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ON

Scottish Folk-Medicine

by

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No excuses are needed at the present day for dealing seriously with folk-lore as a branch of anthropology — that branch of it which treats of the mental and spiritual side of humanity. And the department of folk-medicine has, I venture to think, a special claim upon the consideration of the medical practitioner; for, regarding ^{even} it, from its lowest and most utilitarian side, it makes up no small part of the superstition and ignorance against which he has to war in the course of his day's work. Yet in many instances the newly-fledged graduate leaves his university without knowing even of the existence of folk-medicine. I can speak confidently at least in my own case; for I collected pop-
ular medical beliefs ^{from the lips of the country people among whom I worked} for some time before I was aware that it was a subject upon which a considerable amount had been written; and although this may be a confession of ignorance to start with, it may also serve, to some extent, as a guarantee of that original research which shone of necessity figure in a thesis, research which I have now carried on steadily for eighteen years.

That he will have to fight against superstition and ignorance the young practitioner knows well enough. What he at first does not recognise is how carefully organized there are, nor the age and deep-rooted strength of beliefs which have been handed down orally from generation to generation. To attempt in an off-hand way to deal a knock-down blow to such beliefs is an impossible task; they have lived too long to be so easily killed. The man who scoffs openly at what his hearers hold to be indisputable truth sanctified by age, exposes himself to the risk of being held unlearned and unskilful; whereas, as Hartland says, "the more perfect your interest in and sympathy with them [i.e. the peasantry and uneducated classes] the more completely you can identify yourself with their mode of thought, and the greater your influence for good upon them." For one cannot too early recognise that the same belief or the same "cure" is constantly cropping up; that one is not dealing with the 'folk-lore, what is it and what is the good of it?'

individual vivid imagination of the ^{garrulous} old woman who repeats it; but that she is only a retailer and not a manufacturer. And I would therefore plead that a knowledge of folk-medicine is of distinct practical value, more especially perhaps to the country practitioner.

"Folk-lore is the Science of tradition. Tradition as an object of science means the whole body of the lore of the uneducated. It thus includes customs and institutions, superstitions and medical practice, and many other things besides stories." Hence it is amongst the more ignorant and therefore more superstitious of our population, those in fact nearest the Savage condition, that we look for and find most of our folk-medicine, ^{still} passing as current intellectual coin. As ignorance, dirt and disease commonly boast the same roof, we too often find folk-medicine a really serious obstacle to the spread of modern medical ideas. Take the fatalistic cure I have so often heard when explaining about infection and its dangers—"Ay! ~~yes~~ ^{yes} Hardland

"Ay!" And what smittit the first one?"
 Who, indeed? Here you are face to face
 with the person who believes it has been
 "laid on him", or whose neighbour suggests
 it has been done to "fit a dour ower
 him" for some previous misconduct. I have
 seen the explanation of why a man had a
 family of idiot children, satisfactorily found
 in the fact that "he had been awfu' for laughin'
 at ither folk" when he was a young man.
 And the woman, again, who had unfeelingly
 jerked at his off-spring, herself, in turn, bore
 a child with a club-foot as a punishment
 for her lack of heart. "She kent weel why
 it was sent her, and she aye keeps the
 bairns fit tappit up oot o' sight." I re-
 member, too, a woman gazing awe-struck
 at an anencephalic foetus, and saying of
 the mother "What has she done, poor
 soul, that this has been laid on her?" Pathol-
 ogy to them cannot explain it alone: only
 Calvinism must lend a helping hand. And,
 as a matter of fact, there is not much
 advance this way since the moralist ham-

¹ Vide article by writer on "Popular Pathology," *Calvinian Medical Journal*. Vol. V No. 9. p. 387.

mered out his heavy ballad in 1866' —

"I read how Affrique land was fraught
For their most filthy life,
With monstrous shapes confuzed,
That therein were full rife."

And again —

"Both tender babes and the brute beastes
In shape disform'd bee;
Full manie wayes he plagues the earth,
As dayly we may see.
For sure we all may bee agast
To see these shapes unkynd."

Elivachs, now, the people cannot get at
every shrine, but a dash of the "uncanny"
they must have. ^{And as} ~~And~~ with the lowlander
so with the Gael. "Disease, more especially of
obscure and incurable, was apt to be looked
on as a dispensation, or accepted with that
philosophic fatalism which is still so char-
acteristic of the Celt. 'It was not fated'
is to this day one of the commonest expres-
sions heard amongst Gaelic people."²

It is difficult to separate by a
hard and fast line the present from the past;
it is difficult to say what is really behind

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1. Written in 1566 by John Mellis, of Norwich, and entitled "The
true description of two monstrous children lawfully
begotten between George Stevens and Margarett his wife,
and borne in the parish of Swanburne in Buckyngham-
shyre, the vij of Aprile, Anno Domini 1566: the two
children having bothe their bellies fast joyned together,
and embracing one another with their armes: which
children were both alive for the space of half an hower,
and were baptizd and named the one John and the
other Joan."
2. Caledonian Medical Journal, Vol. V p. 323.

and what is only regarded with sympathy as an "old frail." And in what follows I wish to make no claim that the habits, customs, beliefs and superstitions which are detailed are in any sense universal throughout Scotland. All that can be said of them is that they still crop up here and there with a singular persistence; ~~and~~ that even those whom a school-board education has taught "to know better" have, at the back of their mind a lingering faith in it all; and that this faith may have a distinct bearing on the progress of an illness. Within the last few months I attended a woman whose gloomy view of her illness and of her chance of recovery ~~was~~ ^{was} quite out of proportion to the severity of her disease, and this I found was due to the fact that, shortly before, she had broken a mirror — an accident which condemned her to ill-luck for seven years. An illuminative flash is ^{also} thrown on their mode of thought by the remark once made to me by an old fisherman! I had been discussing with ^{him} the ^{habit} skippers of fishing boats have of

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1. Vide article by writer on "Superstitions of the Fifeshire Fisher Folk." Folk-Lore vol. p.

treating to drink certain old men — "the canny men" — whose good-will is held to be valuable before the boats sail. "Of course," said my friend "it's all a heap o' bletthers." And then, after a pause, "But a' the same I've kent us get some extra gude shots when the richt folk was minding it."

Black, in his interesting work on the subject defines folk-medicine as Comprehending charms, incantations, and traditional habits and customs relative to the preservation of health and the cure of disease, practised now or formerly at home or abroad. Now the words "charms and incantations" had us almost at once to make a rough division of the subject of Scottish folk-medicine into

I Folk-medicine of the Highlands

II Folk-medicine of the Lowlands,

for it is only amongst the Gaelic-speaking part of the population in the more remote glens and islands that we find a real living belief in the charm and incantation. The

Folk-medicine

folk-medicine of the Lowlander, again, is ^{held} ~~in~~
^{along} ~~common~~ with those of his kin in England who
 share the inheritance of a common dialect.

For "the Scottish vernacular is mainly a de-
 velopment of the Teutonic dialect of that Nor-
 thumbria which embraced the more eastern
 portion of Britain from the Humber to the
 Frith of Forth;"¹ and we consequently find that
 the northern counties of England largely par-
 take in the folk-medicine of the Lowland Scot.

The chief repositories of folk-medi-
 cine are now the older women of the ham-
 let, village or town; and in recognising this
 fact we must also bear in mind the ac-
 credited part that women played in the beeke-
 craft of the past. On these far-off and ruder
 days she had ^{usually} ~~always~~ some knowledge of the
 dressing of wounds when man meddled only
 with the making of them;² and she had al-
 ways some knowledge of herbal simples. The
 lady of the "big-house" had her still-room
 whence she dispensed her cordials; had the medi-
 cal books of the time occasionally dedicated to
 her; had even, perhaps, some of her own recipes

¹ T. F. Henderson, "Scottish Vernacular Literature".

² Take, for example, the gentle Annot-lyle in Scott's "Legend of Montrose".

incorporated in them. Nowadays the craft, such as it is, has descended into hands more plebeian, and become specialised more particularly in the sphere of obstetrics. And so, as we are dealing as far as possible with the survivals of Scottish folk-medicine, we may ~~first~~ naturally first consider the subject as applied to menstruation, conception, pregnancy, labour, the puerperium and the child.

Menstruation.

The onset of menstruation in the Southern parts of Scotland is variously described as "comin' the length o' a woman"; "turnin' no-weel o' herself," or "leavin' her ain." A woman who has missed a period will say that "her ain has left her," and when this happens finally she is said to be "past the change." In cessation of the lochia the patient is said to be "dried up,"¹ while a woman who menstruates during lactation is called a "green nurse." There is a belief² that such a "green nurse" should not under any circumstances suckle a male child,

¹ In India puerperal fever is called "the dry disease."

² The Deenshire.

but that it does not matter if the child at the breast is a female. The underlying idea here is probably that which will be dealt with later on, viz the uncleanliness of menstruation when contact with the male is concerned.

As regards menstruation it is steadfastly believed by the vulgar that any substance such as jam or preserves made by a menstruating woman will not "keep," but will for a certainty "go bad." Not long ago I was told in all seriousness, that a newly killed pig had been rendered quite unfit for food through being handled by a woman "in her courses"; all curing processes being useless through the rapid decomposition that set in. The same belief exists in Brunswick,¹ where it is held that if a menstruous woman assist in the killing of a pig the pork will putrify. In the Aegean islands² a woman during her period may not come into an olive-press, or into a garden or enter a boat. Similar examples might be multiplied, and here of course we have traces of Mosaic Law³ and that of Islam.

¹ Frazer, Golden Bough vol. iii p. 224

² Folk-lore vol. xviii p. 330

³ Deut. xxiii 9-14 I Sam. xxi 5

we can trace the idea further in the taboo imposed by many savage tribes on their females, at the onset of puberty: 'The uncleanness of menstruation is ~~accentuated~~ accentuated by Torroaster, who taught that the menstrual flow is the work of Ahriman, or the Devil; and that while a woman suffered from it she was not to be allowed to eat as much as she wished "as the strength she might acquire would accrue to the ~~friends~~ fiends." Further, she was not to be fed by hand, but given food with a long spoon. And for the same reason as the Australian black-fellow kills the menstruous gin who dares to sleep on his blanket, so it is believed by the common people in Scotland that a man who has connexion with a woman in her courses runs the risk of venereal disease. Prophylaxis is obtained by washing his penis with his own urine immediately after coitus, and this, by the vulgar is thought to hold good in all cases where the male fears he has run the risk of contracting the lues venerea.

But the deeply ingrained dread of which

primitive man has of menstruous blood is universal.¹ Amongst the Australian blacks the boys are told from infancy that the mere sight of it makes them prematurely grey-headed and senile. A menstruous woman must not go near men nor touch anything they use: must not eat fish nor even go near water, lest the fish should be frightened and fishing rendered impossible: must not even fetch water to the camp. Severe chastisement or even death is inflicted ~~for~~ as penalty for breach of these rules. Amongst some South African tribes the women, ~~at~~ in case menstruation should come on them suddenly, are not allowed to enter the camp by the men's paths. According to the Talmud, a woman at the beginning of a period passing between two men causes one of them to die; at the end of a period causes a severe quarrel between them. In many parts of Europe menstruous blood is held to have miraculous virtues, and entered into the composition of various love-potions and charms.

¹ Frazer. G. B. vol iii p. 222

Conception

The influence of sympathetic and imitative magic upon the determination of sex enters largely even at the present day in Scotland into the popular ideas concerning conception.

In one case² where the mother had had several female children and was anxious for a son, she expected at the next confinement that the child would be a boy, because at the time of conception marital relations had been carried out with the pillows at the foot of the bed, and the husband keeping his cap on. To the ordinary individual this seems merely ridiculous; but the idea is quite apparent. If children of the female sex were begotten in the ordinary position on the

"Sympathetic magic..... plays a large part in most systems of superstition. Manipled as are the applications of this crude philosophy - for a philosophy it is as well as an art - the fundamental principles on which it is based are reducible to two; first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and second, that things which have once been in contact, but have ceased to be so, continue to act on each other as if the contact still persisted. From the first of these principles the savage infers that he can produce any desired effect merely by imitating it; from the second he concludes that he can influence at pleasure and at any distance any person of whom, or any thing of which, he possesses a particle. Magic of the latter sort, resting as it does on the belief in a certain secret sympathy which unites indissolubly things that have once been connected with one another, may appropriately be termed sympathetic.... Magic of the former kind... may... be described as imitative or mimetic." Frazer G.B. Vol. I p. 10.

² Aberdeenshire, the same idea is found in Lucretius.

bed, reversing the arrangement might reverse the sex; while the idea of virility and activity, suggestive of the male, was maintained by the man keeping on part of his outdoor working garb. This last idea of the man's outdoor garb suggesting masculinity was more marked in another case, where the child, (illegitimate, and not the first) was male. The mother, on hearing of its sex, said, in a matter-of-fact tone, that "it couldna' but be" a boy, as "it was gotten among the green girs (grass) by a man wi' his boots on." And on another occasion² I heard the reason of the ~~so~~ male sex of the child attributed to the fact that it was "gotten under a green tree." In an old Scottish book of popular medicine³, (a book that must have had a wide enough circulation in its day, and, as a collection of folk-lore beliefs have further spread many that were being forgotten,) we find sympathetic and imitative magic ideas well marked. Impotency was cured by the gall of a boar⁴ anointed on the penis. Satyrion root "holden in the hand" chewing coit⁵ was recommended. "If the woman shall eat the great and hard stone of Satyrion she shall

1. Aberdeenshire.

2. Fife-shire.

3. "The Poor Man's Physician, or The Receipts of the famous John Moncreif of Tippermalloch." Edinburgh M. DCC. XXXI. Third Edition.

4. The boar and the goat in popular belief express lust and procreative power.

conceive a male child, and, if she shall eat
the lesser stone, a female child." And again,
"Twice and seed of male mercury having round
seeds hanging in pairs, in form of testicle, an-
ointed on the woman's Privities cause her to
conceive Male Children." So in the Torres
Strait Islands, ^{a woman} will press to her abdomen a
fruit resembling the male organs of generation,
which she then passes to another woman who
has borne nothing but boys. The Chinese wom-
an of the present day² wears "male money" to pro-
cure the much desired male off-spring. This is a
coin inscribed on ^{the one} side "health and long life"; on
the other side a fir-tree³ and the mythical
beast "Kylin"; which appeared to the mother of
Confucius before his birth.

At the present day in Scotland the
belief is variously held 1) that the child is male
or female according as the father or mother is fonder
of the other at the time of conception, 2) that the child
is like the parent who is fonder of the other, (the
Question of sex being left out of account), the reason
given being that he (or she) "looks often at and

1. Frazer. *S.B.* vol. i p. 20.

2. *Folk-lore*. vol. XIV p. 295.

3. *Ibid.* ante p. 14.

thinks often o', " or 3) that the child is like the parent who has the stronger constitution.

A common folk-saying is "Any laddie can get a laddie: it takes a man to get a lassie." And as regards the determination of sex there is a very curious old proverb that "A laddie will lie down in a dirty bed: a lassie in a clean bed." The reference is to premenstrual and post-menstrual coitus. As most practitioners know, it is rare for a woman of the lower orders to wear diapers; and, as a result, the dirty linen is worn right through the period and then changed at the cessation of the monthly flow. Hence the "clean" and the "dirty" bed. It is perhaps worth while to note that the same idea crops up in the pages of Schenk,² who quotes Pliny on the origin of sex in cattle. "If the ovum has reached the stage of ripeness which may be described as an advanced stage, her may expect to have, after fertilisation has taken place a male individual. If, however, the ovum has reached only an imperfect state of ripeness when

¹ Life.

² Theory, pp 89 & 60.

successful impregnation takes place, then no such ~~such~~ powerful and perfect specimen of the race as the male can be developed, and the result of such an ovum is always a female."¹

Sympathetic magic of the "new-birth" type is still to be found in connection with the cure of barrenness. In the bed of the River Dee, near Dinnet, Aberdeenshire, is a stone known as "The Split Stone," and it is believed that any barren woman who creeps through this will conceive. The idea is probably that of simulating the act of birth by her transit through the stone passage, and thereby advantageously affecting her own chance of becoming a mother. The stone is known to have ^{been} put to this use in recent years. And so with "Clack-na-Bhan," (Stone of the woman), a huge granitic rock on the top of Meall-Ghairnach, a hill on the East side of Glen-Avon. Near the top of this rock a hollow has been scooped out by the influence of the weather somewhat in the shape of an arm-chair.² "women about the time of their accouchement ascended the hill, scaled the rock,

¹ Since this was written an article on the Determination of Sex by Dr. Romme has appeared in Le Revue.
² Geogr. Folk-lore of the North East of Scotland p. 42

It is worthy of note that in both these cases the stones are associated with water; in one case the river, in the other the rain water collecting in the hollow. Vide post. p. 20. 21

and seated themselves in the hollow, under the belief that such an act secured a speedy and successful birth. Unmarried women also made pilgrimage to it, in hopes that such an act would have the effect of bringing husbands to them." To similar uses are put the tree called "The Eye of the Needle" on the island of Innesfallen, Kilmaree; "The Holed Stone" near Lanyon in Cornwall; and the "Cruck Stone" (a forked stone, like the Dinner one) also in Cornwall.

And just as the unmarried woman might secure a husband by sitting on the stone, ^{clack-na-Bhan,} where so many women with husbands had sat, so "for luck" a barren woman is told to "take a rub" against a pregnant one, on the same principle as the stocking of the bride when flung at the old custom of "the beddin'" was supposed to mean the married state at no far off date for the person whom it struck.

Beside Stones, various springs in Scotland were held to cure barrenness in women, notably those of St Fillan, at Comrie, and of St. Mary at Whitekirk and in the Isle of May.

1. Preface; Heron Allan Ramsay's extra Canto to "Christ's Kirk on the Green".

Mackinlay¹ points out that many of the wells dedicated to "Our Lady" were famous for the cure of female sterility, "which, in the days when a man's power and influence in the land depended on the number of his clan or tribe, was looked upon as a token of the divine displeasure, and was viewed by the unfortunate spouses with anxious apprehension, dread, doubt, jealousy and pain."

The idea connecting springs or wells with children and the cure of sterility is world-wide.² In ancient Greece sterility was cured at the main Elater in Arcadia, and the Therpsian well at Thebes. The well at Pyra on the Hymettus near the temple of Aphrodite possessed the same property; and at Baiae, in ancient Roman times, these were wells resorted to by women for the same reason. The same belief is found in the mythology of India and China in the fertilising power of water; and in Algeria, not far from Constantine, there is a bath beside the well Burmal-ar-rabba, which Jewish and Moorish women have used for ages in the hope of becoming mothers. Certain fountains near Jerusalem are employed for the same purpose, and in England there are

1. Folk-lore of the Scottish Lochs and Springs, Gustav Walker.
2. Folk-lore. Vol XVIII p. 270. "Children and wells," by D. D. Mackenzie.

numerous wells of similar repute. The habits
binding children and water are detailed by
MacKenzie as follows:—

- (1) Little children are taken to wells and springs
for the cure of disease, and in order to prevent disease.
- (2) According to the folk-beliefs of Germany and else-
where, babies come from wells.
- (3) The deities of rain and water in many parts
of the world were also the deities of fertility and birth.
- (4) Sterility among women is often treated by bathing.
- (5) The water-spirit assumes at times the form of
a child or small person.
- (6) Water spirits show their fondness for children
by stealing them.
- (7) There is a certain amount of evidence to
show that in some parts of the world children
used to be sacrificed in water and wells.

And, again, he points out that the ori-
gin of the connection between water and
children, in early times supposed to be actual
and physical, in later days, mystic only,
was two-fold being based upon two
natural facts. There were

(1) That children in the pre-natal period do actually live in water; and

(2) That there is a natural association between fertility and water, seen plainly in the vegetable world.

Pregnancy.

Pregnancy is frequently dated amongst the folk from "takkin' a Scunner" at some particular article of diet — e.g. fish, tea &c., and an interesting reference to the old tally-stick is found in the saying regarding a woman who is at sea in her calculations, that she "has lost her nick-stick." When a woman becomes pregnant, she is variously referred to as "on the road," heavy-fittit, "gettin' stoot," or, more plainly, but less politely, "breedin'." A husband engaging a doctor for his wife's "doon-lyin'" may delicately refer to the lady as being "in the way o' weel-dassin'." Amongst the Gaels' the pregnant state is described in the modern language by leth-tromach, literally "half-heavy," for the earlier stages; and by

¹ H. Cameron Forbes M.D. "Gaelic Names of Diseases and Disease States." Caledonian Med. Journal 1898.

trom, "heavy" for the later stage. The word torach also is used; it means fruitful, for torach is the fruit or yield of plants and animals.

Each pregnancy is supposed to cost the mother a tooth¹, and there is a general belief that when pregnancy commences the husband is commonly afflicted with tooth-ache or some other minor ailment, and that this continues until the birth of the child. This is a very common and deep-rooted belief. Not long ago² a man came to me to have a carious molar extracted. When the operation was over, he remarked to me, in all earnestness, "I'm feared she's bye wit' again doctor. That teeth's been yarkin' awa' the last fourteen days, and it's aye been the way wi' me a' the time she's carryin' them." Another patient assured me that this always happened with her husband when she was pregnant; and that it was the persistence of tooth-ache in her adult son which led her to the (correct) suspicion that he ~~to~~ had broken the Seventh Commandment.

¹ Vide article by writer on "The Obstetric Folk-lore of Fife." Cal. Med. J. 1902

² In Fife.

and placed her in a fair way of becoming a grandmother. Continued proximity of the two parents is not required, only the fact that the woman is pregnant to the man; for the girl in this case resided miles from her lover. In the north-east of Scotland, it was believed that the one who rose first on the morning after marriage carried all the pains and sorrows of child-bearing, and the sympathy thus created between the health of husband, wife and child brings us in touch with the underlying idea of the Convade. In Aueassin and Nicollet (circa 1130)² we have an especially interesting reference to this, when the hero Aueassin in his search for the lost Nicollet comes to the land of Torelore. On enquiring for the King of the Country Aueassin is told that he is "in child-bed," while the Queen was at the wars with the army. On interviewing the King,

"Quoth the King 'I am brought to bed
Of a fair son, and anon
When my month is over and gone,
And my healing fairly done,
To the Minster will I fare
And will do my churching there,
As my father did repair'."

In a note Lang says that the feigned lying-in

¹ Super. Folk Lore of N.E. of Scotland p. 96.

² "As done into English by Andrew Lang." D. Nutt, London

of the father may have been either a recognition of paternity, as in the sham birth when Hera adopted Herakles, or that it may have been caused by the belief that the health of the father at the time of the child's birth affected that of the child. But in Scotland we have the sympathy between father and child commencing long before the birth occurs; commencing, in fact, with the commencement of the mother's pregnancy.

While the mother is pregnant various things are forbidden. She must not at any time sit cross-legged as she may thereby cause a cross-birth; nor, for the same reason should she sit with folded arms. Here again we come across a widespread belief. In the north Celebes, amongst the Toumboulah tribe,¹ we find the same veto extended to the husband, who, after a ceremony performed at the fourth or fifth month of pregnancy is forbidden to sit with his legs crossed over each other, or to tie any fast knots. In the north-east of Scotland² a cake should not be turned twice on the "girdle" (an approach to the knot-tying) by a pregnant woman, for if so he

¹ Frazer. *G. B.* vol. I p. 393-4.

² *Super. Kilus, Mills, Mullis, Meal and Bread*

child would become "cake-grown", i.e. the child
 would become bent till the belly rested on the
 thighs. Sympathetic or imitative magic teaches
 that by crossing, turning or tying a corresponding
 obstacle or impediment would be set up in the
 body of the woman. "Whether I am cross threads
 in tying a knot, or only cross your legs ⁱⁿ ~~by~~ sitting
 at your ease, you are equally, on the principles
 of Sympathetic magic, crossing or thwarting the
 free causes of things, and your action can-
 not but check and impede whatever may be
 going forward in your neighbourhood." The
 Romans were fully aware of "this important
 truth." Pliny mentions that to sit beside
 a pregnant woman, or a patient under
 medical treatment, with clasped hands, is "to cast
 a malignant spell over the person; and it is
 worse still if you nurse your crossed legs with
 the clasped hands."..... The stock instance of
 the dreadful consequences that might flow from
 doing this, was that of Alcmene, who travailed
 with Hercules for seven days and seven nights,
 because the goddess Lucina sat in front of the
 house with clasped hands and crossed legs, and

¹ Bage. Loc. cit.

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the child could not be born until the goddess had been beguiled into changing her attitude."

Black 'mentions the ^{supposed} power of witches over labour in Scotland. "Owing to a supposed ~~for~~ connection which the witches knew between the relation of husband and wife and the mysterious knots, the bridegroom, formerly in Scotland, and to the present day in Ireland, presents himself occasionally, and in rural districts, before the clergyman with all knots and fastenings on his dress loosened; and the bride, immediately after the ceremony is performed, retires to be undressed, and so rid of the knots." And we all know the common belief that when a bootlace or an apron-string comes untied the person's lover is thinking of him or her. For as knots are kept tight by those thinking evil of or wishing evil to you, so are they unloosed by the kindly thought of the well-wisher.

Perhaps one more reference to the Subject may be allowed on account of its literary interest. In the old Scottish ballad of "Willie's Lady,"²

¹ Folk-medicine. p. 186.

² Child's Collection of English and Scottish Ballads. D. Nutt, London.

we find the same idea traceable, (and the Editor notes that the Danish versions are numerous.) Willie had married contrary to the wishes of his witch-mother; and, when his wife comes to be confined, no progress is made in her labour.

"He's woo'd her for her yellow hair
But his mother wrought her mickle care,
And mickle dolour garded her dree,
For bichter she can never be,
But in her bower she sits wi' pain
And Willie mourns o'er her in vain."

All pleading and offering of gifts are ineffectual, but the witch-mother is at last circumvented through the sage advice of the household spirit, the Belly Blind; who advises the making of a wax infant and inviting the witch-mother to the christening. She, thinking the real child has been born, asks

"O wha has loosed the nine witch knots
That was amos' that lady's locks?
And wha has taen oot the Rains o' care
That hangs amos' that lady's hair?
And wha has loosed her left foot shae
And botten that lady bichter be?"

All this being carefully noted by the anxious husband, he hurries back to his wife; and, the knots and other obstacles being removed the labour progresses favourably,

"And now he's gotten a bonny young son,
And mickle grace be him upon."

A prose variant of this story is found in the Highlands in the legend of Allan of the

Taggats.¹ This celebrated West Highland free-
 booter was ~~a~~ son of a servant maid who became
 pregnant by a married man. The man's wife, got
 a bone from a witch, which, as long as it was kept,
 would delay the birth of the child; Allan being
 thus kept in his mother's womb fifteen months
 beyond the proper time. But the husband made
 his fool come home one night pretending in-
 toxication; and, on being reproved, the fool said
 he had been at the servant maid's house where
 a child had been born, and where he had got
 a dream "which went to his head". The wife,
 thinking the witch had deceived her, threw the
 bone into the fire, where it disappeared in blue
 smoke and knvelled down the chimney. Allan
 was then born "with large teeth." Campbell
 also mentions that this infernal cantrip could
 also be played by means of a ball of black worsted
 thread in a black bag, kept at the foot of the
 witch's weaving loom, where it might not be
 detected.

Amongst the peasantry in Scot-
 land, the hair during labour is usually un-

1. Campbell, Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Scottish Highlands

done from its fastenings and allowed to hang loose. Further, there is a strong objection during the puerperium¹ and until the ninth day is past, for the patient to raise her hands² "abuse the breath" or to "red the hair," i.e. to do up or dress the hair by confining it in knots or plaits. Nine is the popular mystical number in Britain, and danger is always apprehended in the puerperium until the ninth day is passed.

If the mother during pregnancy is much bothered with heart burn it is considered that the child will have a good head of hair; while, if the mother has been "tickin' oatmeal," her offspring will be born with a copious coating of ~~an~~ vernix caseosa. It is a common belief also that the taste, (like and dislikes), of the child are dependent on the mother's diet while pregnant; e.g., a Syrup-loving child will be born if the mother during her pregnancy has eaten much Syrup. Again, if the mother while pregnant has been "greenin'," (longing for), any article of diet which has been withheld from her, the child when born will keep

¹ Life.

² The power of the hand to cause evil is discussed later.

shooting out its tongue until its lips have been touched with the article in question. Amongst the Gaelic portion of the population we find similar belief. In the Highlands a pregnant woman was held in veneration and tenderness. Anything calculated to distress her mentally was withheld. All coming in contact with her were expected to say "God bless you and that which is within you." All she wanted had to be procured for her. If ungratified, the child might have a severe wanting, or be "aye yawning" or "aye seeking" during its life. Scars, birth-marks and deformities might be caused by ungratified pre-natal cravings. These marks are, by the Gaelic people, called mianan, literally "a desire." The mark is "the concrete manifestation of the desire. It is all another person can know of it, and it is therefore called "the desire"; mianan.²"

The popular belief in maternal impressions is in Scotland, as in all lands, fixed and certain; and it is a moot point in scientific circles how much or how little lies behind the belief. Jacob's successful

1. Cal. Ind. Journal vol. V N^o 8. article on "Highland Therapy."

2. H. Cameron Fyfe, M.D. Gaelic names of Diseases and Diseased States

experiment with the peeled wands shows that it prevailed in his day; and, although he only used it in the shady paths of cattle-dealing, it must have had its human application for his Babylonian ancestors. And the people of the present day recognize, in their own rough way and in diverse manners, that the pregnant woman "has her central nervous system so modified that the intellectual functions may be quickened or the reverse: habits both religious and moral intensified or ~~otherwise~~ otherwise,"¹ and that a complete change in disposition or character is not infrequent. And they know, although they cannot tell you in as many words, that "morbid cravings and unnatural desires, as well as events of little importance assume a disproportionate magnitude." As examples, fairly typical of their class, the following may be quoted; Sympathetic and imitation magic ideas entering, of course, largely into them all.

(1) Case of woman whose pregnancy continued eleven months, because in first month of her

¹ J. H. Martin. M.D.

pregnancy she saw an entire horse covering a mare, an animal who carries her young for eleven months.

(2) Man with mark of frog on side. Mother when pregnant had had a frog pitched at her in the harvest field.

(3) Pregnant woman slapped on face with red handkerchief. Child born with red mark on forehead.

(4) Child with mark like red hand on belly. Mother while pregnant had her night dress catch fire, and slapped her hand on abdomen to extinguish flame.

It is always considered amongst the folk, (who are often ready to indulge in horseplay as rough as their language), a most reprehensible thing to throw, even jestingly, any object at a pregnant woman on account of the danger of thereby causing a birth-mark ("rasp" or "bramble-mark") or even a deformity in her future offspring. Should something be thrown, however, and the part affected be an uncovered portion of the body (such as the face, neck or hand), the probable birth-mark may be trans-

ferred to a part covered with clothes, if the mother touches the spot where she has been struck with her hand and then touches a clothed part of her person. A young married woman under such circumstances is always so advised by her wise elders; but the transference is only efficacious before the fourth month of pregnancy. This power of the hand to carry evil was mentioned before¹, and we see the idea also in the popular belief that if one ~~touches~~ grips a part of the body, e.g. the breasts, while "grewsin," (Shivering; during a rigor), that part will "beel" (Suffermate).² or again, if a mother while shivering grips her child, she may pass on the trouble (cold &c) from which she suffers to the child. Amongst the Nootka Indians of Vancouver Island a girl secluded at puberty may not touch her hair with her hands, but is allowed to scratch her head only with a comb or a piece of bone.³ To scratch the body is also

¹ Vide ante p. 29.

² Life.

³ Frazer. S.B. Vol. iii p. 228

forbidden, as it is believed that any scratch would leave a scar. Amongst the Chippewas Indians a menstruous woman had a fork-like bone provided for scratching her head, to prevent her using her hand, which would have caused injury to her health. The same uncleanness of and danger in the hand of a ^{sick,} menstruous, or puerperal woman extends to homicides, murderers and those touching the dead.¹

Labour.

Labour is variously described as a "cryin'"², a "cryin'-match" or "howd'ie-work". A woman may also be referred to as "in the hole" or "in the shae".³ During labour the child is described as "comin' hame," ("the bairn's near hame"), and "the bairn's hame" means labour is completed.⁴ The old Scottish word "lichter" signified the same;

"Canny moment! lucky fit
Is the lady lichter yet?"⁵

A curious slang term for an accoucheur

¹ Frazer. *J.B.* vol. i. p. 323.

² "O wha will tent me when I cry?" Burns.

³ Vide Brand's *Popular Antiquities* on "In the Shae".

⁴ Vide paper by writer on "Some Scotch Words, Phrases & Beliefs bearing on Disease & Conditions" Transactions of Philo. & Phys. Soc. of Glasg. 1888-89.

⁵ Scott's "Guy Mannering".

in Life is that of "finger-smith."

The sex of the child is held by the wise "howdie" to be indicated by its position in the uterus of the mother: "a laddie is carried main to the front: a lassie to the back." Or, "a laddie is carried high up: a lassie laigh doon;" or, tersely and metaphorically, "the laddie bides nearest the door." In various parts of the Country it is the mother's desire ^{to be} (and previous custom ^{to have been}) ~~to be~~ delivered while on her knees before a chair. In this connection we may note that the Gaelic word to deliver is aisead. Literally this is ad sid "to sit to" just as obstetric is to stand before.¹

Various things are held to influence the course of labour. We have referred already to the influence of knots and the spells of witches. In the North-east of Scotland² the locks of all doors, (on the principle of everything being loosed and unconfined),³ were opened during labour,

¹ Gillies, Gaelic Names of Disease & Diseased Conditions

² Prof. F.L. & N.E. of Scot p. 5.

³ Vide ante p. 25

and I have frequently seen the outer door quietly unlocked and left open by the older women when a tedious labour was in progress.¹ At Newtonhill, a fishing village in Kincairdineshire, the "canny man" was, within quite recent years, brought into and kept "ben" the house until the labour had come to a successful issue. In one case² of tedious labour the (unmarried) patient was told "Yill never get rid o' that bairn till ye curse the faither o' it." The process of reasoning here is hard to follow; unless it was that the poor girl's keeping of her secret constituted a "knot" which had to be undone. The "turn o' the micht" is supposed to have an influence; and, if a woman in labour passes that she may "gang the roond o' the clock" again. By the fisher people the tide is supposed to exercise a similar effect, the child being born most rapidly³ at full tide. It is unlucky for another pregnant woman to be in the room while labour is in progress. Prefor mentions that

1. *Life*.

2. *Perthshire*.

3. *F.L. of the N.E. of Scot.*
Cp. Blackth. Folk-medicine

if two women with child happened to be in the same house when the one felt the pains of labour, "they took a straw or a stalk of ~~grass~~ grass, or some such thing, and broke it, each repeating the words 'ye talk' yours and I talk' mine'." Nor was a woman giving suck allowed to sit on the edge of the accouchement bed: such an action would stop the lying-in woman's flow of milk. Here like hinders the progress of life, (one interpretation of the Doctrine of Signatures), just as the red cloth hung at the foot of the Highland accouchement bed checks post-partum hæmorrhage, or as the navel-string was tied with red thread to prevent bleeding of the cord. If, however, such an unfortunate contretemps occurred, the child of the woman who had done the mischief was got secretly and passed under and over the lying-in woman's apron to get back the milk. Here we have a Sham-birk-rite of adoption, and the milk flows again in sympathy with the new connection between mother and child.

The Child.

In the Highlands when the child is born the mother and her offspring are still sometimes secured by charms against the intrigues of the fairy folk. Campbell¹ narrates how at a confinement a house full of women gathered and watched for three days. "A row of iron nails was driven into the front board of the bed; the smoothing iron or a reaping-hook was placed under it and in the window; an old shoe was put in the fire; the door posts were sprinkled with maister (urine kept for washing purposes — a liquid extremely offensive to the fairies): the Bible was opened and the breath blown across it in the face of the woman in child-bed; mystic words of threads were placed about the ~~bed~~ bed; and, when leaving at the end of the three days, the midwife left a little cake of oatmeal with a hole in it in the front of the bed." The father's shirt wrapped round the newborn babe was esteemed a preservative, and if the marriage gown was thrown over the wife she could be recovered if she were

¹ Superstitions of Scottish Highlands p. 36.

taken away.

In fact until within ^{comparatively} quite recent time the belief in fairies, both in Highland and Lowland Scotland, was universal; and their power was especially to be feared in the case of women in childbed and of unbaptised infants. The fairies had a great liking for human milk, which could only be obtained by carrying off "unsained" or unsuckled mothers. The reason they wished possession of the infant was that every seven years they had to pay "the kinn to hell"; and this they endeavoured to do with a human being. In the North-East of Scotland the mother and offspring were sained in the following manner: a lighted fir-candle was carried three times round the bed if this could be done, and if not it was whirled three times round their heads; a bible and bread and cheese, or a bible and a biscuit, were placed under the pillow, and the words were repeated "may the Almighty debar a' ill frae this umman, an be aboot in, an bliss in an in bairn." A pair of trousers²

¹ *Idem*. p. 5.

² *Idem*. Cf. Henderson "F.L. of the Northern Counties (of England)"
See also ballad of "Aiken Drum" p. 14

or any other article of dress of the father, hung at the foot of the bed had a strong effect in keeping off the fairies. I have never personally seen any survival of these precautions actually employed, except the bible and biscuit under the pillow, and another precaution against the changeling (to be mentioned later); but as an example of the persistence of superstition, absence I have known a woman whose child had been dead-born, sweeping attribute her disappointment to the fact that she had not, like her neighbours, a lucky horse-shoe in the house. Regretting that she had previously scoffed at them for their belief in its efficacy, she took the earliest opportunity of remedying this state of affairs by procuring one.

The precaution against the new-born babe being replaced by a changeling is a form of the fire-test which was applied with fatal results within the last few years to a sick woman in Ireland.² If, after being dressed at birth, a child cries continuously, the "granny" or other wise elder

¹ Life.

² Case of Bridget Cleary at Clonmel. Held over a fire by her husband and some other relatives in the belief that she was a changeling and would thereby be forced back to her fairy folk, while the real Bridget would come back "riding on a grey horse."

present makes up a big fire and then puts on "the girdle," the circular flat iron structure on which scones and oatcakes are "fried". The idea is that if the child be "a witch or a warlock" (changeling) it would then go up the chimney; while the girdle would prevent injury to the real child on its return home.¹ Frequently at the present day when a child is crying one can hear the remark "If this gamp on we'll need to put on the girdle," although not every one who says it can tell why she says it. Enquiries on being pressed often drive the person interrogated to a last refuge of "That's what the auld folk used to say" or "That's an auld fraith," or "I've heard my mither say that."

In the Highlands the charm ~~is~~ repeated over a new-born child while being washed thus,

"Hale fair washing to thee,
Hale washing of the Fians be thine,
Health to thee, health to him,
But not to thy female enemy." 2

¹ Life.

2. Campbell, Witchcraft & Second Sight in Scot. Highlands
p. 77.

When the umbilical cord is cut care must be taken not to cut it too short if the child be a male, as in such case it would in subsequent adult life run the risk of being childless¹. The popular belief here is that the length of the cord affects the length of the penis. If a good length of cord is left the child will have a long penis, suggestive to the folk of procreative power. If, on the other hand, the child be female the cord should be cut short, thereby securing for it a narrow vagina, suggestive to the popular mind of retention of the male element and consequently of fertility². The number of "Knots" on the umbilical cord in a first birth will tell what number of a family the mother is to have; divination and augury being thus added to the ~~power~~ power of the navel-string as well as sympathetic effect.

But the belief that the navel-string has a sympathetic connection with the child, and that what is done to it produces a corres-

¹ Life; Aberdeen shire.

² That the size of the vulva corresponds with the size of the mouth, and that women with turned out feet have large vulvae are other popular beliefs.

pending effect for good or ill on the child,
 is common to in various parts of the world.
 In Mandeling¹ the mid-wife cuts the cord with
 a piece of a flute on which she has first blown,
 as then the child will have a good voice. Among
 some tribes in Western Australia it is held that
 a man survives well or ill according as his
 mother put his navel-string in water or not.
 In Rhemist Bavaria the cord is kept for a
 while wrapped in old linen and then cut or
 picked to pieces according as the child is a boy
 or a girl, in order that he or she may be a
 good workman or a skilful seamstress. The
 navel-string of a boy in Ancient Mexico
 was given to soldiers for burial on a battle-
 field, in order that the boy might acquire a
 passion for war. So among the Indian tribes
 of British Columbia the cord fastened to the
 dancing mask of a famous dancer will
 make the child a good dancer; attached to
 the knife of a skilful carver a good craftsman
 in wood-work; attached to the baton of a sur-
 gery master a good surgeon. And the navel-

¹ Frazer. J.B. vol. 1. pp. 54. 55

string of the King of Uganda is kept with the utmost care throughout his life. Wrapt in cloth, the number of wrappers is increased with the years of the King, until it ultimately assumes the form of a human figure swathed in cloth. The Custodian ranks as an important minister of state, the bundle being from time to time presented to the King.

Should the new-born child have enlarged mammae, the common and dangerous practice of "milking the breasts" is almost always indulged in if the child be a female. But if this treatment be attempted in the case of a boy it will, according to popular belief, disastrously affect his chance of having progeny when he comes to enter the marriage state.¹ The child at birth should, if a male, be wrapped in a woman's petticoat; if a female in a man's shirt.² If this is not done the child is held to run the risk either (1) of not being married at all, or (2) if married of being childless, when a tree bears no fruit amongst the Lalabarrees³ they think the

¹ Abideenhu. Probably again the fear of menstruous contact. v. ante p. 10

² Abideenhu. Life: Bamff: Perthshire.

³ Brazer. vol. I p. 39.

tree is a male and their remedy is simple. They put a woman's petticoat on the tree, and Frazer explains this by saying that the tree "being then converted into a female will naturally prove prolific". I should imagine, however, that the idea is not so much to convert the tree into a female, as, by joining male and female, to secure the production of offspring as in the Scottish custom just quoted. A curious application of this male and female idea is found in Malak' when the blood of a tortoise is held to be an excellent remedy for jaundice caused by fright. If the patient be a man he bleeds a female tortoise in the leg and makes the sign of the cross on the joints of his arm and leg; while if the patient is a woman she bleeds a male tortoise.

At birth the midwife, ("howdie;" "cunning wife"), if of the old school, mounds and presses ("strait's") the child's head "to fit it in shape." She then takes a mouthful of whisky and blows it skilfully over the

child's head "to strengthen it." In rural Scotland not so long ago two caps ("mutchies") were then put on the child's head; the "under-mutchie" a plain, tight-fitting cap going on first, and a more ornamental article of head-gear going on above. This was done as the child was supposed to be very ready to take cold "on the brain" through the "openings of the head" (the fontanelles), and these caps were worn till the fontanelles closed. If the child cries lustily at birth the bye-standers make a point of saying "weel, it's got a gude brain, ony wey." Why lung-power should imply brain-power is hard to say. If the child sneezes freely at birth it is held to be a sign of "good-buck" especially for those who may be met by it. ^{In reference to the luckiness of urine} "Jungo Park" in his "Travels into the Interior of Africa" describes how, after a Moorish wedding, he was awakened in his tent by an old woman discharging a bowlful of the bride's urine in his face. This is held as an auspicious compliment by the young unmarried Moors, and,

Abendenshine - Banffshire.

2. Quoted in Brand's Popular Antiquities, one vol. 3d.
Chapman & Windus. 1800 p. 388

accepting it as such. Park sent his acknowledgments to the lady.

At birth, too, the child is carefully examined to see if it be "wise and warlike," (Strong mentally and physically), and have no signs of being an "object," (physically deformed), or a "natural," (mentally deficient). A "bramble-mark," or "a rasp" (nevus), is not objected to unless on the face, as it is considered a sign of good luck. Then are held to increase in size and darken in colour as the fruit they resemble ripens. They are also held to be more prominent as each birth-day comes round. Such marks, it may be noted, can be removed by being stroked with the dead hand of a blood relation.

For a child to be born with a caul ("coolie", "hallee-hoo", "happy-hoo", "Sillie-hoo")¹ is considered very lucky, and for this reason the dried caul is preserved. Recently in Aberdeen² a midwife laid one carefully aside, and on being asked her reason said it was "to assist

¹. Coolie = a night-cap; hallee-hoo = holy hood; happy-hoo = fortunate hood, or perhaps wrapping hood (cf. to hap = to wrap up); Sillie-hoo = fairy (cf. numerous "Silly" (or "Seely") hilloos, and houses in Scotland) hood.

². Mentioned during discussion in Aberdeen Medical-Chirurgical Society on paper on Folk-Medicine read by writer, Session 1905-06.

her in her business." In the Aegean islands if a child is born with a caul the midwife takes the caul and puts it secretly under the altar of a church and leaves it there for forty days. It is then good against the Evil Eye and other things.¹ In the Highlands a child born with a caul, (and also a child born feet-first), is held to have the gift of second-sight, a belief that probably arose from its being born seeing "through a veil." This ^{belief} ~~same~~ ^{belief} holds amongst the Boers, where strange properties are possessed by the man met die helm. "One often hears the remark 'I am afraid of so and so: he has been born with the helm?' As long as they preserve the covering (which the nurse carefully removes and dries) they are able to look into the future, and to possess a kind of second sight."² The caul in Scotland is almost invariably ~~stied~~ dried and carefully preserved. A tradesman told me not long ago that all his four children had been born with cauls; that he had all the cauls dried and preserved; and that he would not dispose of them for a hundred pounds as he had profited every day since the first one came

1. Paton; Folk-medicine of Aegean Islands. Folk-lore vol. xviii p. 330.

2. Recent article in "Spectator".

into his possession. Amongst other properties the caul has the power of keeping its possessor from death by drowning, and of giving him the gift of eloquence. Some years ago I saw one which had been kept for 65 years by its owner, and was still cherished as a valued possession.¹ If given ~~to~~ to another person the caul acts as an indicator of its real owner's health. If it keeps dry he or she is in good health; if it becomes moist, in bad health. Henderson² mentions the necessity of keeping the caul carefully, for should it be lost or thrown away the child will pine away or even die.³ This superstition however is world-wide, and of such antiquity as to be reprobated by Saint Chrysostom in several of his homilies. Its universality in France is attested by ^a ~~the~~ proverbial expression — être né coiffé means to be prosperous and fortunate in everything. Braud⁴ deals comprehensively with the subject in a chapter on "The Silly Hood".

I have already stated that a child born feet first is held to have the gift of second-sight. Alternatively it is held to be born to be a wanderer.

1. *Life*.

2. *Folk-lore of the Northern Counties*. p. 22

3. Cf. *Navel-String* *beliefs* pp. 42-3-4

4. *Popular Antiquities*

The same fate hangs over a child born with two hair-whorls on its head; while another interpretation of this last phenomenon is that the child will live to see two ruling monarchs crowned.¹ The child born feet first is also held to be "a healer," and to have the power of curing such complaints as lumbago and sciatica by treading on the parts affected.²

It is considered unlucky to weigh a newborn child, and I have seen³ very genuine opposition offered to such a proposal. The reason is probably the same as that of the objection amongst fisher folk to count the catch or the number of the fishing fleet, or to have themselves counted.⁴

To thoroughly wash the child's "loof" (palm) is considered unlucky as tending to destroy its chances of acquiring and retaining this world's goods.⁵

By some it is considered unlucky to wash the child's back too thoroughly for the first three weeks or so, as it is thereby weakened. This is also the belief of the adult Fife fisher munn regarding himself: to wash his back and his knees too often weakens them. The weakening effect of water, too,

¹ Aberdeen.

² Highlands. Also also "Northumbrian Folk-lore" p. 48.

³ Cf. ² *Life* ³ *Life* ⁴ *Life* ⁵ *Life* ⁶ *Life* ⁷ *Life* ⁸ *Life* ⁹ *Life* ¹⁰ *Life* ¹¹ *Life* ¹² *Life* ¹³ *Life* ¹⁴ *Life* ¹⁵ *Life* ¹⁶ *Life* ¹⁷ *Life* ¹⁸ *Life* ¹⁹ *Life* ²⁰ *Life* ²¹ *Life* ²² *Life* ²³ *Life* ²⁴ *Life* ²⁵ *Life* ²⁶ *Life* ²⁷ *Life* ²⁸ *Life* ²⁹ *Life* ³⁰ *Life* ³¹ *Life* ³² *Life* ³³ *Life* ³⁴ *Life* ³⁵ *Life* ³⁶ *Life* ³⁷ *Life* ³⁸ *Life* ³⁹ *Life* ⁴⁰ *Life* ⁴¹ *Life* ⁴² *Life* ⁴³ *Life* ⁴⁴ *Life* ⁴⁵ *Life* ⁴⁶ *Life* ⁴⁷ *Life* ⁴⁸ *Life* ⁴⁹ *Life* ⁵⁰ *Life* ⁵¹ *Life* ⁵² *Life* ⁵³ *Life* ⁵⁴ *Life* ⁵⁵ *Life* ⁵⁶ *Life* ⁵⁷ *Life* ⁵⁸ *Life* ⁵⁹ *Life* ⁶⁰ *Life* ⁶¹ *Life* ⁶² *Life* ⁶³ *Life* ⁶⁴ *Life* ⁶⁵ *Life* ⁶⁶ *Life* ⁶⁷ *Life* ⁶⁸ *Life* ⁶⁹ *Life* ⁷⁰ *Life* ⁷¹ *Life* ⁷² *Life* ⁷³ *Life* ⁷⁴ *Life* ⁷⁵ *Life* ⁷⁶ *Life* ⁷⁷ *Life* ⁷⁸ *Life* ⁷⁹ *Life* ⁸⁰ *Life* ⁸¹ *Life* ⁸² *Life* ⁸³ *Life* ⁸⁴ *Life* ⁸⁵ *Life* ⁸⁶ *Life* ⁸⁷ *Life* ⁸⁸ *Life* ⁸⁹ *Life* ⁹⁰ *Life* ⁹¹ *Life* ⁹² *Life* ⁹³ *Life* ⁹⁴ *Life* ⁹⁵ *Life* ⁹⁶ *Life* ⁹⁷ *Life* ⁹⁸ *Life* ⁹⁹ *Life* ¹⁰⁰ *Life* ¹⁰¹ *Life* 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is seen in the belief that decay of the teeth occurs in those who live close to running water.

The new-born child is still frequently held up by the heels and shaken to prevent it taking colic! This old cure for colic is quite common amongst the peasantry of Aberdeenshire, more especially school-boys and farm-lads, and is looked on as a pretty certain cure for a "Sair weim." A teething ring of aspen wood² ensures safe teething, this tree being sacred owing to belief that the Cross was made from it. When dressing the child for the first time the "witch brooch" was within quite recent years³ ^{always} pinned on to the child's petticoat as a preservative against witches, fairies and the Evil Eye. This brooch⁴ ^{made of silver} is heart-shaped, and was worn regularly till the child was a considerable age. The shape was probably derived from that of the flint arrow head — the "elf-shots" of the people. Mounted in silver these arrow heads⁴ are still in use by the Irish peasantry, and within recent years in Scotland the flint arrow head was esteemed — so long

¹ Caledonian Medical Journal vol. V No. 2. "Old Highland Therapy."

² Idem

³ Aberdeenshire

⁴ Cf also Henderson's Folk-lore of Northern Counties

as it was not allowed to touch the ground — as a safeguard against witch and warlock. To prevent fairy interference, too, the "hippins" (napkins) of the child were not allowed to be left out after Sun-down, as with these articles of the child in their possession evil could be wrought on their owner. It was for the same reason that the nails of the child are not to be cut but bitten and swallowed by the mother, and that hair and teeth should be carefully preserved from falling into hostile hands.²

If the child "sneezes" (sneezes) the act is always greeted by "Blen the bairn;" In Florida, Zululand, West Africa, Germany, ancient Rome, Homer's Greece and many other places this old and wide-spread habit of acknowledging the act of sneezing prevails.³ The exclamation so often attendant on a sneeze originated as the belief that a spirit could take possession of a man; then, as with some, the act of sneezing seemed to "cast him out with monstrous potency;" or, with others — for example the Zulus — it was a sign that the ancestral spirit was a beneficient

1. *Afroditeum*: Kura and in skin: Tsangshu.

2. Cf. Roalfe Cox. *Introduction to Folk-lore*. p. 203

3. *Id.* p. 7.

visitant." In Scotland the act of sneezing is held to "clean the brain."

On its first visit to another house the child's mouth is frequently filled with sugar "for luck." Unless this were done the child would always be licking its lips, shooting out its tongue and generally discontented. A visit of an infant for the first time brings luck unless the child is carried by its mother. Jeyar mentions that a child entering a house for the first time had to have something given it, otherwise "hunger was left in the house." If in spite of sugar being put in its mouth the child persisted in shooting out its tongue and licking its lips, these actions were attributed to an unsatisfied craving of the mother when pregnant. She was therefore asked what she had been "freemin' for and hadna gotten", and if the article was procurable it was got and pushed on the child's lips.

Various beliefs centre round the cradle as a power to affect the child's health. The first child should not be rocked in a new cradle

but in a borrowed old one, nor should the cradle be brought into the house before the child is born. In sending the borrowed cradle it should never be sent empty, but with a blanket or some other object lying in it, nor should it touch the ground on its journey. (Even when the child is older and the mother wishes to take the cradle into a neighbour's house for a forenoon it is held to be unlucky to carry the cradle in empty.) In some districts 'if the cradle was borrowed for a boy the object put in it was a live hen; if for a girl, a live cock.'² An empty cradle should never be rocked. I have frequently tested the prevalence of this idea by deliberately rocking the empty cradle. I was either openly checked for doing it, or the cradle was gently but firmly pushed out of my reach. In life it is believed that rocking the "loose cradle" gives the child "a sair wame." Henderson, quoting the Weir M.S. quotes the old rhyme

"O rock not the cradle when the baby's not in
For this by old women is counted a sin,
It's a crime so inhuman, it may na be forgiven
And they that will do it hae lost sight of Heaven."

The belief holds also in Holland and Sweden.

¹ Preface. I-L. of N.S. of Scot.

² Vide ante p. 44, 45

A large amount of popular belief
 are found also about the teeth and teething;
 augury, divination and incantation all occurring.
 A child born with teeth has to have them
 "hew'd out" by the hew'die, to avoid dis-
 heartening the mother, for

"Sure teeth, Sure sorrow."

The person who first discovers that a child
 has cut a tooth, has to get a present from
 the mother of the child. Gums through
 which the teeth are shining are described
 as "breedin' gums", and such teeth are
 usually brought through the gum by rub-
 bing with a silver thimble or a shilling.
 It is held to be very unlucky to cut the up-
 per teeth before the lower. Hence the
 proverb

"He that cuts his teeth above,
 Will never wear his marriage shoon."

"Sure teeth, Sure man", or "Sure teeth
 Sure anither" expresses the belief
 that a child which cuts its teeth
 early will soon have a successor. When

"Of Henderson. "Soon teeth soon toes."

teeth come out, or are extracted, each tooth should be put in the fire with a little salt, and either

"Fire, Fire, burn bane"

God gie me my teeth again,"

or

Burn, Burn, blue Tooth,

Come again a new Tooth,"

repeated. In northumberland the lines are added

"Not a crooked but a strite one,

Not a black one but a white one."

Here we have the cause destruction of the teeth, as of hair and nails, but they fall into inimical hands and be used for working evil on the owner. Toothache is

considered due to a worm in the tooth¹ which can be killed by smoking. The fishermen treat toothache by snuffing salt vigorously up the nose. Reference has already been made² to each pregnancy costing the mother a tooth; to toothache in the husband during the wife's pregnancy

¹ Cf. Cameron Gillies "Folk names of Disease and Disease State" p. 29

² Vide ante p. 52

and to teeth being disadvantageously affected by living near running water.

A child speaking before walking will turn out "an awfu' leear." A child speaking before six months old will, if a boy, not live to "comb a grey head." A child should not be allowed to see itself in a looking-glass before it gets its teeth, as it will not live to be five years old. The first time a child creeps, if it makes for the door, it will creep through life and be a slow-coach, and never make a name for itself. Similarly, if a child on first walking is inclined to run, it will have more failures than successes in life. If a child's bowels move while it is sucking it is held to have a bad breath. Any person seeing an infant for the first time should give it a present, or the visitor will "gang awa' wi' the child's beauty." In the same way any person not "drunkin' ^{out} the dram" offered after the child's birth, will "tak' awa' the bairn's luck." (This is

probably a list for a well-wisher or evil-wisher to the child, in case of Evil-Eye influence.) If a child on being given a piece of money holds it tight, it, will turn out "awful" grippy" (greedy); miserly), but if, on the other hand, it lets it slip through its fingers it will be open-handed and generous. The first time a mother takes her child out she should not carry it into another house herself but get some one else to do it, otherwise evil will speedily befall the child. A newborn child should be carried upstairs before it is taken down, so as to seem that it will rise in life. If no stair be available the nurse may seem this end by mounting a chair with the child in her arms. If the child's first cry sounds like "Dey" (Father) the next child will be male, while a child with different coloured eyes — e.g. one blue, one brown — will never live to grow up.

Vernacular Pathological and Anatomical Terms.

Before dealing with "cures" we may consider some of the popular terms in ^{in Scotland} use, for parts of the human body and the troubles that affect them.

A skeleton is called an atomy; an emaciated person being described as "reduced to a fair atomy." The Cranium is the Larn-pan; the brains, the harus. The openin' or open o' the heid is in the infant the anterior fontanelle, but in the adult is used loosely for the top of the head, the crown. The haffits are the temples; the chaffs the jaws; the chawks the cheeks. The eyelids are the winkers; the pupil of the eye the sicht o' the ee, e.g. a foreign body in the eye may be described as "fair on the sicht o' the ee." The neb is the nose, a person with a keen sense of smell being described as neb-wice or nose-wice. The mau or gab is the mouth, a prognathous person being described as gash-gabbit. The

Lug is the ear; Lawse or hass, craip
 and thapple being used for the throat. The
scap, clap or clapper o' the lawse is the
 uvula. It is also frequently called the
wee tongue. The briest is the thorax;
 the stot o' the briest, the line of the sternum.
 The wame or ween, Kyte or baggie (in
 children) is the abdomen; the fuddens are
 the intestines. The birth signifies the ex-
 ternal female genitalia. Fore-birth for vulva
 and hind-birth for anus are sometimes
 differentiated, but the commonest name for
 the latter is the booth passage. The axilla is
 the oxer, a crutch being called an oxer-
 staff or a hiltie. The elbow is the elbuck;
 the "funny bone" the dirty bone. The Shackle-
 bone is the wrist; the loof the palm of
 the hand; the nieve the clenched fist.
 The little-finger is the curmie, the
pinkie or the pearlie, while the per-
 minal phalanges are the webs o' the
 fingers. The nates are the cloups,
hundreds, backside, or in children
 the dock — to "pay the dock" being
 to bestow chastisement in that situation.

The Sacro-iliac synchondrosis is the Couplings o' the back. The hainet is the haunch; the lunker bones or rumple-bones the ischial tuberosities; the herkle bone the ilium. The clatter-bone or whistle-bone is the coccyx. The link is the groin; the thre, the thigh. The lid o' the knee is the patella; the yield or bught o' the knee the popliteal space; the bran o' the leg the calf, and the ceet (or greet) the ankle.

A tendon is a leader or a serion. Jaughon is correctly enough described as a luppen sinow, but the term is often loosely applied to varicose veins. The fell is the deep fascia, a deep-seated pain being described as "betwixt the fell and the flesh".

A new-born child, as was mentioned before, is, ^{if} healthy in body and mind described as wice and warl'-like — the opposite being either a natural (imbecile) or

an object (physically deformed). ~~St~~ Shager, weirdie, drauchle, titlin, warral or messan are all applied to an undersized, dwarfish person; these terms being ~~applied~~ used for the smallest pig in the litter. The word replan is also employed, but replan is properly either 1) a hermaphrodite or 2) an imperfectly castrated animal.

Of the slighter deviations from the normal we have lamiter (cripple); huple (to limp); to gang cheeky on (walk in a lopsided manner as, for example, in scoliosis); glee, gley or skell (to squint), the adjective being gleyed, gled or skelly-eyed; mant (to stammer — stammer in Scottish dialect means to stumble — boobie-backed (round-shouldered); humpshie-backed (hump-backed); boo-houghed (out-kneed); and hauchly (walking trailing the feet.) To isk' is to hiccup; to gant, to cawn; to reeze to sneeze. Pilly is used for weakness not of the mind but of the body; while stout means robust and unstout weakly. The expression not strong is used almost always.

1. At each hiccup "a drop o' blude leaves the heart." Lipp.

to mean phthisical, and a medical man unintentionally convey a totally wrong impression by saying this, and even cause grave offence; for phthisis is almost considered to be a hereditary complaint and, consequently a slur on the "Constitution" of the family.

An albinos is described as blin'-fair; a left handed person is described as car-, cur-, ~~or~~ curry-, Kerry-, derry-, Kippie-handed or doakie. Deaf means benumbed, partially or totally devoid of sensation. A rawly finger is a sore finger; a whistle is a whithor; a lorat is a wart. A plook is a pimple; a fleein'-oot, hive, or ootstrickin' a rash; fern-bickles are freckles. The carry in Shudeenshwa is used for infectio contagiosa.

A scart is a scratch; a chack is a nip; a rack is a strain; an income gatherin' or beelin' is an abscess. ~~The~~ Rin, render, beel or lype are all used

A deafy boal is a marble that will not "shot" properly.

for to discharge; while a dottle or melt signifies any stringy tenacious substance, as for example the detritus of a boil or the membrane in diphtheria.

The lily is the thrush; crewels or waxen kernels are enlarged glands, more especially in the neck; a naar is the scar left after suppuration in such glands. Recrossed bone coming away from a wound in small particles is described as marled (crumbled) bone.

To bock is to vomit, to belch. A dry-bok is a retching. To cowk is also used for to retch. To Reunner is to disgust. To gar the heart rise is to make sick — e.g. "it fairly garred my heart rise" is said of medicine or food that cannot be taken. To gar the heart fill is to affect almost to tears. Great-hearted means emotional. To get roond the heart is to cause to feel faint. To gang wi' the heart is to go with one's inclination e.g. of food it is said "he'll tak that: it'll gang wi' his heart." Any injury on the left side of the thorax is held to be dangerous as being near the heart. An injury complained of, say on the leg, will be referred to contemptuously by an onlooker as far frae the heart — "Yies no dee o' that: that's far frae the heart."
i. ahead o' him; his coardiness; Bannockburn.

a Loast is a cough: Kuik-loast whooping-cough. a Kittlin' loast is an irritable cough as is a clocker. Flut or corruption (Fife) is expectoration. Noisy breathing is described as a hirslin at the brier a whauzlin' or a rothie (Aberdeenshire).

Staved means jammed: a Scob is a splint: a battu a plaster.

Pain is variously described as (1) a yawin' or yarkin' (gnawing) pain: (2) a beelin' (suppurating) pain: (3) a stoonin' loupin' or goropin' pain. This last is the shooting pain of acute toothache, or the lightning pain of locomotor ataxia.

The "furoridum nigrum Scotorum" is proved to a certain degree by the various words we have to describe mental conditions. Kapie means excited - almost fey; clowf, feeklen (fidgets); moithend (confused); dovey or dooy dovey-headit, (thick-headed); doifted, dottrified, donnet, dottded (stupid through age, senile); steery, camsteery, ramhaceous (highly excited); carried (delirious); deed to the wail (unconscious). Sair felled or

Sai made means much prostrated
by illness.

a grewsin (ripw); longue-tackit
(tongue-tied); lust (seborrhoea); nirls (meads);
watung pox or chrystal-pox (chicken-pox);
natural-pox (small-pox); brands, buffets
(mumps); han-shaw (han-lip); whum-
guk-bore (cleft-palate); tramble-mank
or rash (naevus) are all in common use.

Diseases and "Cures"

It will be, I am afraid, almost im-
possible to deal systematically with
diseases and their cures; and the better
way, perhaps, will be to consider them
as they most commonly occur; for the
commoner the trouble the more numerous
the cures for it.

The Krick-hoast (whooping-cough)
has many methods of folk-treatment. The
sufferer may be taken to a lime-kiln, to a
gar-works or made to "breathe the air off"
a hole freshly dug in the ground. (This earth-

Cure is also held to be of value in phthisis, (as is the smell of stable-manure), and it is considered specially efficacious by the old-fashioned life miners in those who have been affected by "bad air" in the pit. A hole is dug in the earth and the patient made to lie face downwards over it. Even after he has somewhat recovered and been put to bed, a "divot" of turf may be cut and laid on the sufferer's pillow, so that the gentle breath of Mother Earth may play about him as he sleeps.) The child ill with whooping-cough may also be passed beneath the belly of a donkey; or carried till a ride on a white (some say a pinto² horse) is met with. He is then asked what is good for ^{whooping-}cough and what he says must be given. After the disease is past its height a "change of air" is always considered essential to complete the cure; the change being if possible "across water."³ A curious variant of the idea is that the sufferer need not have the change of air, but that he may be treated with some substance to

¹ Sacred through its association with Christ, whenever it carries the mark of the Cross on its back.

² Tamerlan says the English for information would shout "Man on the pinto (pinto) horse, what's good for the King's horse?"

³ Of the belief that witches can not cross water.

to which the change of air has been administered. In pursuance of this idea I have frequently ^{known} the life miner to take more bread down the pit for his "pit-pieces" than he needed, and this ~~surplus~~ surplus food (which had received this modified change of air) was then administered to the sick child. I have also known of a child being taken down the pit and held in the strong draught of ^{an} "air-course" to "change the air on it" and completely drive out the Knith-boast.

Efficacy also lies in bread and milk administered by a man and his wife who both bore the same surname before marriage. Jeyor' mentions this also, with the addition that if the patient is taken to and from their house through a wood the cure will be more sure. He also mentions that a decoction of sheep's excrement was esteemed as a cure both for Knith-boast and Lam'dice. (This treatment cropped up in the concentration camps during the Boer War.) Eating the food with a "quith-horn" spoon

¹. Folklore of the North East of Scotland p. 46 & p. 38

i.e. a spoon made from the horn of a living animal, or a draught of water from the hollow of a detached boulder were also recommended. Taking the patient to another land's land, drinking asses milk or riding on an ass were all held to be good treatment, while Black⁴ mentions that in Scotland and Devonshire alike a hair from the sufferer's head put between slices of bread and butter and given to a dog transferred the disease to that animal — more surely it, on eating, the dog, as was natural, coughed ~~and~~ while consuming the hair.

Pains (rheumatism) being, like knit-heart, a common complaint has also many cures. A potato carried in the pocket is fervently believed by many — even educated ~~for~~ persons to effect a cure. It is held "to draw the iron out o' the blade". A ~~Lare's~~ Lare's foot — the left fore-foot for preference — is also valuable when carried in the pocket. Black slips "masked"

(infused) in a tea-pot supply an oil which is good for rubbing. The marrow of bullock's bone twice-boiled is used as an ointment, while Swine's-Lear ('Pig-fat') is a very common application. The inflamed joints may be switched with freshly gathered nettles. This was the favorite application of an old man of eighty in Fife, a sufferer from rheumatism of many years standing. Flowers of Sulphur rubbed over the joints or put inside the stockings is often used, and, spread on blue-flannel (itself held to be "a real healing thing") is used for the treatment of humors. A rather risky internal "cure" is the sucking of turpentine mixed with Sugar.

Cramp is also treated with sulphur. a piece of Sulphur under the pillow is held to ward off cramp from all occupants of the bed. The sulphur-band is made by tying ^{or sewing} a piece of Sulphur firmly into the garter, and sulphur is sometimes tied in the osier for the same purpose. When a

"rust is hingin' about a basin" Sulphur and whisky are administered to "bring it to the outside", while Sarsaparilla and cream of tartar make a popular "Spring drink" for "clearin' the blood".

It is a common and unfortunate popular belief, both as regards phthisis and other infectious diseases, that an older person is not liable to take infection from a younger. The clothes in an infectious case may thus, according to this belief, be quite safely washed by a person older than the patient — "She's auld be's (compared to) him" — or the older person may sleep with the younger. Fortunately this belief is somewhat outlaid by another viz that if there is a marked difference of strength — or of age in persons sleeping together, the older or stronger will "draw the strength out o' " the younger and weaker. The young woman was probably put into the bed of the aged Palmerist on this understanding. And here, perhaps one may also note the belief in the existence of a "white-liver" in a man who has been a widower several times.

Along with the white liver is supposed to go a "bad break" which is fatal to the horse.

The old idea of ridding one's self of disease by transference is always cropping up. "When disease was recognized, though tardily, to have positive existence, and the fact realized that, despite prayers and offerings, it might mysteriously be ~~conveyed~~ communicated by the sick person to another person who suffered in much the same way, complaining of similar pains and exhibiting the same general symptoms, a step had been taken in folk-medicine. If a man could, without conscious act on his part, infect his neighbors why might he not, of purpose, transfer his complaint to something of a lower order, which should suffer the disease in his place?"¹ And the history of witchcraft in Scotland shows that many

¹ Black. Folk-medicine p. 34

suffered the extreme penalty for putting
 this idea into practice, and professing
 to transfer disease to cats, dogs, calves
 and other animals. Within recent
 years in life, on the advice of a "tinkler
 wife" (for it is wonderful "what gann-aboot
 fowk ken") a litter of black puppy dogs
 was, ^{killed,} split up, and applied warm to
 the "poisoned aron" of a man, the "tribble"
 being thus transferred from the human
 body to the canine. A black cat was
 killed, split and applied to ~~a~~ a sore
 in the latter half of last century in
 Strathdon, Aberdeenshire, while a sufferer
 from venereal disease² was about
 the same time laid inside the carcass of
 a freshly killed and disembowelled
 ox. (Such a sufferer is always described
 in popular parlance as "rotten," the
 term invariably used in the old medical
 books of popular medicine³.) In Yorkshire⁴
 a calf's brain was removed, applied
 as a poultice to the head of a sufferer

¹ Dalziel. "Dark Superstition of Scotland," pp. 104-5.

² "The wicked laird of B.," *Life*.

³ *Physicall Secrets*. London. 1633.

⁴ Told me by a
 clerical friend in
 Aberdeen

from neuralgia and then replaced in the calf's skull and buried. As the brain decayed the pain left the patient's head. So with all the common cure for wrats (warts) in Scotland and elsewhere: the rubbing of a slug on the wart and striking the slug on a thorn to decay: the rubbing of the wart with a piece of stolen beef which was then buried: the burying of a string on which knots to the number of the warts had been tied, or straws corresponding in number to the warts: the ~~striking~~^{placing} of a warty hand into the throat of a newly-stuck pig and so on.

And the popular faith in the efficacy of a poultice lies not so much in its heat and moisture as in its power to "draw the tribble". The disease is "in" until it is extracted: it has to be "drawn out." Some poultices, e.g. Carrot, turnip, "appli-rumpie," cow dung, Soap and sugar, are held to be "awfu' drawin'" things, and "So it no' drawin' it owre

1. A remedy, amongst other things for "foul-shae," (Scabies)

sain?" is a common query. a blister which fails to rise shows that the trouble is "down to draw" and that it is "deep in."

The commonest cause, of course, of criminal assaults on children is the wish to get rid by transference of venereal disease, and I lately came across a case where a nurse-maid deliberately "smittit" her charge with syphilis Contagiosa to rid herself of the complaint.

When a patient is ill, too, there is always the fear of taking any food that may "feed the tribble." "For ony favam," said a woman to me, on one occasion who was suffering from bronchitis, "dinna gie me ony drups that will gar me eat, for a' I tak gaups to the hoast and jist strengthens it." Behind it all, unknown to the speaker, lay the old idea of demoniac possession, just as Zoroaster believed that while a woman suffered from the
 'vide ante. p. 11.

menstrual flow she was to be kept
on low diet or the strength she again
would go to the fiend.

Hence it is, perhaps, too that we
get the idea that those "who arena" feared
at a trouble winna talk it," on the prin-
ciple of "resisting the devil and he
will flee from ~~at~~ you." It is an idea
that has frequently to be combated in
dealing with infectious disease; plenty
of people, otherwise intelligent believing
that disease is "no' catchin'" provided
they "arena feared at it." In one old
medical book we find that "Fear
corrupts the Juices of the Braine (through
the force of imagination) and makes them
fall downe and disperse themselves into
all the parts of the bodie filled with
a sicklie qualitie, and soe contrary
to Nature. This is the reason why feare-
full men are apt to die of slight
wounds; whereas a valiant spirit has
always flesh apt to be healed." An Echo

"Helps for suddain accidents." London 1633.

here of Ecclesiastes with "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit crusheth the bones."

An infectious disease is described as a catchin' complaint, while for contagious the word ornittle (o. to omit) is used; often, however, the word ornittle is employed both for infectious and contagious. The belief as regards measles, scarlatina, whooping-cough &c ~~as is~~ that they are merely "bairn's troubles" and therefore as inevitable as teething is responsible for much infant mortality; for "Pit them a' thegither and hae done wi't" is often quickly practised. Measles also "maanna be wet," and this axiom is frequently the excuse for leaving the patient in a lamentable state of dirt.

Cold water is always regarded in popular belief as a most dangerous drink in acute illness, and the sick-bed attendant will frequently narrate with pride how she has refused the natural craving of the sufferer. "A rash drink o' water" will either "founder" the patient

or cause a "burst." The alarming statement "he's burst himself" or "he's fien himself a burst" explains any skin disease from ploots (pimples) to pempthigus, and the burst is usually caused by a drink of cold water when the patient is heated by over-exertion. Cold water is an especially forbidden drink in the puerperium, and the medical attendant who permits its use must assume responsibility for any illness that may arise, from chackit ripples upwards. I have referred before to the weakening effect of water when used externally to the infants on the miner's back and the consequent objection to over-much washing.

Change of water is assumed to do as much harm as change of air does good. People coming to a new district often blame this for causing ~~much~~ illness especially boils, pimples, constipation or diarrhoea — often, of

cause, correctly enough when the water-supply is too hard or not above suspicion of pollution. Running water in the vicinity was shown before¹ to be considered a cause of decay in teeth, and there is a curious school-boy belief that water which "has run over three stones"² is safe to drink.

As regards boils the general belief is that they are a sign of rude health, or at any rate ~~only~~ apt only to appear in those who are exceptionally well.

Another belief of the same nature is that pediculi capitis only appear in strong children and are "a sign o' life." And a curious instance of the "life cures like" theory — in this case that "life gives life" — was given by the old woman³ who deliberately collected these undesirables on another child and transferred them to the head of a sickly child, under the belief that the invalid would thereby regain strength.

¹ V. ante pp. 52 & 56

² Aberdeenshire

³ Kirkcaldy, Fife

to another instance of Sympathetic magic we can take the application of the eel's skin in sprains. (There are other popular cures for sprains, e.g. rubbing with oil o' Sant, foes hot, or Swine's Seam.) The eel's skin is not ~~applied~~ applied as a bandage or support, but merely twisted loosely round the ankle. The reasoning is obvious: for the sprained part is stiff, and the eel being one of the most supple of living creatures the virtue of the latter is given to the former by application. A Salmon Skin² is used in the same way for the same purpose, while a Lamb's skin³ is applied to the chest in asthma. Here again we have the skin of one of the most long-winded of animals applied to the chest of a short-winded sufferer in the hope of a transference of attributes. It is on the same principle that some Bechuanas wear a ferret as a charm because being very tenacious of life it will make them difficult to kill. Other

¹ a miner I knew in Fife kept an eel's skin which he regularly bent out for this purpose.

² *Thuidesmodon* (Shad-don)

³ *Thuidesmodon*

Bechuanaos mean the hair of a porcupine
 one amongst their own hair, and the skin
 of a frog in their mantle, because the
 ox having no horns is hard to catch, and
 the frog being slippery is the same. Perhaps
 too, from the idea of movement, hare's flesh and
 soup was administered at the Highlands in
 menostasis.¹ Another cure for asthma
 is wearing a string of hammer (amber)
 beads round the neck. This is also
 worn for eye-trouble.²

An example either of transference
 of Disease or of sacrifice — perhaps of
 both — is seen in the Highland cure for
 epilepsy by burying a black cock
 alive when the patient has had the
 first fit. A modified form of this was
 the cure used for giddiness³ when a
 hole was dug and a black cock put in
 it alive. The patient was then made
 to lie ^{face} down-wards over the hole after a
 handful of earth had been scattered
 over the unfortunate fowl, and nitrate

¹ Caledonian Med. Journal. vol. V p. 400. "Old Highland Therapy".

² Cf. p. 40 & Henderson p. 145.

³ Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, within the last 30 years.

the "Smell o' the earth" caused by the fluttering of the birds' wings. Whether the old man who recommended this cure suspected that the giddiness was due to petit mal is hard to say, but we have here the transference of disease idea associated with the Earth cure mentioned before as in use for whooping-cough, phthisis and asphyxiation by bad air! The other cure for epilepsy is drinking out of the Skull of a Suicide, while Salmon in his "Dispersatory" and Moncrief in his "Poor Man's Physician" mention the power of powdered Skull of a dead man in all diseases of the head.

Worms. It is a popular belief that ~~medicine~~ medicine for worms should be administered when the "moon is at its height," as the worms then "come out." One common cure is to make the child chew dry bread for a time. The worms are supposed to "come out" at the noise of the chewing, and, on which being administered are killed. A cure of a

similar kind was on the advice of an old woman' carried out (in 1904) on a chief who ~~he~~ was supposed to have "the drinkin' diabetes." The sufferer was given a salt-herring to eat; her arms were then tied behind her back and she was made to lean over running water. "a beast cam' up her throat," and she was then held to be cured. Here "the beast" that caused the disease was so tormented by the salted food that it came up at the sound of the running water and the cure was complete.

The "height o' the moon" brings up again the effect of season and time of day and night on disease. Leap Year is held to "be unlucky for beasts and bodies: there's a heap o' witch-craft gawn about ~~at~~ in Leap Year" May is a bad month for marriage for

"O' marriages in May

Bairns die in decay."

There is a "change in the system"² every seven years.³ In spring there is a necessity of

1. Life.

2. It is noteworthy that the fairies pay kind to hell every 7 years.

3. Cf. Black h. 135

"Clearin' the blude," as of old there was necessity of bleeding. "Spring-medicine" is usually taken, commonly as mentioned before, Sulphur and cream of tartar. A purge and a vomit were the old objects aimed at. Sibbald in his "History of Life" mentions a well in the parish of Auchtermuir which was much resorted to for this purpose, and all over the country were numerous "medicine-wells"; the word medicine having, as it usually has amongst the people to this day, the meaning of a purgative.¹ Eruptions on the skin, boils &c are all explained as "bein' just the time o' year."

A few notes may be given on animal cures. Some years ago I came across a boy² who was having administered to him, thrice daily, a tablespoonful of the liquor in which a mouse had been boiled. This was for emmenesis. On enquiring I found that this was well-known as a cure by the older women, although some preferred that the animal should be roasted to a cinder, then powdered and the cure so given.

¹ A pretty full list of curative wells is got in MacKenlay's "Folk-lore of the Scottish Lakes and Firths."

² Fife.

It is also occasionally so used for whooping-cough. Zola in "L'assommoir" mentions it as an anthelmintic, and Salmon in his "Dispensatory", ^{recommends} it ~~is mentioned~~ for a similar purpose.

Skate-bree, i.e. the liquor in which skate has been boiled is recognized popularly as an aphrodisiac. A barren woman, too free with her tongue, will be checked with the rejoinder "Awa and Sup Skate-bree." And the contemptuous phrase in the north, of "gang to Banff and bottle Skate," has probably the same innuendo concealed in it. Geop¹ mentions skate-bree as being accounted an efficacious application for sprains and rheumatism. Sweat is supposed also to have an aphrodisiac action. This is mentioned by Kraft-Ebbing² as existing in Germany, and Geop³. The latter states that when two lozenges, covered with perspiration and stuck together, were given to the one whose love was sought strong affection was excited by the eating of them.

Pig's blood has been referred to as a

¹. p. 46

². Psychopathia Sexualis.

³. P. 86

cure for warts.' The gall of the pig is used as an application for chilblains. The rind of a piece of ham with fat attached is held in estimation in life as a cure for sore throat and bronchitis. Sowin's Seam (pig's fat) ~~is~~ has been already frequently mentioned as an universal application for rheumatism, sprains, swollen glands &c. It is also the common base for many home-made ointments, being often combined with green powder, Sulphur, "chaffit-beds" &c as a healin Sae (Salve); another common Sae being made by burying fresh butter (wrapped in a cloth) in the earth for two or three days.

One of the Commonest of all complaints met with in Scotland is that which in popular parlance is termed Hives. The word is constantly in use, and it is hard to say how much or how little it connotes. Jamieson in his "Dictionary of the Scottish Language" gives it as meaning "any eruption ^{on} of the skin when the disorder is supposed to proceed from an internal cause. Thus bowel-hive is the name given to a

disease in children in which the groin is said to swell. Hives is used to denote both the red and yellow gum (Lothians) A. S. Heafain to swell." Campbell says "Breac-shith (Jaetic) 'elfin-pox', hives are spots that appear on the skin in certain diseases, as whooping-cough, and indicate a highly malignant. They are not ascribed to the Fairies, but are named sith, because they appear, and again disappear 'silently'; without obvious cause, and more mysterious than other symptoms." From my own observation I should say that, generally speaking, if an infant is at all out of sorts it is said to be hivie; diarrhoea, vomiting, thrush - all these conditions come under the adjective; while a frequent cause of sudden death in children is said to be the hives gum round the head.

The commonest varieties of the disease, so far as we can classify them, are those that follow:-

1. Bowel-hives is the green, slimy diarrhoea so often associated with dentition and mal-feeding

2. Oat-fleece' hives is when we get a rash

1. Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands.

of any sort, short of the exanthemata. For example eczema capitis is frequently described as starting with a hive on the brow, and the sudamina so common on neck and nose in the first few days of in/out life are frequently looked on as a good sign and called the thruwin' hives.

3. In flee in' hives is difficult to define. It usually spells sudden death for the patient; or, at any rate, sudden death is quite satisfactorily explained by the fact that the hives have gone inward (inward), the usual habitat being, as I mentioned above, the heart.

4. The bannock-hive is a term applied, usually humorous and contemptuously, to the sufferer from gastric derangement following over-eating. When doubt is being thrown in the family circle on a member's claim to be untroubled we hear the phrase "well, if ye're hived, it's the bannock-hive;" similar to "Ye're meat-head, my way," or Palt's famous "my sma' kaid o' health he has is aye at meal times."

Hives, either with the May-flower or at some subsequent date went over to America. It

crofts up in some of these trans-atlantic medical advertisements with which we are all so abundantly favoured, and in the fiction of the United States.

As regards the lunes gettin' round the heart there is an idea also about that a sudden fright or shock will ca the heart aff its stalk and so cause sudden death. Not long ago, on a child dying from shock following a severe scalding with boiling water the popular explanation was that the heart had been ca'd aff its stalk. Whether this idea of the heart possessing a stalk is due to its pear shape or not is hard to say; but more likely the aorta in days of old was looked on as the stalk on which the heart hung, and as a large amount of popular anatomy has filtered out to the multitude through pig killing and other butchery (for has not man got a' the puddens o' a sow but one?) we cannot expect it to be very exact. In the Highlands in connection with misadventure there is a belief that the cause is the person's heart getting displaced ("jumping out of its husk") by a sudden shock.

¹ Mowdie. "Highland Therapy." Cal. Med J. vol. IV

Hence the attempt to make it jump back by administering another shock, e.g. attaching the sufferer to a rope and towing behind a boat until thoroughly exhausted.

Cancer is almost always spoken of by the folk as eatin' cancer, and is popularly supposed to "eat" all applications that are put to it. It is quite common to hear such tales, as "it ate a loaf o' bread and a bottle o' whisky a day."

Folk Surgery

This is now entirely in the hands of the bone-setter.¹ The "natural bone-setter" is the predecessor of the present day fraudulent osteopaths, but all over Scotland there are bone-setters — sometimes male, not infrequently female — who have a local reputation for setting bones and "rubbing" sprains. Very frequently the bone-setter is a black-smith. Of knowledge of anatomy or of training he possesses nothing: but of this, he and his patrons are proud. For the "touch" must be always a matter of her-skep (heredity).

¹ Vide article by author "The Scottish Bone-setter," Cal. Med. Journal for January 1902

the bone-setter's father, mother, grandfather, or aunt must have possessed the skill in their day and generation. a rough and ready massage plays an important part in their modus operandi, as does the implicit faith of the patient. The fearlessness of utter ignorance leads them to deal with adhesions in joints in the most thorough-going fashion, and we hear of their successes and never of their failures. Many of them have the gift - carefully practiced for the purposes of charlatanism - of making a cracking noise at the thumb or finger-joints by flexion and extension. When an injury is exhibited for treatment, the bone-setter handles it freely, says how many banes are out, and then works away at the joint making cracking noises with his own fingers, each separate noise representing a bone going "in." "They maam has been out," said a patient to me on one occasion, indignant at being rebuked for his folly; "I heard them gaum in." Seeing may be believing, but hearing "comes a'."

^{Scottish}
 amongst bone-setters about whom I have known personally there were the following occupations: Schoolmaster, black-smith, quarryman, farmer, carpenter, plate-layer, miner and midwife.

and their fashions embraced all classes —
 Earl, duckers, clergyman, laird, labourer.

Appendix — Some vernacular
 medical proverbs.



Stuff a cold and stave a fever.

Stuid afe disna come its lane.

When ye get ailed ye get mirted.

He fits his meat in a fude skin.

He's like his meat.

If he's the hime it's the bannock-hime.

As the soo fills the draff sours.

If ye want to be sure weel, be lang sick.

Better wear shoon than sheets.

The better war the sooner peace } Said of
 ye'll be waur afore ye're better } labour pains

A drunken doctor's clever.

He'll no kill.

He's a gey tough Simon in his neck. } Said of an
 } exceptionally
 } hardy man.

Nurse weel the first year; ye'll no nurse twa.
 (i.e. two children.)

He's waur than draff: he's reid-heidit.

Better hand weel than snak weel.

Let the saw sink to the saw. (usually said
 of whisky taken for illness.)

He's like's bannock; he's like's bit. (applied to
 any one in a thriving condition of health)

Broken bread maks hale bairns

Sliver and sharp teeth's the best Kitchie.

Hungry's the best Kitchie.

They never gantit but wantit
Meal, Sleep or makkin' o'.

Ellin-moed maidens never get a man:
Cluekly-moed maids get twa.

Ye're owre mony werrucks (bumions) to get
a man.

Bigheid, little wut.

David Rorie.

1 Saint Devenick Terrace

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Aberdeen.

Aprile 27. 1908.