

VIII.

NOTES ON A SILVER-MOUNTED CHARM-STONE OF ROCK-CRYSTAL FROM INVERLENY, WITH NOTICES OF OTHER SCOTTISH BALLS OF ROCK-CRYSTAL AND OF SUPERSTITIONS CONNECTED THEREWITH. BY GEO. F. BLACK, ASSISTANT-KEEPER OF THE MUSEUM.

I. Through the kindness of Mr Alexander J. S. Brook, F.S.A. Scot., I am enabled to exhibit a fine specimen of a mounted ball of rock-crystal (fig. 1), which is stated to have been used as a charm. The ball is $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter, and is mounted in a setting of four silver bands. Attached to either plate, uniting the ends of the bands, is a staple or loop of silver, from each of which depends a circular ring of the same metal. In the centre of each band is a small hemispherical setting of light blue paste, of a turquoise colour.

This ball was originally the property of the Gordons of Carall, and is stated to have been in their possession for six hundred years. It now belongs to Col. Eyles Gordon of Inverleny, Callander. Nothing is known of its history beyond the tradition that it was used, like the crystal balls already described in the *Proceedings*,¹ for the cure of cattle diseases and other ailments. The silver mounting, according to Mr Brook, is probably of late seventeenth century date.

This ball is the finest mounted specimen which has come under my notice, and it is much to be regretted that nothing more definite can be said either of its history or use.

II. The Rev. Dugald Campbell, in his account of the united parish of Kilmore and Kilbride, states that at Dunolly Castle there are two crystal balls about the size of pigeons' eggs, and he adds that, "Tradition says a Lord of Lorn, who joined the Crusaders, brought these stones from the Holy Land. They were for centuries supposed to possess great healing virtues, particularly in curing diseases of cattle, when it is said they were dipped in water which the cattle received to drink. It is not a

¹ *Proceed. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxvii. pp. 434 *et seq.*

century since they were sent for by express a distance of 40 miles, to stay the ravages of an epidemic."¹

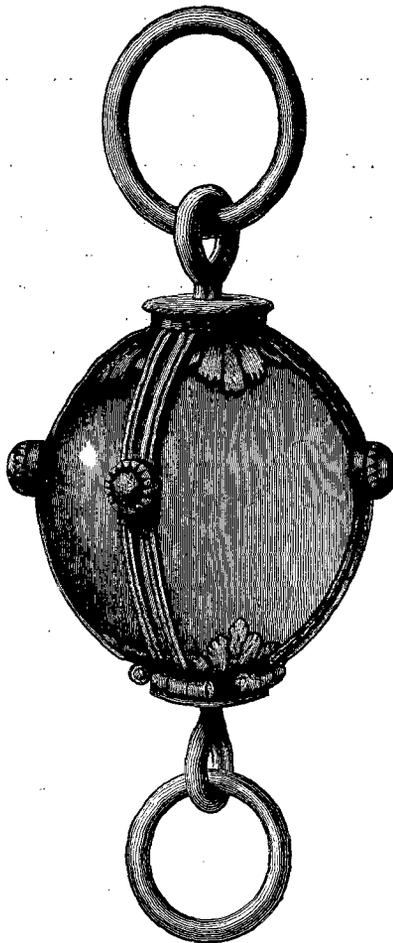


Fig. 1. Crystal Ball, mounted in silver, as a Charm. (Full size.)

About fifty or more years earlier, one of these balls is mentioned by

¹ *New Statistical Account* (1845), Argyllshire, vol. vii. p. 527.

Ramsay of Ochtertyre in his chapter on Highland Superstitions. His account of the ball and its virtues is as follows :¹—

“The Leugh—*i.e.*, a sacred stone—is another engine of superstition derived from the Druids, which is used by the Highlanders, as well as by some other branches of the Celtæ. The Highland ones are generally larger than a hen’s egg, and of much the same shape. Some of them are of a substance like crystal, and others of a sort of half-transparent pebble. There are few old families of any consideration that have not one of them in their possession. Various are the virtues ascribed to them—some being accounted efficacious in curing diseases whilst others are supposed to secure people against dangers. And therefore, not many years ago, it was customary to lustrate persons who were about to go on a military expedition with water into which the *leugh* had been dipped.²

“Mr M’Dougal of Dunolly, a gentleman of Lorn, is in possession of one of the most celebrated of these stones. According to tradition, it once belonged to M’Dougal, Lord Lorn, a great family forfeited by King Robert Bruce, of which Mr M’Dougal is reputed the representative. Its fame for curing the diseases of cattle is still very high with the common people of Argyllshire ; and long ago, the first people of that country sent for it on extraordinary occasions, and gave their obligation to restore it under a severe penalty. It has a flaw, concerning which they have a foolish tradition. It had been lent, say they, to somebody at a distance, with a strict charge to put it in a clean place, instead of which it was put into a sack of wool. This offended it so much that it gave a loud crack and flew home. Ridiculous as this may seem, the same locomotive powers are ascribed by the Highlanders to other *leughs*, as well as to St Fillan’s bell.”³

The discovery of the crystal balls above mentioned has suggested the desirability of enumerating and briefly describing all the Scottish balls

¹ *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, from the Ochtertyre MS., vol. ii. pp. 453, 454. Mr John Munro, of Oban, informs me that one of the Dunolly balls is globular, and the other oblong or egg-shaped.

² Smith, in his *Galic Antiquities*, Edinburgh, 1780 (p. 62), says :—“A few of these crystal balls are still to be seen in the Highlands, where they have not yet lost all their credit. Some of their owners have still the weakness to believe, or the disingenuity to pretend, that these trinkets can do almost everything but raise the dead. If a distemper rages among men or beasts it is no uncommon thing to send 50 miles for this glass physician to cure them.”

³ The following instances from Islay, of relics possessing an inherent locomotive power, are mentioned by Lord Teignmouth : The skull of a man named Mackerter [M’Arthur] is shown on a stone in a cave beneath the headland of the same name [M’Arthur’s Head, near Proaig]. All attempts to remove the skull have failed. “It has been cast into the sea, and carried away, but has always resumed its

of rock-crystal that are at present known. Further particulars of these and other charms of rock-crystal will be found in the *Proceedings*, vol. xxviii, pp. 434-444.

III. The *Clach-Dearg*, or Stone of Ardvoirlich, mounted in a setting of four silver bands, with a ring at the top for suspension.

IV. The *Clach-na-Bratach*, or Stone of the Standard, the property of the Robertsons of Struan (Clan Donnachaidh). This is an unmounted ball, $1\frac{7}{8}$ inch in diameter. Mr Robertson Matheson, of Dunfermline, Honorary Secretary of the Clan Donnachaidh Society, informs me that it is believed by some that the ball "always grew dim or damp before the death of a chief of Clan Donnachaidh."

V. The *Clach Bhuaic* (*Bhuaidh*),¹ or Powerful Stone, formerly in the possession of the Campbells of Glenlyon. It is mounted in silver, and is described as about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. The present resting-place of this ball is unfortunately not known.

VI. The sixth ball is in the Fingask Collection, at present on loan in the Museum of Science and Art. It is mounted in silver in the usual manner. Unfortunately it has no history.

VII. A small ball, $1\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter, unmounted, is in the Scottish National Museum. It is stated to have been found in a grave in Fife.

VIII. In the Appendix to the paper on "Charms and Amulets," already referred to, mention is made of two balls of rock-crystal in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy, one of which, $2\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter, is "reputed to have belonged to the Regalia of Scotland."² The second

station. . . . Several coffins [*i.e.*, stone cists] have been found in this island. . . . One of these, which was closed, the people could not be prevailed upon to open; and they were persuaded that a stone removed from the grave would return to its position" (*Sketches of the Coasts and Islands of Scotland*, 1836, vol. ii. pp. 333, 334). The Bells of St Fillan and of St Eunan, if removed from their resting-places, returned of their own accord, ringing all the way (*Old Stat. Acc.*, vol. xvii. p. 378; *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 1st ser. p. 196).

¹ *Buadh*. "This word literally means a victory; hence the extraordinary powers or virtues of amulets, &c. Jewels are called *clocha buadh*, *i.e.*, stones possessing virtue, probably from the ancient belief that the gems were efficacious for the discovering and counteracting of poisons and spells."—Footnote to "The Pursuit of Diarmuid and Grainne," *Trans. Ossianic Society of Dublin*, vol. iii. p. 119.

² *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxvii. p. 524.

ball, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter, was stated to have been found at Upper court, Kilkenny. Through the kindness of D. W. Stewart, Esq., a Fellow of this Society, I am enabled to correct this paragraph, and to give some additional particulars. Mr Stewart, during a recent visit to Dublin, had his attention drawn to the crystal balls in the Museum there, and on making inquiries concerning them, learned that an error was made when the Catalogue of the Royal Irish Academy was compiled, and that the smaller of the two balls is the one from Scotland. Mr Stewart further learned that the ball was formerly in the possession of the Campbells of Craignish, and that it was sold to the Royal Irish Academy about forty years ago. In the bond of manrent of the year 1610, printed in the paper, describing a charm-bead from Craignish, in the last volume of the *Proceedings*,¹ mention is made of "ane precious stane," in the possession of Ronald Campbell of Barrichibyan, but pertaining to Angus Campbell of Innerlyver, "quhilk stane the said Ronnald hes oblessit him and his airis quhatsumeuer to mak furthcomand to the said Angus and his airis, And to that effect sall anis delyuer the said stane in the handis of the said Angus, And the said Angus sall redelyuer thaireftir the said staine againe in and to the custodie and keping perpetuallie of the said Ronald and his airis berand his surname and armis ; And thairfoir the said Rannald oblissit him and his airis foirsaidis to present and delyuer at all tymes at requist the said stane when the saidis Angus and his foirsaidis sall haue to do thairwith, the samen beand reportit bak agane eftir thair turne be done." It was further provided for, that if the stone were not forthcoming, Ronald and his heirs obliged themselves to pay to the said Angus the sum of "ane hundrethe merkis money as pryce and value of the said stane." In the paper on the charm from Craignish it was surmised that the bead there described was the precious stone referred to in the bond, but it is just as likely to be the crystal ball under consideration.

IX. In the possession of Mrs Gibson, Bankhead House, Forfar, is a ball of crystal $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. It has no history.

X. The Keppoch Charm-stone is "an oval of rock-crystal about the size of a small egg, fixed in a bird's claw of silver, with a silver chain attached." This charm is now believed to be in Australia.

¹ *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xxviii. p. 231.

The classical accounts of crystal, as, for instance, that of Pliny, deal mainly with its use as a material for the manufacture of articles of luxury, such as basins, goblets, cups, &c. The only medicinal property credited to crystal by Pliny is its use as a cautery for the human body when acted upon by the rays of the sun.¹ It is only when we reach mediæval times that we begin to find marvellous accounts of the magical and curative properties of this stone. Of these accounts the fullest, and probably the most quaint, is that of Bartholomew Glanvil. It is as follows :²—

“Crystall is a brighte stone and clere, with watry colour. Men trowe that it is of snowe or yse made harde in space of many yeres. Therfore the Grekes yave a name therto. It is gendred in Asia and in Cipres, and namely in the northe moûtaynes, where the sonne is mooste feruent in somer. And they make this dure longe, that is called Cristal. This stone set in the sonne taketh fyre, in somoche if drye towe be put therto, it settieth the towe on fyre. His vse is ordeyned to drynke, and werketh none other thyng but what colde thyng may do. Huc usque Isidorus li. xvi. ca. xiii. Dioscorides speketh of Cristall & saythe, that it is harded and torned in to stone not onely by vertue and strengthe of colde, but more by erthely vertue. And the colours therof is lyke to ise. The vertue therof helpeth ayenste thirste and brēnyng hete. And if it be beten to powder and dronken with hony, it fyllith brestes and tetes full of mylke, if the mylke fayleth before bycause of colde. Also if it be dronken it helpeth ayenst Collica passio, & ayenst the passion of euyll guttes, if the wombe be not harde. This stone is clere, and so lettres and other thyng that ben put therin, ben seen clerely ynough. That Cristall materially is made of water, Gregorie sayth super primum Ezechielis : water (sayth he) is of itselfe fletyng, but by strengthe of colde it is torned & made stedfaste cristall : and so in Eccles, it is writen. The northen wynde blewe and made cristal frese, &c. And herof Aristotle telleth the cause in li. Meteororum :

¹ “Invenio medicos quæ sunt urenda corporum, non aliter utilius id fieri putare, quam crystallina pila adversis posita Solis radiis.”—*Hist. Nat.*, lib. xxxvii. cap. 10. Among the ancients crystal was believed to be a species of ice, hence its name κρύσταλλος, from κρύος = icy-cold, frost. Herodotus also, in describing the rigours of the winter in Scythia, uses the word “crystal” in the sense of ice (lib. iv. cap. 28).

² *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, lib. xvi. cap. 31. The author of this treatise, Bartholomew de Glanvil, was an Englishman and a Franciscan friar. His work was compiled about 1360, and is a complete store-house of what passed for scientific knowledge in his time. Written originally in Latin, the work became popular in England in the translation by John of Trevisa in 1398. The work is based on the *Speculum Naturale* of Vincent de Beauvais (Vicentius Bellovacensis), who died about 1284. The edition here quoted was printed “in ædibus Thomæ Bertheleti 1535,”

There he sayth, that stony thynges of substaunce of ooze, ben water in matter, as Ricardus Rufus saythe : Stone ooze is of water : but for it hathe more of drinesse of erthe thanne thynges that melte, therefore they benne not froze onely with coldnesse of water, but also by drynesse of erthe, that is myngled therwith, whan the watri partye of the erthe and glasy hath mastry on the water, and the forsayde colde hathe the victory and mastrie. And soo saynct Gregory his reasone is true, that sayth that crystalle may be gendred of water."

Crystallomancy, or divination by means of a crystal ball, was in great repute in Elizabethan times, and is practised more or less at the present day. In divining with the crystal the operator first muttered a formula of conjuration over the ball and then placed it in the hands of a chaste youth or virgin, when the spirit summoned shortly afterwards appeared, or the desired answer was seen on the surface. Aubrey devotes a chapter of his *Miscellanies* to the subject of divination by means of a beryl or crystal, and gives a figure of a "Consecrated Berill" mounted on a stand. "This Berill," he says, "is a perfect Sphere, the Diameter of it I guess to be something more than an Inch : It is set in a Ring or Circle of Silver resembling the Meridian of a Globe : The stem of it is about Ten Inches high, all gilt. At the four quarters of it are the Names of Four Angels, viz., *Uriel, Raphael, Michael, Gabriel*. On the top is a Cross Patee."¹ This beryl was consulted for the cure of diseases ; and the operator, after repeating the conjuration, "did see, either the Receipt in Writing, or else the Herb."

The following formula for conjuring with a crystal ball is printed by Douglas from a manuscript in the British Museum. The manuscript, he states, appears to have been written in the reign of Queen Elizabeth or James the First (of England) :—

"Here followeth an experiment, approved and unknowne, of Ascaryell, to see most excellent and certainly in a christall stonne what secret thou wilt.

"First, take a chrystall stone, or a glasse, the greater the better, so that it be fayre and cleane, without any ragges, cracke, or holes broken within ; and thou must have a thonge of harte-skinn, to wrappe thy stone in, so that thy stone may be well scene in the middest of the bindinge ; and ever, when thou dost wrappe the stone about with the thonge, say thus : *In nomine sancte*

¹ *Miscellanies*, 1696, p. 131.

trinitatis et diætatís hanc gemmam recondo. Then holde the crystall stone, which is so dight in thy right hande, against the sun, which must be done in the heate of the sun at noone, when the sun is in the highest and hottest, and soe call him in such likeness as thou wilt by the conjuration followinge, and he will come and shew thee whatsoever thou wilt in all countryes, of all things, whatsoever thou wilt ask him ; and thou shalt command him to bring his followers with him, and he will bringe one Mathayas with him, and another also will come with him.

“SEQUITUR CONJURATIO.

“Conjuro vos Centony Ceton, messitone messiton, myssycón vel myceteron, qui habitatis in Bosco, ego vos conjuro et precipio vobis cum sociis vestris ut sitis parati obediendo mihi, et ad omnia præcepta mea adimplendo. Conjuro te Ascaryel Abylon vel Boat, per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum, qui est Alpha et Omega, principium et finis, per tremendum diem Judicii, et per virtutem Dei venii, et per omnia nomina ejus effabilia et ineffabilia. Quatenus tu Askaryell *in istam gemmam cristalinam* sine mora citissime venias, in propria persona tua et in pulchra hominis forma et sertum in tuo capite et mihi visibiliter teipsum demonstres, et omnibus circumstantibus cito appareas et socios tuos tecum adducas ut te et illos optissime videre possimus, per desiderium meum et meas conjurationes et per omnia quæ tibi jussero. Et si hoc non feceris in virtute et per virtutem Dei, et per potestatem magnam quam Deus habet super te, ego condemno te Ascaryel in infernum et ignem inextinguibilem usque ad ultimum Diem judicii : fiat, fiat.

“Nisi hic citius appareas, et ad omnia interrogata veraciter respondeas, et statim et sine mora cum te vocavero ad instantiam meam venias omnibus horis.

“Conjuro te Askariell, per Deum patrem omnipotentem et per Jesum Christum ejus [filium], et per Sanctum Spiritum, trinitatem personam, per virtutem substantiæ ejus, per providentiam sanctam qua Deus in monte sua habuit, antea qua mundum fecit, et per bonitatem quæ omnia fecit per sapientiam per qua cœlos suscepit, et terram deorum fundavit, per cœlum terram et maria et omnia quæ in eis sunt per profunditatem abyssi, per quatuor elementa, et per virtutem quam in elementorum confusione immisit, et per opera misericordiæ et per potestatem Dei quæ lucem creavit, et diem et noctem ordinavit, per angelos et archangelos, per thronos, dominationes, potestates, principatus, et virtutes, cherubyn et seraphyn, et per eorum officia, et per eorum conjurationes, et eos qui præsunt aliis, et per eos qui sub ipsis positi sunt, per firmamentum cœli, et per omnia quæ sub firmamento et in firmamento sunt, per omnes cœlos, et omnes virtutes eorum cœlorum, et per omnia quæ creavit Deus, ad laudem et honorem nominis suæ majestatis, conjuro te Ascaryell, per duodecim patriarchos, per duodecim prophetas, et per eorum prædictiones, per

duodecim apostolos, Domini nostri Jesu Christi, per sanctam Mariam, matrem Domini nostri Jesu Christi, semper virginem, per quatuor Evangelistas Jesu Christi et per sanctum Evangelium Christi, per virtutem viginti quatuor seniorum incessanter canentium et dicentium, sanctus sanctus sanctus Deus Sabaoth, et per eorum victoriam et sedes, per mare vitreum, quod est ante conspectu divinæ majestatis, gradiens et potentiale, per quatuor animalia, ante thronum divinæ majestatis, gradientia, oculos ante et retro habentia, et per ignem ante ejus thronum circumstantem; per quatuor cœlestia aurea candelabra, per sedem magistratis, per thronum Dei, per altera aureum quod est ante conspectum Dei, per fulguria, tonitrus, et voces, quod egrediuntur de throno, per merita omnium confessorum, et per reliquias omnium sanctorum, et per omnes sanctos et sanctas virgines in cœlo, et per omnes sanctos quæ Deum semper laudent et adorent. Quatenus tu Ascaryell statim et sine mora venias, et in *istum speculum* citissime intres, in propria persona tua, et in pulchra forma humana, et sertum in tua capite, et visibiliter mihi, et omnibus circumstantibus citissime appareas, et socios tuos tuum adducens ut te et illos aptissime videre possimus, per desiderium meum, et per meas conjurationes et per omnia quæ tibi jussero; at si hoc non feceris in virtute et per virtutem Dei, et per potestatem quam Deus habet super te, ego condemno te Askariell in infernum, et in ignem inextinguibilem usque ad diem Judicii, nisi citius hic appareas, et ad omnia interrogata mea veraciter respondeas, et statim et sine mora cum te vocavero, ad meam instantiam venias omnibus horis.

“Adhuc conjuro te Askariell, per eum qui est Alpha et Omega, et per ista sancta nomina Dei quæ sunt hic, Ehel, Abiel, Anathael, Amay, Hagynos, O Theos, Deus omnium potentias, Hiecteta, Grammaton, Oneytheon, Almaron, Stimulamaton, Elioram, Elsephares, Existon, Histerion, Adonay, Rusus, Leabacon, Cyron, Jehovah, Elibra, Eloy, Saton, Leecom, Messias, Leyfte, Letiston, Almarias, Archima, Rabur, Onela, Elbrae, Elos, Egepate, Regum, Abraca, Bota, Legata, Amazim, Christus, Saday, Candor, Decor, Candos, Elfel, Nazarenus, Helenon, Abecor, ye, ya, El, Elion, Saray, ymas, Anabona, Emanuel, Quatenus, tu Askariell, sine mora et statim venias, et ut supra.

“Adhuc conjuro te Askariell, per alia sancta nomina Dei secreta, quæ sunt hic, Erisiel, Deus, Apres, Eloy, Ursta, gloriosus, bonus, on, unigenitas, via, vita, manus, homo, sapientia, virtus, principium et finis, fons et origo, paracletus, mediator, agnus, ovis, vitulis, Aries, verbum, splendor, Sol, gloria, lux, et Imago, panis, flos, vitis, mons, pons, Janua, petra, lapisque Angularis, pastor, propheta, sacerdos, athanatos, Kyros, Theos, panton, craton, ysus, igerion, Anapheneton, albinago, Ebrutone, talsea, Sameth, Agla, Ihesus Christus, Tetragrammaton, Sabaoth, Quatenus tu Askariell, et ut supra.

“Conjuro te Askariell, per bonitatem domini nostri Jesu Christi, et per incarnationem nativitatem, et circumcisionem ejus, et per baptismum ejus, et per

jejunium ejus, et per humilitatem, qua p̄des discipulorum ejus lavit, per crucem et passionem ejus, et per omnes ejus p̄enas quæ in ara crucis sustinuit pro redemptione humani generis totius, per coronam spineam quam in capite suo portavit, et per clavos quibus manus et pedes ejus confixi fuerunt, et per lanceam quæ latus ejus aperuit, et per aquam et sanguinem, qui de latere ejus fluxerunt, per precationem sudatam, quam patrem suum invocavit, et per animam ejus quam in manus patris ejus commendavit, et per virtutem qua velamen templi divisum fuit, Sol obscuratus fuit, et tenebræ factæ fuerunt uper universam terram, et sepulchra aperta sunt, et multa corpora sanctorum qui dormierunt surrexerunt; per hæc, et omnia alia prædicta, conjuro et Askariell, et præcipio tibi, Quatenus statim et sine mora venios, et in istam gemmam cristallinam citissime intres, in propria persona tua, et in pulchra forma humana, et sertum in tuo capite, et mihi visibiliter et omnibus his circumstantibus cito appareas, et socios tuos tecum adducens, ut te et illos aptissime videre possimus, et sine timore, terrore, vel nocumento, mei corporis vel animæ vel cujuscunque creaturæ Dei, et ad omnia interrogata mea veraciter respondeas sine fraude vel mendacio, vel dissimulatione quacunque, per desiderium meum, et meas conjurationes, et per omnia quæ tibi jussero; et si hoc non feceris in virtute et per victum Dei, et per potestatem quam habet super te, condemno te Askaryell in infernum, et in ignem inextinguibilem, usque ad ultimum diem Judicii, fiat, fiat, Amen.

“Nisi citus hic appareas, et ad omnia interrogata mea veraciter respondeas, et statim et sine mora cum te vocavero ad instantiam meam et per præcepta mea venias omnibus horis.

“And yf he come not at the third call condempe him saying thus:—

“Ego condemno et condemnato te Askariell in ignem eternum, et inextinguibilem, in virtute et per virtutem Dei vivi, et per potestatem quam habet super te Deus, in lacus ignis, et sulphuris, et in p̄cna æterna sustinens habet, et omnia alia maledicta donec præsens appareas mihi, et totam voluntatem meam adimpleas.

“And yf he come not the first day, call him the second; and if not the second, call him the third, until he come; then bind him to you, ut in aliis experimentis, &c.”¹

¹ Douglas, *Nenia Britannica*, pp. 17, 18. Another though differently worded and less copious incantation (in English) for conjuring spirits into a crystal ball is printed by Reginald Scot (*Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Nicholson's ed., pp. 360-362).