

The Legend of the Lee Penny

Many tales of lore, stories of knowledge, can only trace their origins to a rough point in time, if at all. The stories seem to change every generation as the stories were passed on, especially if the tradition was passed as verbal history instead of written history. The older the tale, often times it may be far removed from the original tale. To the credit of the early storytellers, they often tried to keep the purity of the tale by expressing it in the form of a song, which would be repeated much the same each time it was sung. Later the written form became the main form of passing the lore on, but it also removed some of the emotional content so expertly conveyed by the storytellers. Because the role of storyteller was reduced, much of this knowledge was lost if not written down and much was lost as it was not taught to the younger generations. A worst offence can be when the original story becomes the basis of a new fictitious story, often time replacing the facts of the original with the fantasy of the new story. Generations blindly then follow the story while the original and it's truth are forgotten. The Lockhart's are able to claim the honor of being the source of one tale, that of the Lee Penny. The original story was the basis of the fictional story "The Talisman" by Sir Walter Scott.

The Facts of the Lee Penny

When Sir Symon Locard returned from a crusade in 1330, he left an amulet to his heirs at the estate called the "Lee", giving the charm the name of the "Lee Penny". The amulet itself is triangular in shape (some say heart-shaped) and dark red in colour. It is now mounted on a coin identified as a groat, this is a silver fourpenny piece of the reign of Edward IV (1422-1483).



Lee Penny

The Discovery of the Amulet

When King Robert the Bruce was dying in 1329, he asked that his heart be removed on his death and taken on a crusade back to the Holy Land and that his heart be placed in the Holy Sepulchre (tomb where Jesus Christ was reported to be entombed after his death) in Jerusalem. This was in part to atone for his murdering John Comyn in the Church of Greyfriars in 1306. Sir James Douglas took the heart in a silver and enamel casket hung from his neck and the key to this casket was given to Sir Symon Locard. They began their journey from Scotland with Sir James Douglas, Sir Symon Locard of Lee, Sir William Sinclair of Roslyn, Sir Robert Logan and Sir Walter Logan, Sir William Keith, Sir Alan Carthra, one unnamed knight and twenty-six squires and gentlemen. They sailed first to Sluys in Flanders to invite others to join in the crusade. Early in the spring of 1330 they sailed around the Straits of Gibraltar and landed in Valencia, Spain. They found that King Alfonso of Castile was battling the Saracens trying to drive them from his country. They joined the king battling the Moors at the Castle of the Star (the Battle of Teba) where Sir Symon Locard, the first ancestor of the Lockhart name, took a Moorish Emir of wealth as captive. As was customary in those times, the Emir was offered for a ransom. The Emir's mother would gladly pay the ransom for her son's life.



Teba is located on the south of Spain.

The story goes that as the mother was extracting payment from her purse, an amulet in the form of a jewel that some said was inserted in a coin of the lower Roman Empire, fell from the purse. The matron made such a hasty recovery of the item that it gave Sir Symon an indication of its high value. He insisted that the jewel would be added to the amount earlier stated for the ransom.¹

Persians were known for a strong belief in amulets, spells and other charms, which could provide medical cures or advance a person's fortune. The Emir's mother desiring the release of her son consented to adding the amulet to the ransom. She proceeded to explain the history and use of the amulet as well. The stone was a remedy against different manners of bleeding, fever, the bites of mad dogs, and for sicknesses of horses and cattle. To use the amulet, it was dipped three times and swirled once in water. This water was then used by drinking it or used to wash a wound or bathe a patient. No words were to be spoken in the process or the cure will be ineffective. This last item became important later for a Lockhart descendant, saving him from execution. It is not clear when the additional requirement of not accepting payment came about, but the heirs of Sir Symon Locard did not accept payment for use of the coin, though in times they did require a deposit when it left the estate. It is said that during an epidemic that attacked Newcastle in the reign of Charles I., the inhabitants of the town were loaned the Lee-Penny by giving a bond of £6000 for its safe return. They offered to forfeit the bond to keep the penny but were denied.

The Lee Penny in Scotland

In an "Account of the Penny in the Lee", written in 1702, it states the amulet was taken a put on the end of a split stick and then dipped and twirled in the water. This water was then given to sick cattle curing all types of illnesses. It also was reported used to cure the Lady Baird of Sauchtonhall of hydrophobia (rabies) after being bitten by a mad dog. It was a common practice into the nineteenth century for a bottle of Lee Penny Water to be kept in every barn in the district to be used when livestock became sick.ⁱⁱ

About the year 1629, an outbreak of illness occurred in East Lothian, Scotland attacking livestock. The stories were "Oxen were never able to lie down, but moaned in pain continually until they died. Herdsmen traveled to the home of the Laid of Lee to ask the loan of his curing stone. The request was denied but the herdsmen were given quantities of water that had been treated with the Lee Penny." For their conduct in obtaining this water, the herdsmen were given ecclesiastical censure and ordered to undergo penance at the Church of Dunbar. In their defense the herdsmen offered up a defense that what they had done was ordinary practice by the best of husbandmen.

During the time of the Scottish Reformation, a person could and often was, put to death for performing witchcraft. Persons could have charges laid against them for numerous reasons, some truthful but many times it seems that it was for personal gains in political arenas, simple revenge, instead of a true desire to "purify" the religious nature of a person. Gawen Hammiltoune of Raplocke made a charge to the Presbytery of Glasgow near the end of the seventeenth century. He accused Sir James Lockhart of the Lee, of superstitious use of a stone set in silver for the purpose of curing diseased livestock. Sir James was found not guilty of practicing witchcraft on the grounds that no words were spoken, "because the custom is only to cast a stone in some water and give diseased cattle to drink, and the same is done without using any words such as people practicing witchcraft".ⁱⁱⁱ

The Lee Penny in Story

The great Scottish writer, Sir Walter Scott, is supposed to have heard the story of the Lee Penny while growing up and used it as the basis of his story “The Talisman”. There are very few similarities between the “Talisman” and the Lee Penny lore. In the Talisman, Sir Kenneth, the Scottish Knight of the Leopard, befriends a Saracen Emir named Saladin. Saladin then disguises himself as a physician to cure King Richard the Lionheart using the amulet. Later Sir Kenneth is revealed to be Prince David of Scotland.

There are many references to the Lee Penny which have quotes supposedly taken from the meeting of the Emir’s mother and Sir Symon Locard. These quotes usually can be traced back to the introduction of “The Talisman” written in 1825, almost 500 years after the event occurred, thus should be suspected. Indeed, there was much offence to Scott’s use of historical facts in his works of fiction, as it seemed to give his stories the basis of being true. ^{iv}

The Gold Snuffbox

James Lockhart (b1727) was the second son of George Lockhart III of Carnwath (abt 1700). Because the job prospects were slim at this time and with a thirst for warfare, he became a soldier of fortune. He began as a young man soldiering in Persia under Shah Nadir. Later he joined the Austria Army under Maria Theresa at the end of the Austrian War of Succession as a low ranking soldier. On 17th March 1782 he was made “Count Lockhart-Wishart of Lee and Carnwath” (Wishart was his mothers maiden name), Count of the Holy Roman Empire. When James brother George (b1726) died in 1761, he inherited the Lee Estate. He kept watch over the estate even while still serving for the Austrian Royal Family in the Austrian Army, where he had an earned a reputation for bravery. Maria Theresa, Empress of Austria, gave Count James Lockhart a gold snuffbox in 1789. In a few references, the Count was also a General at this time. The Lee Penny is now kept in this box.



Gold Snuffbox

Sources:

<http://www.clanlockhartsociety.com/history.htm>

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/charms13.htm>

<http://www.electricscotland.com/kids/stories/penny.htm>

<http://www.lockharts.com>

<http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/novels/talisman.html>

Ronald McNair Scott, quoting from a Carthcart Family manuscript

The Talisman by Sir Walter Scott

ⁱ "Seven Centuries" by Simon Macdonald Lockhart

ⁱⁱ <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/charms13.htm>

When used for healing purposes in Scotland, the Lee-Penny was drawn once round a vessel filled with water and then dipped three times into the liquid. In an "Account of the Penny in the Lee," written in 1702, it is stated that the amulet "being taken and put into the end of a cloven stick, and washen in a tub full of water, and given to cattell to drink, infallibly cures almost all manner of diseases," and that "the people come from all airts of the kingdom with their diseased beasts." About the year 1629 the "routting ewill, a strange and suddane disease," prevailed in Scotland, "quhairthrow" an ox "was never able to ly down, bot routed continually till he deid." To cure this disease some persons travelled from East Lothian "to the laird of Leyis house and cravett the len" of "his cureing stane—quhilk was refusit be the lady; but [she] gave thame ane certaine quantitie of water in flacones quhairin the said stane was dippit, quhilk being gevin as drink to the bestiall haillit thame." For this conduct the parties were subjected to ecclesiastical censure and appointed to undergo penance in the church of Dunbar, although they urged in extenuation of their offence that such was the ordinary practice of "husbandmen of the best soirt." It is said that "in one of the epidemics of the plague which attacked Newcastle in the reign of Charles I., the inhabitants of that town obtained the loan of the Lee-Penny by granting a bond of £6000 for its safe return. Such, it is averred, was their belief in its virtues, and the good that it effected, that they offered to forfeit the money and keep the charm-stone." But "the most remarkable cure performed upon any person was that of a Lady Baird of Sauchtonhall, near Edinburgh, who, having been bit by a mad dog, was come the length of a hydrophobia; upon which, having sent to beg that the Lee-Penny might be sent to the house, she used it for some weeks, drinking and bathing in the water it was dipped in, and was quite recovered. This happened about eighty years ago [that is, about 1707], but it is very well attested, having been told by the Lady of the then Laird of Lee, and who died within these thirty years. She also told that her husband Mr Lockhart and she were entertained at Sauchtonhall by Sir Baird and his Lady for several days in the most sumptuous manner, on account of the lady's recovery, and in gratitude for the loan of the Lee-Penny so long, as it was never allowed to be carried away from the house of Lee."

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.electricscotland.com/history/articles/charms13.htm>

Towards the latter end of the seventeenth century the Lee-Penny formed the subject of a complaint by Gawen Hammiltoune of Raplocke to the Presbytery of Glasgow, the result of which was the following deliverance by the brethren :

"Apud Glasgow, the 25 Octobr. Synod Sess. 2.

"Quhilk daye, amongst the referries of the brethren of the ministrie of Lanerk, it was propondit to the Synode, that Gawen Hammiltoune of Raplocke had preferit an complaint before them against Sir James Lockart of Lie, anent the superstitious using of an stene set in selver for the curing of diseased cattell, qik, the said Gawen affirmit, could not be lawfully used, and that they had differit to give ony decisione therein, till the advice of the Assemblie might be had concerning the same. The Assemblie having inquirt of the muaner of using thereof, and particularlie vnderstooche, by examinatioune of the said Laird of Lie,

and otherwise, that the custome is onhie to cast the stene in sume water, and give the diseasit eattil thereof to drink, and yt the sam is dene wtout using onie words, such as charmers and sorcerers use in their unlawfull practicess; and considering that in nature they are mony thinges seen to work strange effects, qr of no humane witt can give a reason, it having pleasit God to give vnto stones and herbes special virtues for the healing of mony infirmities in man and beast, _-advises the bretheren to surcease thir proces, as q'rin they perceive no ground of offence; and admonishes the said Laird of Lie, in the using of the said stone, to tak heed that it be vsit heirafter wt the least scandal that possiblie inaye bie.—Extract out of the books of the Assemblie helden at Glasgow, and subscribed be thair Clerk, at thair comand.

"M. Robert Young,
"Clerk to the Assemblie at Glasgow."

^{iv} <http://www.walterscott.lib.ed.ac.uk/works/novels/talisman.html>

Charles Mills (1788-1826), who had written a *History of the Crusades*, took offence at Scott's assertion in his introduction to *The Talisman* that an Edith Plantagenet had existed. He defied the novelist to produce evidence to support his statement and accused Scott of deliberately misleading his readers. Indeed *The Talisman* gave rise to much debate amongst the critics as to the use that can be justifiably made of historical facts in fiction. The *Quarterly Review* commended *The Talisman* for surpassing grandeur and effect and praised the construction of the story. The *Edinburgh Magazine* praised characterization, diction and costume but criticism the overuse of Oriental themes. The *Examiner* asserted that Richard was by far the best character, but that the novel in general was too melodramatic. Criticism from the *London Magazine* focused upon Scott's descriptions of clothes and furniture which it felt rendered the novel tedious. Richard and Saladin were praised by most readers. More significantly however, *The Talisman* is perhaps the first novel in English to portray Muslims in a positive light.