

## Original Documents.

### DIVINATION IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY BY AID OF A MAGICAL CRYSTAL.

COMMUNICATED BY THE REV. JAMES RAINE, JUN.

THE curious document which is now for the first time printed, occurred to me in the course of a long and laborious search into the registers of the Archbishops of York. It presents an interesting picture of the life of a magician.

As much has been written about the use of the magic crystal, from that consulted by Paracelsus to the recent practices of similar divination in our own time, I shall content myself with making a few observations upon the document before me.<sup>1</sup>

The culprit, one William Byg alias Lech, came to Wombwell in the southern part of Yorkshire, about the year 1465. For the next two or three years he earned a livelihood by recovering stolen property through the aid of a crystal. His fame for good and evil began to spread abroad, and he soon found himself in the hands of the vicar-general of the Archbishop of York, upon a charge of heresy. The fear of the heavy pains and penalties which could be inflicted for so serious an offence drew a full confession from the culprit. In it he gives us an account of the manner in which he practised his art, of his experiments and their success.

In the course of his examination Byg mentions one circumstance of interest. He says that he left his books, probably of magic, in his chamber at Greenwich, soon after the death of the late Duke of Gloucester (1446). This is the celebrated Duke Humphrey. Whether Byg had anything to do with Master Bolingbroke or Dame Margery Jordaine, who are said to have flattered the vanity and hastened the end of that popular though ill-fated nobleman, we cannot now tell. At all events, it is probable that the persecution, which at that time arose against the professors of that art, in which Byg was then a student, obliged him to leave the vicinity of London and retire to a secluded village in Yorkshire.

The following punishment was inflicted upon the culprit. He was ordered to walk at the head of a procession in the Cathedral Church of York, holding a lighted torch in his right hand, and a rod with his books hanging to it, by a string, in his left. A paper inscribed with the words—*Ecce sortilegus*—was to be affixed to his head. On his breast and back two other sheets of paper were to be placed, each bearing the words—*Invocator Spirituum*,—whilst his shoulders were to be decorated with similar ornaments, charged with the appalling title of *sortilegus*. Thus attired, he was ordered to make a full recantation of his misdemeanors, and to seal it by committing his books to the flames. A similar repudiation of

<sup>1</sup> See a notice "on Crystals of Augury," by Mr. H. Syer Cuming, *Journal of the Archaeological Association*, vol. v., p. 51. A stone supposed to be Dr. Dee's "Show-stone," a ball of smoky quartz, given to

him, as he affirmed, by an angel, is to be seen in the British Room at the British Museum. It had been preserved in the mineralogical collection.

his errors was to be made in the parish churches of Pontefract, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham.

It will be observed that Byg's confession before the Commissary Poteman was made on the 22nd of August, 1467. He did not, however, make his full submission before the 23rd of March in the following year, when he was released from the pains of excommunication and received his sentence. The punishment, for such an offender, was but slight. This apparent lenity may perhaps be accounted for. It is very probable that some persons of consequence had required Byg's assistance, and thus the deceiver was rescued by the dupe. With great adroitness he implicates with himself several persons of rank and consideration. By doing so he probably saved himself. The Wombwells were even then rising into importance, and the Archbishop of York, with the princely blood of Neville flowing in his veins, would beloth to lay his hands upon a Fitzwilliam.

I may, perhaps, be permitted to state here, that for the last three years I have been preparing for the press a biographical account of the various dignitaries of the church of York. This work, which I propose to call the "Fasti Eboracenses," was commenced by the late Rev. W. H. Dixon, M.A., Canon Residentiary of York. In it, it is my intention not to content myself with a bare list of names, but to collect the preferments and services of each ecclesiastic at York and elsewhere from every available source, and to arrange them after the fashion of the *Athenæ Oxonienses*. If any member of the Institute will kindly furnish me with any information which he may possess, he will confer a great favour upon me, and take away from the imperfections of a very difficult and laborious work. JAMES RAINE, JUN.

In quadam causa hereticæ pravitatis et sortilegii.

Willelmus Byg alias Lech, de Wombwell Ebor. dioceseos, de heretica pravitare suspectus, juratus ad sancta Dei Evangelia per ipsum corporaliter tacta, coram venerabili viro magistro Willelmo Poteman legum doctore, in Christo patris et domini, domini Georgii permissione Divina Ebor. Archiepiscopi, &c., vicario in spiritualibus generali, xxij. die mensis Augusti, Anno Domini Millesimo cccc<sup>mo</sup> lxxvj, de fideliter respondendo requirendis ab eodem. Interrogatus et examinatus dicit, quod circiter duos vel tres annos ultime elapsos venit iste juratus ad villam de Wombewell, causa moram trahendi in eadem, et ibidem usque modicum ante festum natalis Domini ultimi preteriti moram traxit. Et dicit interrogatus quod cencies, a tempore quo ipse primo pervenit ad villam de Wombewell, ad reducendum bona furtive subtracta, artem quæ sequitur occupavit, viz., primo juvenem quemdam annorum etatis citra xij usitavit statuere super scabellum coram ipso Willelmo, et in manu pueri sive juvenis hujusmodi posuit, ut dicit, unum lapidem cristallum, ipsum cogendo dicere Pater Noster, Ave et Credo, secundum informationem istius jurati, et tunc verba proferre subsequencia; *Domine Jhesu Christe, mitte nobis tres angelos ex parte dextera qui dicant aut demonstrent nobis veritatem de omnibus hiis de quibus nos interrogabimus.* Et tunc, ut dicit, fecit juvenem hujusmodi prospicere in lapidem, et petiit ab eo quid viderit, et si aliquid viderit, juvenis retulit ipsi jurato, et quandoque ut dicit, juvenis hujusmodi vidit in lapide prædicto bona subtracta et quandoque subtractores bonorum in eodem lapide, et quandoque unum angelum, et quandoque duos angelos, et nunquam ultra. Et si primo viderit angelos apparentes, tunc verbis sequentibus usus est ipse juratus eisdem dicere; *Domini Angeli, ego precipio vobis per Dominum et omnia sua nomina sancta, et per virginitatem, gratuite dicatis nobis veritatem et nullam*

*falsitatem de omnibus hiis de quibus nos interrogabimus, et aperte sine dampno meo et omnium presencium.* Et tunc, ut dicit, fecit hujusmodi juvenem ipsos angelos sive angelum interrogare, sub hiis verbis; *Say me trewe, chylde, what man, what woman, or what childe hase stolne y<sup>r</sup> thyng, and shewe me thing in his hand;* et tunc usus est specificare subtracta. Et tunc, ut dicit, juvenis ipse clare prospiciebat in lapide hujusmodi cristallino subtractores bonorum ac ipsa bona subtracta. Et si juvenis hujusmodi prius noverit personas hujusmodi subtrahentes, voluerit specificare nomina eorundem, sin autem voluit per manum suam designare in qua patria et qua parte ejusdem subtractores hujusmodi moram trahebant. Sed pro majori parte, ut dicit, ipsi qui aliqua bona habuerunt subtracta juvenem secum adduxerunt qui noverit partes suspectas in hac parte. Et ulterius dicit quod (si) juvenis hujusmodi post primam conjurationem nichil in lapide prospex(er)it, iteravit ipse, (viz. ipse juratus) ipsam conjurationem, dicentes; *Domine Jhesu Christe mitte nobis tres angelos, etc.* Et dicit, quod habuit ipse juratus firmam fidem de sciendo de hujusmodi bonis subtractis, si angelus vel angeli apparuerit vel apparuerint et juvenis hujusmodi loqueretur. Et dicit, quod vigesies juvenes hujusmodi nullam apparenciam in lapide viderunt, nec ipse juratus aliquo tempore. Et dicit, interrogatus, quod primo post adventum suum usque Wombewell ipse juratus per artem suam recuperavit et reduxit, ad instanciam Johannis Wombewell, unum flammeolum ejusdem Johannis furtive per filiam suam propriam subtractam. Et dicit, quod alio tempore citra idem Willelmus xvij vel xix nobilia in auro et argento Johannis Steven, moram trahentis in quadam villa prope et juxta villam de Wombewell situata, ad majus per tria milliaria negligenter per ipsum perdita et omissa, ac per quandam ancillam ejusdem Johannis inventa, ac per ipsam ab eo detenta et concealata, per artem predictam eidem fecit restitui et per eandem deliberari, et habuit et recepit ipse juratus a dicto Johanne Stevens pro labore suo vj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>. Et dicit, quod circiter festum Sancti Andreæ ultimo preteritum venerunt ad istum juratum usque Wombewell quidam Bisshop et Pagett de Derthington, et alii viri quorum nomina ignorat ipse juratus de presenti, et nunciaverunt eidem jurato qualiter duo calices ab ecclesia de Derthington subtractæ fuerunt, desiderantes eum, quatenus vellet, eis suum auxilium in hac parte pro recuperacione eorundem exhibere. Quorum votis applaudit ipse juratus, ut dicit, et tunc habuerunt, ut dicit, ipsum juratum ad quemlibet honestum virum nomine Fitzwilliam armigerum, et ab inde usque Darthington cariarunt, et in presencia ejusdem Fitzwilliam, necnon cujusdam Scurdvill et aliorum quamplurium, produxerunt predicti Bisshop et Pagett duos pueros, et eos sedere fecerunt super ij herpicas, et artem suam predictam in eis exercuit predictus juratus, ut dicit, et alter ipsorum puerorum, ut dicit, vidit in lapide predicto quemdam virum, sed quem nescit, ut dicit habentem calicem argenteum in manibus suis, et aliter, ut dicit, diffamavit nunquam ipse juratus vicarium de Darthyngton seu aliquem alium super premissis. Et dicit quod ipse juratus recepit a seniore Pagett xiiij<sup>d</sup>, et a juniore Pagett xx<sup>d</sup> pro labore suo in premissis. Et alia quam plura bona diversorum hominum subtracta arte sua predicta ad eorum proprietarios reduxit infra tempus sic prædictum. Et dicit quod premissam artem didicit a quodam Arthuro Mitton a Leycistre, circiter annos tres ultra elapsos, sed habuit libros suos apud Greynwiche cito post mortem ducis quondam Gloucestre in camera ejusdem apud Greynwich, et dicit quod credit firmiter angelos predictos cicius apparuisse per lecturam suam super libros predictos. Et dicit se credere modo ipsos fuisse malos angelos.

[Reg. Neville, fol. 69.]