” in November, 1576, to the trial of Lady Munro, and her son Mr. Hector Munro, of Fowlis, in July, 1590; and Agnes Sampson in the following January, who was consulted by Bothwell among others.

Of course in the interim there were remarkable trials; the confession of Isobel Goudie, in 1661, is one which could not well be spared in the elucidation of the subject, so full is it of suggestion and of graphic detail, though certainly not fit for general reading. Still, all through the earlier part of the seventeenth century, the letters, diaries, and contemporary records show that the *furore* of belief and interest in witchcraft was flagging, just as the interest in mesmerism or hypnotism was flagging in the early part of the nineteenth century.

Still another leap of a century, and we find ourselves in the period prior to the witchcraft

trials, viz., the end of the fifteenth century, yet when the seeds were being sown,—the period of the writings of some of the great alchemists and magicians, when much of occult wisdom and knowledge was being brought before the public and attracting great notice, especially from the fact of its being frequently used by unscrupulous persons for criminal objects, and hence arose a demand similar to the demand which is being made now, that this strange power should be restrained by the hand of the law. The current of popular belief and feeling at that time would be most interesting to trace had we the time, but it is foreign to our subject; suffice it to say, that the end of the fifteenth century passed and nothing was done, beyond that we find the Justice Aire or assize court of Jedworth, in 1510, commissioned to inquire “gif yair be Wichecraft or Sossary wsyt in y^e realme”; but

the first recorded case was not until 1563, when, on the 26th of June, Agnes Mullikine, alias Bessie Boswell, in Dunfermline, was banished and exiled for witchcraft. This was one of the mildest sentences, perhaps, ever pronounced, but the solitary statute on the matter, which appears among the Scottish Acts, only bears date three weeks before, and was perchance not promulgated at the time. This provides that "na person, of quhat sum ever Estate or condition they be of, take upon hand in onie time hereafter to vse onie manner of Witch craftes, Sorcerie or Necromancie nor giue themselves furth to have onie sik craft or knowledge their of, theirthrow abusand the people. Nor that na persoun seik onie helpe response or consultation at onie sik users or abusers foresaidis of Witchcraftes Sorcerie or Necromancie under the pain of death."

This naturally appears at first a very undue penalty for the offence, but if we were to ask any of those good persons who are now quite righteously and properly seeking for some legislative regulation of hypnotism, what the penalty should be for an abuse of that power as compared, for instance, with the theft of a roll of silk from a shop, most would say the former crime was the greater, and should be more severely punished ; yet the penalty for the latter was death in the period we speak of.

By 7 Act Stat. David, 2 B. Ch., and cap. 13 b 4 Reg. Mag., one defamed for theft who cannot find caution should be hanged, and Mackenzie concludes that theft is *of its own nature* punishable with death. In fact, 300 years ago the death penalty was thought a generally appropriate one for all persons who seemed likely to be an incurable nuisance to

society, though modern sentimentalism has made it seem very strange that such ideas should ever have obtained.

One thing to be specially noted is the concurrence of this statute with other acts of the same period establishing the so-called "Reformed Religion"; the importance of this concurrence will appear as we proceed.

Passing from this date to Nov. 8th, 1576, we come to the trial of Bessie Dunlop, one of the first and perhaps one of the most extraordinary of witchcraft trials in Scotland, or any country. She was indicted on her own confession of using Sorcerie, Incantation, and Invocation of Spirits of the Devil. The circumstances as described seem in brief to have been that she had no art or knowledge herself, but learned all from a man whom she met, whose name was Thom Reid, whom she described as "ane honest elderlie man

gray bairded and had ane gray coitt with Lumbard slevis of the auld fassoun a pair of gray brekis and quhyte shankis gartanit aboon the kne, ane blak bonnet on his head close behind and plain before with silken laisses drawn thro the lippes thereof and ane quhyte wand in his hand." She seems to have been in trouble, and he greets her with "Sancta Maria ! Bessie ! why makis thow sa grit dule for any worldly thing?"—observe here the Catholic form of salutation. He asks her if she would believe in him, and she says she would believe in any who would do her good. He then promises her great wealth if she would deny her Christianity, and she replies, though she were riven at horse's tails she would never do this. This seems to have been intended as a test, for he did not withdraw his help ; but afterwards in his company she saw a gallant band riding past, and he told her these were the "guid wychtis

that wonnit in the Court of Elfhame," or the good neighbours that live in the Court of Fairyland. Thom Reid then taught her how to heal, and from the record of cures she seemed to have great power of what is now called faith-healing over both man and beast, power of alleviating the pains of women in childbirth, and the power of the modern thought-reader of finding lost articles. This Thom Reid seems to have told her that he was dead, had been killed at the battle of Pinkye, and that his son Thom Reid the younger was Baron officer to the Laird of Blair. So far, however, she had done nothing but good. She was asked next by the interrogating Court, "Quhat she thought of the New Law?" (*i.e.* the Reformed Religion). Answered that she had spoken with Thom about that, but Thom answered "that this new law was nocht gude and that the auld ffayth suld cum hame again but nocht sic

as it was befoir." Here seems to lie much of the root of the matter. Bessie seems often to have seen the Court of Fairyland, or Elfhame, as she calls it, riding by to the Middle-earth, which was considered to be their special place. On one occasion she says that "scho had gane afield with hir husband to Leith, for hame bringing of mele and ganging afield to teddir hir naig at Restalrig Loich quhair thair come ane company of Rydaris by that made sic ane dynn as heavin and erd had gane togidder, and incontinent thair raid in to the loich with mony hideous rumbill." Another notable fact in this trial is, that she asked Thom Reid what trouble should come to her for his company, who told her that she should be troubled, but if she could be brought to Glasgow and come into the Bishop's hands, "scho wald be wele trait and sent hame againe." Poor Bessie however did not come to the hands of

the Bishop. As usual in such cases, there was a precognition taken before the Privy Council after repeated examinations before the Kirk Session or Presbytery of the Parish, wherein she resided. These inquisitions were held by special commission issued by the Privy Council. In many cases, as for instance, in that of poor Bessie Dunlop, there seems little doubt that the Presbytery set out to find witchcraft in a person who professed the old Catholic faith. The well-known phenomena of hypnotism, faith-healing, and spiritualism, give a perfect clue to all that was charged against Bessie Dunlop, nor is it even necessary to refer to spiritualistic phenomena, if we assume Thom Reid to have been, as most likely he was, a living man and a strong hypnotizer. Not one single instance was brought of the use of her powers for anything but good. But the Kirk Session were bent on "purging the

land from Witchcraft." That confessions were often induced by torture is a certain fact, but one which has often puzzled writers on the subject. Of course we can easily see that under torture the unlucky victim would say anything in order merely to be rid of the dregs of her wretched life, but this does not account for the graphic details given by the witches of their experiences, which are of enormous value now in showing the similarity between the witchcraft and sorcery of Scotland, and of other lands and other races, in the far East and in Africa, many details of which were absolutely unknown to any in Scotland at the time, and could not therefore have been suggested by the tormentors. A far more probable solution seems to lie in the well-known prohibitive power of the hypnotizer of making the subject forget entirely from where the impulse came, and the details of what was

seen. The extreme agony of the torture constitutes in itself a re-hypnotization, in which what was formerly *bona fide* forgotten is recalled to memory, constituting what the Germans term *Erinnerungs Brücke*, or Memory-Bridge, as to which see Moll, "Der Hypnotismus." Among the modern proposals for Legislation on hypnotism, the possibility and desirability of employing the power to detect crimes committed by it, or to induce confession, has been often mooted. Had the Authorities in the sixteenth century possessed a competent knowledge of hypnotism, they would probably never have resorted to the coarse and brutal method of torture. Deprivation of sleep was a common method. Iron collars, or Witches' bridles, are still preserved in many parts of Scotland; a hoop passed over the head, a piece of iron with four prongs was thrust into the mouth, two pointed to the tongue and palate, and two

outwards to each cheek. The infernal machine was secured by a padlock, and at the back was a ring by which the prisoner was fastened in a standing position to the wall of the cell, and thus equipped, was night and day regularly waked and watched. One of these instruments now hangs, appropriately enough, in John Knox's house. By such means the Kirk Session rarely failed to procure confessions about the third day. There is little doubt that some such discipline was applied to Bessie Dunlop, who, having been found guilty, was convicted and burnt, or as the sentence ran, "carried to the Castle Hill, and there worried at ane stake and her body burnt to ashes, her whole goods being escheat to the King's use."

Another interesting trial occurs on 28th May, 1588, of Alison Peirsoun. She, under the influence of her cousin William Simpson, whom

she speaks of as a great scholar, and doctor of medicine, and who it seems was taken away from his father when but a lad by "ane man of Egypt ane gyant quha had him away to Egypt with him." By the aid of this William Simpson she saw many curious things connected with the Court of Fairyland; *inter alia*, that they maintain their anomalous and intermediate position by paying every year a tribute to the Devil of a tithe of their number, for which cause they are anxious to abstract human children with whom to pay this tribute. The only act positively charged against Alison Pierson, apart from these visions, is the healing of the Bishop of St. Andrews, under the directions of William Simpson. This must have been the celebrated Patrick Adamsoun, and his cure probably is sufficient cause of offence to the Kirk Session.

The next point of special interest is the trial

of Lady Munro of Fowlis, on the 22nd July, 1590. Here whatever practices were used the purpose was undoubtedly criminal, and was largely carried out by poison as well as witchcraft. The purpose of it all was, that by removing Marjory Campbell, the young Lady Balnagown, her brother George Ross of Balnagown might marry Lady Munro, and to do this effectually it was necessary also to destroy her stepson Robert. In this case we get the first authentic account of the use of the waxen images for purposes of enchantment, so familiar now in books of demonologie. The indictment bears, "In the fyrst thow art accusit of making twa pictouris of clay in companie with Christiane Roiss and Marjorie Neyne Mc Allister (alias Loskie Loncart) in the said Christiane Roissis westir chalmer in Canorth, the ane made for the destructioun and consumptioun of the young laird of Fowlis, and the uthir for the

young Ladie Balnagown, to the effect that the ane should be put att the Brig end of Fowlis and the uthir att Ardmoir for the destructioun of the saidis young Laird and Lady. And this suld haif bene peremit at Alhallowmes in the zeir of God I^m V^o lxxvij zeiris. Quhilkis twa pictouris being sett on the North syde of the chalmer the said Loskie Loncart tuik twa elf arrows and delyuerit ane to ye Katherene and the uther the said Christiane Roiss Malcumsone held in her awin hand and thow schott twa schottis with the said arrow heid att the said Lady Balnagowne and Loskie Loncart schott thrie schottis at the said young Laird of Fowlis." These details seem to have been supplied from Christiane Roiss' confession. There was also a Katherine Ross implicated, who afterwards married Sir William Sinclair, he who had been the leader of the riot of High School boys when Bailie Macmorran was killed.

In this remarkable case there was undoubtedly some wholesale poisoning, nevertheless Lady Munro and her stepson were acquitted, seemingly by means of very powerful political influence, but the accomplices were condemned and burnt ; and notwithstanding the fragmentary and unsatisfactory character of the Reports, probably garbled to allow of Lady Munro's escape, there seems little doubt that her Ladyship was the prime mover in the scheme, and succeeded in hypnotizing her associates for criminal purposes. If we could obtain all the circumstances of this case, it would undoubtedly be of great use in modern proposals for legislation on hypnotism. Whatever else might have been the use of the pictures and ceremonies, they doubtless served to polarize and intensify the evil wills of the circle. Images were also made, as recorded in the evidence, of butter, which is a curious parallel

to certain ceremonies recorded by Abbé Huc of the Thibetans.

There are many most interesting trials of this period that must be passed over for lack of space, but some notice must be taken of the case of Dr. Finn, Fian, or Fean, burned in Edinburgh in January, 1591, which presents several features of interest. It seems the Devil preached at North Berwicke Kirk to a number of notorious witches, and Dr. Finn acted as registrar. The means of discovering the doctor's complicity in this work was as follows. A servant girl began to develop a certain healing gift, whereupon, being questioned how it came, she declared she knew nothing, but being put to the torture of the thumbscrew, and her head thravn with a rope, some words fell from her, leading to the conclusion that she was marked by the Devil, and on search the mark was found on the fore part of her throat.

It may be queried whether this were not somewhat of the nature of the hypnotic zones often referred to by writers on the subject, which being touched or stroked the hypnotic state is revived. Anyhow, this being found she confessed, and in her confession implicated a number of other persons, including Dr. Finn, also called John Cunningham, a schoolmaster at Salt pans in the Lothians. A detailed account of the circumstances of this and some other Witchcraft trials is contained in an extremely rare black letter tract, considered to be unique, called "Newes from Scotland," 1591. Only a few of the most remarkable of the circumstances can be noticed, but the whole story is infinitely curious. The parties seemed to be a group or circle practising hypnotism or spiritualism. Here we find the first notice of the Devil's mark, which students of demonology will remember, and in the pricking

or finding of which Matthew Hopkins in England, and John Kincaird of Tranent in Scotland, made a villanous livelihood. Agnes Sampson, the eldest witch of those accused, mentioned that upon Hallowe'en some two hundred witches had put to sea, each one in a riddle or sieve, and went into the same very substantially with flagons of wine, to the Kirk of North Berwick. This recalls Shakespeare's line,

“But in a sieve I'll thither sail,”

and shows his accuracy, for this feat seems peculiar to Scotch witches, at least I do not remember to have see it in any witch stories of England or any other country. This confession, which was made before the King himself, caused him to say “they were all extreame liars,” whereupon she told him certain words which had passed in private between the Queen and himself, which he could not but acknowledge to

be exact. Dr. Finn, implicated in the same confession, and described as the only man permitted to attend the Devil's readings, was probably the hypnotizer of the circle. He being put to the torture, would not confess, but one of the witches pointed out two pins under his tongue, being the cause whereby he could not confess anything; these being drawn out the charm was lifted and the doctor confessed. It is quite possible here that the doctor, being a somnambulist, had used some form of auto-suggestion and hypnotized himself, inhibiting his own memory of his misdeeds; these appear to have been of the nature of unbridled licentiousness. Wishing on one occasion to use a love charm on a young lady, he endeavoured to procure three hairs wherewith to work his incantation, but her mother being a witch, and fathoming his design, substituted three hairs of a cow, and when the

doctor had made his conjuration, the cow came to him at the door of the church, leaping and dancing, and followed him wherever he went. Students of Rabelais will note a similarity here. Having confessed, however, Dr. Finn contrived to escape ; being again taken, he utterly denied all his former confession, and the most fearful tortures, graphically described in the Reports, failed to awake memory again, and he was burnt on the Castle Hill.

Agnes Sampson, another of the same circle, called the wise wife of Fife, was described by Arnot as "a grave matron-like woman, of rank and comprehension above the vulgar"; and Archbishop Spotswood, speaking of her in much the same terms, says that "she declared she had a familiar spirit who appeared to her in visible form and told her any doubtful matter." She was consulted by Bothwell as to the fate of the

King, and apparently bribed by him to persuade the spirit to compass his death. This the spirit failed to do, and this was apparently the chief cause of her condemnation. She also, however, used charms for her healing, some of which appeared in evidence, and were monkish doggerel rhymes such as are not unknown in nurseries of the present day, one being a rhymed version of the Apostles' Creed, which, doubtless, stank in the nostrils of the saintly Kirk Session. The evidence in her case gives a full and graphic description of a Witches' Sabbath at North Berwick Kirk. There seems great probability that this was really an hypnotic *séance* held by Dr. Finn, wherein, as hinted by Mackenzie, they were persuaded they were carried to places where they never were. The details, however, are very ample of the Devil starting up in the pulpit and calling the roll of

their witch nick-names, of the ceremonies of initiation, of their raising bodies in the kirk-yard, and of the Devil conjuring wax images and love charms wherewith they should work incantations in future.

She also was burnt on the Castle Hill; and here it may be useful to note, as this burning of witches has been much spoken of as barbarous, etc., that the death penalty was inflicted in various ways in Scotland at this time. Men usually were beheaded—to be hanged was counted very degrading, a fit punishment for a border-thief taken red-handed and executed out of hand, but savouring too much of lynch law for the solemnity of criminal justice. To behead or hang a woman was against the Scottish feeling of the time; women and infirm persons were usually drowned, but women of rank were burnt, as also were women guilty of the higher crimes

of treason and murder, to which, on account of its heinousness, witchcraft was added. There was, therefore, no special barbarity in this mode of punishment, which was quite consistent with the criminal ideas of the day.

Barbara Napier, another of the circle, being acquitted by the jurors, an action of wilful error was brought against them on the following 7th of June ; they were, however, found not guilty of this.

The most distinguished of the circle was Euphemia or Effie Makcalzane, the only daughter and heiress of Lord Cliftonhall, a judge of the Court of Session, a man of great learning and attainments, an eminent lawyer, and a great statesman ; she married Patrick Moscrop, an advocate of considerable talent, by whom she left three daughters. The charge against her, as against others of the circle, was

attempting to compass the King's death by sorcery, images in wax, etc. It is to be noted, however, that she was an ardent Roman Catholic and devoted to the cause of Bothwell, which may throw a side light on her trial. According to Law's "Memorials" Bothwell himself had much traffic with witches, and was esteemed an expert necromancer. She was burnt alive, the severest sentence ever passed by the Court, most of the witches being worried (*i.e.*, strangled) at the stake before being burnt. She met her fate with great firmness, glorying in what she had attempted. The political and religious animosity of the times appears in every line of this trial.

Instances might be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*, and as studies of ceremonial magic 300 years ago, are of very great value. It would, however, be utterly impossible now to enter into more details.

One case only shall be noted, viz., that of Margaret Wallace, the whole pleadings in which are given in full in the 3rd vol. of Pitcairn, and show in a striking way the opinions held by eminent Scotch lawyers on the subject of Witchcraft. In this case it was asserted, though certainly not proved, that she had taken a violent hatred against Cuthbert Grey, and that she threatened his life. According to the evidence Grey had, in fact, persistently abused and threatened her. Howbeit Grey was taken ill, and was lying helpless and unable to move. Margaret Wallace being sent for, “ Tuik him by the Schaikill-bane with ane hand and laid her uther hand upone his breast and without any word speaking save only by moving of hir lippes past fra him at that instant : and upon the morn theirefter returning bak again to the s^d Cuthbert Scho tuik him by the arme and bad him aryse

quha at that tyme and fyftene dayis befoir was nocht abill to lift his legis without help yet scho haifing urget him to ryse and taking him by the hand, as said is, broucht him out of his bed and thairefter led him but the house quha immediately thairefter by hir Sorcery and Charmeing practizet by hir, walkit up and down the fluir without help or support of ony and fra that time quickly recovered."

The likeness of this to modern recorded cases of psycho-therapeutics needs no comment.

It remains to see what conclusion can be drawn from all this. It would be absurd to pretend that all mediæval witchcraft was nothing but hypnotism; as absurd, in fact, as to pretend that all the occult phenomena manifested at the present time can be accounted for in the same way. Still, we do see a very striking analogy between these old times and our own.

Then, as now, there came a great wave of phenomena unexplainable by commonly received scientific laws ; a probability, indeed an actuality, of some of these phenomena or strange powers being used for criminal purposes, and a demand arose for legislation ; this was severe, but considering the severity of all punishments at the time, not out of proportion. But then came the great upheaval of the Reformation, and with it the conviction, probably in many cases honestly entertained, that the devoted adherents of the old faith were bewitched—hypnotized we might say now—and the severity of the law and the obscurity of the crime put a ready weapon into the hands of the triumphant reformers. The publicity of the early witchcraft trials would certainly affect sensitive and imaginative persons, inducing a kind of auto-hypnosis, and the periodic wave I have alluded to would certainly

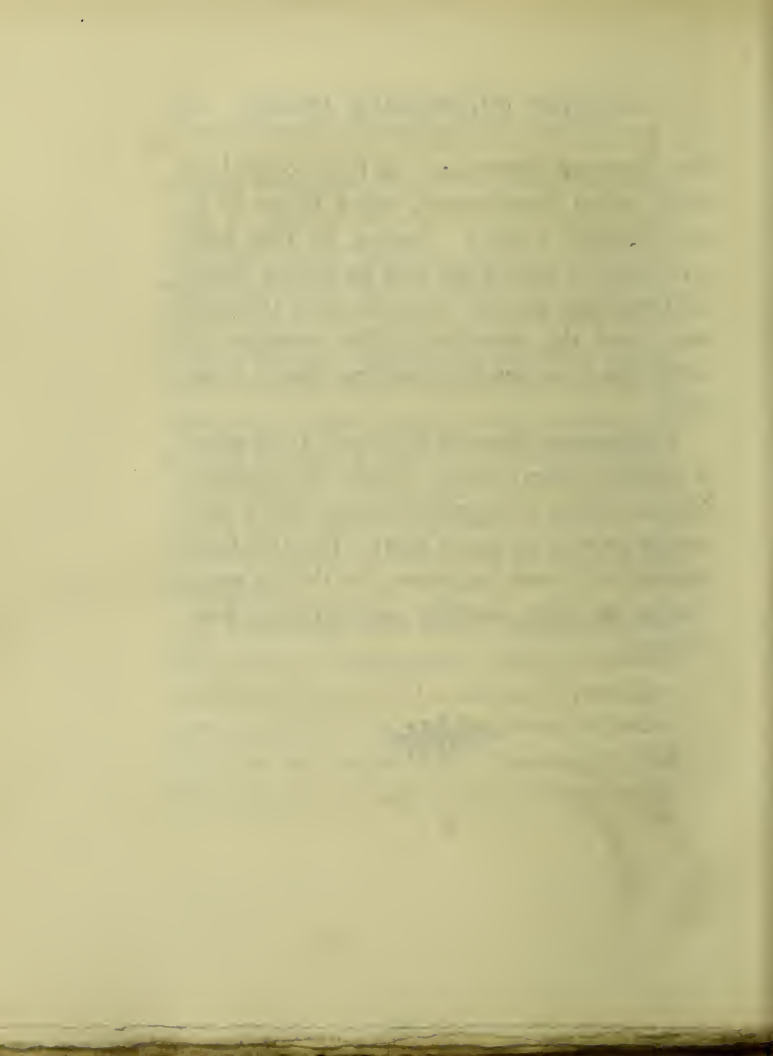
produce a very large number of such sensitives, ready to become somnambulists or clairvoyants with very slight disposing cause. Sensualists, such as probably was Dr. Finn, would seize on the power which probably they would empirically discover. Criminals, political and other, would naturally learn and employ it, and the operation of these causes would increase the popular terror and produce the terrible retributions of panic. These again would operate to spread cases of auto-hypnosis and hysteria, till the wave passed and the symptoms wore themselves out.

Of course this is far from accounting for the whole range of phenomena; indeed, unless we accept the theory of the operation of intelligent powers superior to man, some better and some worse, of an intermediary character, neither wholly good nor wholly evil, it is hard to see

how observed phenomena can be accounted for with logical completeness, either to-day or in the sixteenth century. Passing by this, however, there is little doubt that the known results of hypnotism account for much, both then and now, and the unaccounted for residuum is about the same and as perplexing now as it was then.

Furthermore, these old Witchcraft Trials afford a valuable lesson to those who ask for legislation on the subject of hypnotism to-day which they would do well to lay to heart. Not that there should be no such legislation, but that its scope should be most carefully and earnestly considered.







O. V.

A

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