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And

Breif Description

of

The Well of the Woman Bill.

Two Hundred and Seventy-Six Copies Printed, One of which is on Vellum.

No. 81.





Ane
Breif Descriptionn
of
The qualíteis and effectis
of the
Well of the Woman Hill
besyde Abirdene
Anno Do. 1580

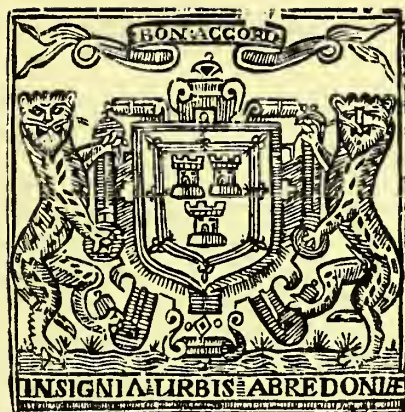
A Facsimile in Photo-Lithography

With an Introduction

BY

A. K.

ABERDEEN
J. & J. P. EDMOND & SPARK
1884.



Unto the Very Honourable
JAMES MATTHEWS, Esquire of Springhill.

Lord Provost.

GEORGE WALKER,
DAVID MACDONALD,
JAMES PATERSON,
ROBERT BEVERIDGE,
JAMES KINGHORN,
CHARLES GORDON, } Baillies.

JOHN SANGSTER, Dean of Guild.

JAMES WALKER, Treasurer.

DANIEL MEARN, Master of Shore Works.

ARCHIBALD DUFF, Master of Kirk and Bridge Works.

JOHN OGILVIE, Master of Mortifications.

WILLIAM PYP, Master of Guild Brethren's Hospital.

And the remanent members of the Council of the
CITY OF ABERDEEN.

VERY HONOURABLE,

More than two centuries ago, viz. in the year 1670, *Philopolis* did, with the permission of your worthy predecessors in the Town Council, rebuild the structure over the Well of Spa, whose spring had been buried in the ruin made by a violent torrent of waters falling into the stream running by it, and was in danger of being lost for ever, and dedicated to them a re-print of that learned and famous physician, Doctor William Barclay's Book 'Callirhoe, or the Nymph of Aberdene,' which they at the same time had caused to be made.

Following, at a distance, the example of *Philopolis* in endeavouring to preserve a good thing from being lost, we have caused to be made this facsimile re-print of 'Ane Breif descriptioun of the qualiteis and effectis of the Well of the Woman hill besyde Abirdene,' the Well of Spa, originally printed more than three centuries ago. A beautiful sketch of the Well, by that loyal son of Bon-Accord, Mr. Arthur Clyne, is included in the shape of a frontispiece to this volume. That sketch will, we hope, show to future generations of Aberdonians that the Nymph, slattern as she has now become, still bears traces of the beauty of her youth. This Re-print, with your permission, we dedicate to you.

In conclusion, we think we cannot do better than reiterate to you the wishes of *Philopolis* to your worthy predecessors, and in his words we “wish a
“blessed success to all your publict proposals lately
“made, which may tend to the repairing of our ruines,
“and freedom from our heavie burdens of debts and
“taxes. Wherefore, very Honourable, go on, faint
“not, but by patient and diligent endeavours : remove
“the mistakes of withstanders, informe the ignorant,
“encourage the discreet, convince the selfish-spirited,
“and by your prudence dispel our divisions when any
“appears, and let all concurre in their stationes to
“have ABERDENE upon all good accompts deservedly
“honoured with the tittle and motto of BON-ACCORD :
“Which shal ever be the earnest desire of

“ RIGHT HONOURABLE,

“ Your most affectionat Servants

“ and Well Wishers,”

THE PUBLISHERS.

INTRODUCTION.

Chapter I.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WELL.

The following "Breif descriptioun of the qualiteis and effectis of the Well of the Woman hill besyde Abirdene" is believed to be the earliest topographical tract connected with Scotland. It is dated in 1580, and was then first printed as a small quarto of six pages, besides the Title-page, apparently at Edinburgh by John Ross, and probably not more than two copies of that impression have been preserved.

The tract was not reprinted till 1860, when the Bannatyne Club included it in its volume issued in that year entitled "Tracts by Dr. Gilbert Skeyne, Medicinar to His Majesty." That impression was of course limited to the number required for the members of the Club, and it is not easily obtainable even in that form. From this fact, and also in consideration of its own intrinsic merits, it has been thought that another reprint would be acceptable to many, and it is therefore now issued in the form of a photo-lithographic

reproduction of one of the existing copies of the original impression, which is in the Library of the Faculty of Advocates, who have kindly allowed it to be photographed for this purpose. It is produced in exact fac-simile, the printed page of the present issue being of the same size as that of the original.

The subject was afterwards more fully treated in a small octavo tract, entitled "Callirhoe, The Nymph Of Aberdene Resvscitat By William Barclay M. of Art, and Doctor of Physicke. What diseases may be cured by drinking of the Well at Aberdene, and what is the true vse thereof—printed by Andro Hart, Anno Dom. 1615." This tract by Dr. Barclay was reprinted at Aberdeen in 1670, also in octavo, with the following Title-page, viz.:—"Callirhoe, Commonly Called The Well of Spa, Or The Nymph of Aberdene Resuscitat by William Barclay, *Mr of Art, and Doctor of Physick.* What Diseases may be cured by drinkind of the Well of *Spa* at *Aberdene*, and what is the true use thereof. As it was Printed by Andro Hart, *Anno Dom.* 1615. And Now Reprinted at *Aberdene* by *John Forbes Younger*, Printer to the Town and Universitie, *Anno Domini* M.DC.LXX." This reprint is preceded by an 'Epistle Dedicatory' to the Provost, Baillies, and Council of the City of Aberdeen, by 'Philopolis,' Alexander Skene of Newtyle, at one time a Baillie himself, and there are annexed to it an 'Approbation' by James Lesly, Med. Doct., several

cases of cures effected on persons then alive by the use of the water, some verses "In memorie of that excellent, rare, and renowned Spring the Well of Spa, famous for Antiquitie, and singular good for diverss Diseasses. Written some 55 years ago" by J. Moir, six lines of verse 'Upon the Well of Spa at Aberdene,' and a poetical 'Description of the Well as now built in hewne stone 1670, with this inscription,

The Stomack, Reins, the Liver, Splen, yea sure :

A thousand evils this wholesome spring doth cure.'

by Philopolis himself.

It was again reprinted at Aberdeen in 1799 in 12mo., and to this Edition were annexed these

‘VERSES

For the present Edition of Dr. Barclay's excellent Treatise on the Virtues of the Well of Spa, or Nymph of Aberdeen:—1799.

True,—Fashion, Whim, or Folly, or all three,
Or (what includes them all) dear Novelty,
Has for a while withdrawn thy beauteous Train ;
Yet gladly shall they soon return again :—
The blessing, Health, whoever *truly* lacks,
Will soon perceive the fallacy of *Quacks*.
Not but I grant the *Fir-hill Well* is rich.
In *Sulphur*—which may serve to cure the *Itch* ;
But has it those restoring, bracing powers,

Which Barclay amply proves are found in ours ?
It may : but if it has, they're still to find ;
While SPA'S great Cures—are known to half mankind.
Both let th' Afflicted try—each NYMPH caress :
“*Lat wark bear witness,*”—And to *both*, success !

A WATER-DRINKER.'

The Well is also mentioned by Kennedy in 'his
'Annals,' and by Gordon in his 'Description of both
Touns of Aberdeen,' in the quotations given in the
following Chapter.

*Chapter II.*THE TOPOGRAPHY AND HISTORY
OF THE WELL.

In the translation of 'Abredoniae utriusque Descriptio' by James Gordon, Parson of Rothemay, a MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, the Well is referred to as follows: *—'Upon the west syde of the toune, at a small distance, ther is a litle green swelling hill to be seen, corruptlie called the Woman-hill, bot more properlie the Woollman-hill, because it is affirmed that in old tymes the sellers of Wooll quho came from the neirest parts about the toune took ther stand ther upon mercat dayes. Under the verie hill ther runs a spring of water, and another veyne of the same water in the midst of the channel of a litle brook, running closse under the foot of that hill; yit it is easilie distinguished, both by its taste and colour,

* A Description of both Touns of Aberdeen. Edinburgh, Printed for the Spalding Club, 1842, p. 10.

from the waters of the brook. This spring is knowne by the name of the wall of Spaa, borrowed from, or so called, I suppose, becaus it resembles in its taste and vertues the waters of Spaa in the bishoprick of Leige or Linchland, which is distant some 8 mylles from the citie of Tungres. Yet in some things they differ; for Spaa in Aberdeen is actuallie cold, but that of Tungres is hott when it is touched. In other things (iff Plinius may be beleived, quho descryves the waters of Liedge, lib. 31, cap. 2.) it seems they differ not much. His words are as followeth:—the citie of the Tungrieans hes a wall wher many bubbles doe distill, tasted lyke the ore of iron, which is not perceaved till the end of the draught one leave to drink. This water purgeth the body, cureth tertiane fevers, and the stone in the bladder.—Doctor Williame Barclay, an Aberdeins mediciner in our age, did wreat a tractat concerning the natur of the wall of Spaa besyde Aberdeen; such as wold know more thereoff may peruse that treatise extant in print.'

Kennedy writing in 1818, says in his *Annals of Aberdeen*, Vol I., p. 388:—'On the west precincts of the town, near this place,' (Gilcomston) 'is situated The Well of Spaw. The spring rises at the foot of the slope of the Woolmanhill, where the Infirmary and its garden are situated. The water flows abundantly, is impregnated with iron ore and vitriol, and has been long celebrated for its medicinal qualities in nephritic

disorders, or in obstructions. About the year 1615, the spring, over which a building, ornamented with the portraits of six of the apostles, had stood during many years, attracted the attention of Dr. William Barclay, at that time an eminent physician. He analysed the water, and, having discovered its qualities and virtues, published a treatise upon it, under the title of "Callirhoe, commonly called the well of Spa, or the nymph of Aberdene." The building having fallen to decay, was afterwards repaired by George Jameson, the celebrated painter, who appears to have been subject to a nephritic complaint. The well was in high repute among the inhabitants, on account of its medicinal virtues, and frequently resorted to for relief in disorders of that nature. About the middle of the seventeenth century, an extraordinary overflowing of the Denburn, which runs near it, demolished the building, and buried the spring among the rubbish of the hill. In this situation the well remained till the year 1670, when the spring having again made its appearance, the present structure was erected over it by Alexander Skene of Newtyle, one of the baillies, who had experienced considerable relief from drinking the water.* About the year 1751, the

* 9 March
1670
Act anent
rebuilding
of ane wall
comonlie
called the
Wall of
Spa.

The said day, anent the petitione given in to the counsell by Master Alexander Skeene of Newtyll, late baillie of the said brughe, showing that considdering everie blessing bestowit be God on any place should be improvin for the publict good, and seing that medicinall wall at the Womanhill, commonly called the Wall of Spae, had been much neglectit thes severall yeires bygone, since the same wes stopit by the violent torrent of wateris which overturned it, after the same had

spring disappeared for some time, but, by the exertions of Dr. James Gordon of Pitlurg, it was recovered, and has ever since continued to flow, without interruption. Its salutary virtues are still known to many individuals, who resort to it for relief in various disorders. In the summer months it is much frequented by the citizens, particularly in the mornings.' 'On the front of the building there are cut, in stone, a thistle, rose, and lilly, with a diadem and rising sun, having under them the following inscription :—

“ As Heaven gives me—So give I thee.”

“ Hoc fonte privata salū in patriam populumque fluat spada rediviva—1670.””

been cairfullie buildit by ane inhabitant of this brughe, who had good proof in his owne persone in cureing him of the stone, in memorie wherof be translated the same in ane more hansom way, with the portrature of sex apostles raisit on each side of ane long hewin stone, with which ornaments it had been sett forth for the notable vertues with which thes wateris ware indued, in heiling such varietie of diseases, as ane printed book, set out by Doctor William Barklay in the year 1615, did demonstrat ; and now the said spring appeiring in its wonted place, and the wateris found to be of the same qualitie, according to the said doctor his marks and prescryvit meines of tryall, and it being found that the said wall had not beene onlie ane former great blessing, but evin many at this tyme had felt the good effectis therof in cureing the gravill, and stone in the kidnes and blader, the collicks in the stomach, when so violent that nothing else could, and also despirat lyke hydropsies ; therfor desyreing the counsell that they wold be pleasit to permitt him to caus rebuild the said wall, in as comlie ane way as befor it had been, without any charge to them or the toune, and which being done, that they wold take it as ther owne and preserve and manteine it in tyme comeing ; and also that thay wold caus reprint the said Doctor Barclayes book, which wold be about ane sheet of paper, with such testimonies as ther present phisitians should, at ther desyre, from thair knowledge and experience annex, wherby seeklie strangeris knowing of such ane free offer of health might make the more frequent resort to this brughe, and be partakeris of the same goodnes of God with others, as in the petitione wes contenit. [*Extract from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen.*]

The Latin portion of this inscription seems difficult to construe, and I am afraid Mr. Kennedy has not copied it correctly. Baillie Skene's structure was renovated in 1851, and as so renovated the structure now stands. The inscription now reads—

RENOVATUM EST OPUS
Anno

MDCCC·LI.

Beneath this are the figures of a rose, a thistle, and a fleur de lys, and below them the motto—

AS Heaven Gives me
so Give I Thee,

beneath which is the figure of the rising sun on a shield, flanked and followed by the Latin inscription mis-quoted by Kennedy, thus :—

Hoc Fonte
In Patriam



Derivata Salus
Populumque fluat.

Spada Rediviva

16 70,

which is more intelligible than Kennedy's rendering of it.

The spring still continues to flow, but alas! 'A Water Drinker's' prophecy has not been fulfilled. For although the 'Novelty' of the Fir-Hill Well has grown old, and

it is now in even a worse condition than the Well of Spa, yet our Nymph's beauteous Train, for a while withdrawn, has not returned.

Omnia mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis.

No celebrated painter nor baillie of the 'braif toun,' subject to a nephritic complaint or any other, now thinks of trying the effects of the water of our Well of Spa on himself. We must needs now be off to some German Spa, or have its waters, bottled by its proprietor, some German Count, and sealed with his seal, brought to us here instead of taking a walk of a morning to the Well of the Woman hill, and there quenching our thirst at its 'cristaline' stream. Yet we may fairly be held excused for so doing, for the Well is no longer an inviting spot, nor would any one be tempted to drink its waters in its present filthy condition. The Nymph has become a very slattern. At one time Callirhoe, now the Well of Spa, the time has come when the name may be again changed, and what more appropriate now than Ichabod? She has long ceased to be a rural nymph, and her bower is now no longer at the foot of 'a litle green swelling hill.' No doubt the 'litle brook,' the Denburn to wit, is still 'running close under the foot of that hill,' but the water of the spring is now quite undistinguishable, either by its taste or colour, from the waters of the brook, for before it reaches the channel of the brook, it has been already lost in the mighty current of one of the *cloacae maximae* of the

town, running along close behind the Well. The whole surroundings of the Well are changed ; and it is now in the heart of a densely populated portion of the city. It was otherwise in 1580. Then 'the most considerable pairt of the citie' stood upon three hills, the Gallowgate-hill, the Castle-hill, and St. Katharine's-hill, and did not extend westward beyond the Great Kirk, on the site of the present East and West Churches. A little to the north-west of the Great Kirk stood the Grammar School, and to the west of the Grammar School the Convent of the Blackfriars, whose 'circuit in all took up all that parcell of ground that lyeth betuixt the Grammar Schooll and the Woolmanhill, evne to the edge of the loch,' and westward from the Convent extended the 'litle green swelling hill,' at the foot of the western slope of which rose the spring now called the Well of Spa.

The name 'Well of Spa' seems to have been first given to the spring at some period between the date of Barclay's Tract, 1615, and that of Gordon's Description, 1661. In the latter we first find that name applied to it. In the Tract now reprinted it is called 'The Well of the Woman-hill besyde Abirdene,' and 'Ane Fontaine . . . at Abirdene,' and Barclay calls it 'Callirhoe,' 'The Nymph of Aberdene,' 'the medicinal water, which not only orneth the Towne of Aberdene, but blesseth the territorie about it with a treasure of health, more worth than the wealth of Croesus,' 'The

Well which springeth at Aberdene,' the 'Abredonian Nymph,' 'The Well of Aberdene,' &c., but nowhere does he call it the Well of Spa. Indeed he uses that name for the well near Liege in such a way as to show that at the date at which he writes our Well was not known by that name. He says, 'I have seen in *Paris* water brought from the Well of *Spa*, that is two hundred Scottish miles, but of none effect, no efficacie; only to satisfie the languishing curiositie of some prodigal patients.' And again he says, 'This is the sume of which may be saide concerning the nature and use of that water, neither will I wearie the Lector with any longer discourse, beseeching him onely to hear me patiently in few termes, render thanks to God, which for the benefit of our poor diseased persons in this Ile hath revealed this secrecy, and that in such a part, that the ingine of man could not have devised it better: not in the Highlands and wilderness, not in some countrie beggerly village, as *Spa* and *Forges* are, but amongst the most civil, and courteous, and charitable people of this Realme, where the poor may be assisted with almes, and with Physicians, where the rich may be harboured, according to their estates, and where all sorts of ranks may have fit company, honest recreation, good example, great pietie, and all kind of eaes and commodities that any man or woman desire: Blessed and honoured be that Omnipotent and beneficial Father, and Author of health, and the first of all Physicians.'

Chapter III.

ANALYSES OF THE WATER.

From the 'effectis' of the water on diverse diseases, the writer of the 'Breif description' argues that 'it is of medicinall qualitie, and flowis from diueris minerallis,' viz:—'Iryn' 'Brasse' and 'brynstane,' but that 'thair is no suspitioun to be taken of Alme'; and Dr. Barclay at page 11 of the 1799 reprint of his Tract says, 'Having then settled as a principle in physicke that water is a commodious matter to receive the accidental formes of all simples, I conclude that this water of the Well of Aberdene hath received qualities and vertues from such minerals as it floweth thorow: which are Iron and Vitriol: for the effects do argue the mixtion of these two.' On page 12 he gives several methods of analysis. He says, 'Now I proceed to shew by what Arte we shal know that this water hath these qualities. For trial of which you shal take a little of a nutgal, bruise it in pieces, and throw it in a drinking glass full of this water, and if it be the true water, it will become red, like clared wine: notwithstanding that a nutgal

maketh all other liquour black, were it never so redde of itself; neither is there any moysture in the world, except it be endued with this Vitriolical vertue, that can draw a scarlet colour out of a nutgal. Beside this essay there is another which consisteth in distilling of this water: for in the bottome of the Alembicke, there will remaine a matter unsavourie, sometime red, and sometime blacke. The third essay, is the quick effect and speedy passing of this water, through such a long and crooked Labyrinth of wayes, which are between the stomacke and the bladder, and that without any weight or tension of the Hypochendres, without any swelling or puffing up of the body, which followeth the excess of any other drinke in the world, yea were it wine.'

It may be interesting to compare these analyses of the water made in the years 1580 and 1615, with that made by Mr. Thomas Jamieson, F.I.C., F.C.S., City Analyst, Aberdeen, in the year 1882. That gentleman in a sample of the water collected by himself personally in a chemically clean vessel, found 48·3 grains of solids per gallon, or 690 in parts per million, consisting of—

| | |
|--|---------|
| Chlorine | 121·714 |
| Free Ammonia | ·005 |
| Albumenoid Ammonia | ·090 |
| Sulphate of Lime, Alkali, Carbonaceous Matter, &c. | 568·191 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 690·000 |
| | <hr/> |

At the same time Mr. Jamieson made a more exhaustive analysis of water from the fountain at Gilcomston Steps, which is a little more highly charged with mineral matter than that of the Well of Spa, but otherwise of a very similar character; indeed, the sources of the two fountains are supposed to be identical. This water he found to contain 54.400 grains of solids per gallon, consisting of—

| | |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Sulphuric Anhydride | 5.621 |
| Phosphoric do. | 1.122 |
| Nitric do. | 8.478 |
| Chlorine | 8.342 |
| Lime..... | 7.078 |
| Magnesia | 2.460 |
| Iron and Alumina | .344 |
| Silica..... | .419 |
| Soda, Potash, &c. | 8.614 |
| Volatile Matters | 11.922 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 54.400 |
| | <hr/> |

Chapter IV.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE TRACT.

The authorship of the Tract is very uncertain. The Bannatyne Club's volume above mentioned consists of 'Ane Breve Descriptiovn of the Pest quhair in the cavsis, signes, and sum speciall preseruatioun and cure thairof ar contenit. Set furth be Maister Gilbert Skeyne, Doctoure in Medicine. Imprentit at Edinbvrgh be Robert Lekprevik. Anno Do. 1568,' and the present Tract. This Tract was included in it at the suggestion of the Secretary of the Club, because in his judgment it 'bears internal marks of having been likewise the production of Dr. Gilbert Skeyne.'

It may seem presumptuous to differ from so great an authority in such matters as Dr. Laing, but I must confess that not only do I fail to see any internal marks that the 'Breif Descriptioun of the qualiteis and effectis of the Well of the Woman-hill besyde Abirdene' is by the same author as the 'Breve Descriptiovn of

the Pest,' but I think that any internal marks which it does bear that would in any way enable one to form an opinion as to its authorship tend to show that these two Tracts are not by the same author.

Gilbert Skeyne was born at Bandodle, in the Parish of Skene, about 10 miles from Aberdeen, in 1522 or 1523, where he lived until he was sent to Aberdeen to attend the classes in the Grammar School. These he attended for four years, and then proceeded to King's College, where he spent other four years as a Student in Arts, taking the Degree of Master of Arts, and afterwards applied himself to the study of Medicine, in which he took a Doctor's Degree, and was appointed Mediciner, or Professor of Medicine, in the year 1556. In 1568 (the year in which he published his 'Breve Descriptiovn of the Pest') he became one of the ordinary Regents, but in 1571 there is a presentation, dated 6th November, by the Rector, Principall, Regents, &c., of the College of Aberdeen, with collation of William, Bishop of Aberdeen, to Maister Gilbert Skeyne, Doctor in Midicine, of the Burse of Medicine, otherwise called a prebendar of the said College, with the Manse, hous, place, yardis, and croftes pertaining thereto. He held his Professorship till he removed to Edinburgh in 1575, where he practised as a Doctor till his death in 1599. He was appointed Medicinar to his Majestie in 1581, and kept up his connection with Aberdeen as far down at any

rate as 1587, for in that year he, with consent of the Masters, disposed the Mediciner's manse to Mr. Thomas Lumsden, Rector of Kinkell.

Now it seems to me that the whole tone of the 'Breif Descriptioun' would lead one to think that it was written by one who had no personal knowledge of the locality of the Well, but whose information about it was from hear-say, certainly not by one, who, as a boy, in all probability passed it many times as he went to and from Aberdeen while he lived at Bandodle, who spent four years at the Grammar School of Aberdeen, within four hundred yards of the Well, and who, as a Student of Arts, Student of Medicine, and Professor in King's College, lived, till he was 52 years of age, within a mile and one-eighth of the Well, with nothing between his house and it but green fields.

There is not much material for judging of the similarity or dissimilarity of the styles of the composition of the two Tracts, that on the Well of Spa extending only to six small quarto pages, and both being medical treatises written in an age when I do not suppose any two such treatises would be very dissimilar in style. Yet I am disposed to think that the styles of the two argue a difference of authors. The orthography also of the two Tracts, although I would not be disposed to rest any strong argument on that, seems to me to favor the supposition that they were not written by the same person. The spelling in those days was, no

doubt, left a good deal to the judgment or caprice of the printer, and the differences in spelling in the two Tracts may be accounted for by the fact that they were set up by different compositors. But even in the small field available for comparison, some differences in spelling occur, which I think are those of the authors, and not of the printers. For example, the second word of the Title-page of each Tract is spelled differently, 'Breve' and 'Breif,' the word 'hot' is always spelled 'hait' in the Pest Tract, and 'het' in that on the Well of Spa, and what appears to me to show more forcibly than anything else that these differences are not to be attributed to the printers, is the spelling of words which would now end in -ing. In the Pest Tract this ending much more frequently takes the form -and than the form -ing, while in the other Tract the reverse is the case. Had these words been spelled uniformly, in -and in one Tract, and in -ing in the other, it might have been argued that these were the tastes of the different printers; but as it is, I think it is more likely to be the result of the different habits of spelling in different authors.

Again, if the Tract on the Well of Spa was written by Dr. Skeyne, why did he not put his name to it? He had already, only twelve years before, written at least one Tract with his name on the Title-page as author, and there is certainly no reason why he should have been ashamed to put his name to this second Tract.

The Tract, if written by Dr. Skeyne, so lately a Professor in King's College, a gentleman of so high standing in his profession as to be appointed Medicinar to His Majestie within one year of the date of it, and proprietor of the Mediciner's Manse at Old Aberdeen for seven years after that date, even if written after he had left Aberdeen and printed in Edinburgh five years after he had settled there, would surely have been well known in Aberdeen. Yet Dr. Barclay in 1615, only 35 years after the date of the Tract, appears to have known nothing of it, for he makes no mention of it in his 'Callirhoe,' and seems to consider that he is then for the first time describing the Well of Spa and the virtues of its waters.

I have very great hesitation in setting up my own opinion in opposition to that of Dr. Laing, but on the whole, without being able to suggest any other author, I am disposed to think that the 'Breif Descriptioun' is not the work of Dr. Gilbert Skeyne.

A. K.

ABERDEEN, *January, 1834.*

Printed by Milne & Hutchison, Aberdeen.



SINCE the foregoing Introduction was printed, an opportunity has been afforded of presenting the reader with two fac-similes of the Device of John Ross, the supposed printer of this Tract. These impressions are from blocks kindly lent for the purpose by Dr. Dickson of Carnoustie.

Dr. Dickson has also compared the ornamental border on the titlepage of this Tract with that on the titlepage of Bishop Douglas's 'Palice of Honour,' 'Imprinted at Edinburgh by John Ros' in 1579, and he is quite convinced that they are printed from the same blocks. I believe there exists no higher authority on the subject than Dr. Dickson.

The fact that this Tract was printed by John Ross, while that on the Pest, acknowledged to be the production of Dr. Gilbert Skeyne, was printed by Robert Lekprevik, who was then still a printer in Edinburgh, is by no means conclusive of a difference of authorship, but I submit that it points in that direction.

I may take this opportunity of mentioning that I have come across an earlier application of the name Spa to the Well than any of those mentioned in the Introduction. Dr. Arthur Johnstoun in his Epigram on 'Aberdonia Nova,' printed in 1632, says:—

‘ Hanc *quoque* Lanaris Mons *ornat*, *amœnior illis*,
 Hinc ferrugineis SPADA *colorat* aquis
 Inde Suburbanum JAMESONI *despicis* Hortum
 Quem Domini *pictum* *suspicio* esse manu.’

which is “Englished thus” in Baillie Skene’s Succinct Survey, printed in 1685:—

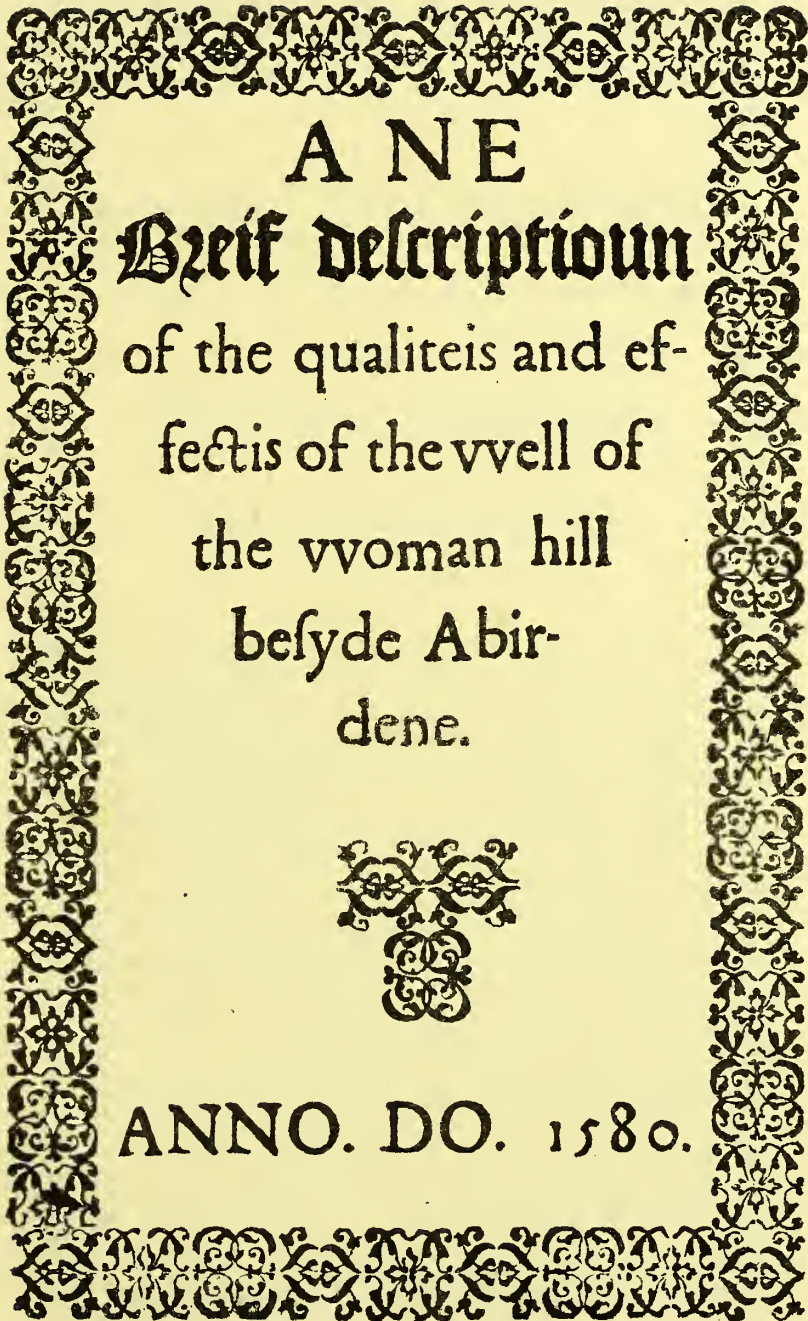
‘ The *Wool-man-hill* which all the rest out-vyes
 In pleasantness, this *City* beautifies :
 There is the *Well of Spa*, that *healthfull Font*
 White *Yr’ne-hew’d-Water* colloureth the *Mount*.
 Not far from thence a *Garden’s* to be seen,
 Which unto *Jameson* did appertain :
 Wherein a little pleasant House doth stand,
 Painted (as I guess) with its *Master’s* hand.’

At page 221 of the Succinct Survey the Baillie refers to the Well in these terms:—“We have a choise

Medicinall *Spring*, called the *Well of Spa*, at the *Wool-man-hill* built with hewen-ston, very specifick for *Gout*, *Gravell*, *Collick* and *Hydropsie*, as the late Famous *Dr. William Barclay Physician*, did learnedly describe 1615, which is now re-printed when the Well was re-built 1670, the copies whereof the *Dean of Gild* hath in his custody, to which every person concerned to know its Vertues, and how to use the same, is referred."



FAC-SIMILE.



A NE
Breif description
of the qualiteis and ef-
fectis of the vvell of
the vvoman hill
besyde Abir-
dene.



ANNO. DO. 1580.

A N E

Breif description of the
qualiteis and effectis of
the vuell of the vvo-
man hill besyde
Abirdene.



MEDICINALL and Philoso-
phicall doctrine testifeis be ex-
perience fro the beginning mony
diseis and Infirmiteis of mannis
body hes bene curit be the qua-
liteis and vse of Bathis and minerall wateris , of
quhilkis sum hes bene obseruit of mony zeiris
bypast, vtheris be experience laitly approuit in
diuers countreis, to the greit profeit and preser-
uatioun of mannis life. Amangis the quhilkis
the profeit and phisical vertew of ane Fontaine
hes bene obseruit be mony men and wemé thir
four last zeiris bypast at Abirdene , ane of the
maist ancient and renounit Burghis of this Re-
alme , and the Inhabitantis thair of maist ciuile,
honest, and politicall. Quhilk spring of watter

The vvell of

appeiris to be ane diuine gift of God grantit and now laitie manifestit to the greit support and aduancement of helth in cure of sic diseis as hes bene obseruit in diueris persounis. Quhairfoir I seing the samin to haue bene obscure from the beginning to thir dayis, zit being ane ornament and ane publict vtilitie to the Realme & Burgh, thocht gude to mak the qualiteis and profecit thairof acknowledgeit to sic persouis as be vexit with sic diseis as it is good for. For of treuth it is of Medicinall qualitie and, and flowis from diuers minerallis, as hes bene obseruit be the operation taist & minerall vre, quhilk being drunken, is laxatiue to sindrie, and so must neidis be het of qualitie, be resoun on na wayis it laxis nor moleseis the exterior partis, or the skyn of mannis body: thairfoir it is laxatiue of the interior partis, and promouis gude passage of the bellie, as wrytis Celsus lib. 2. Ca. 12. To vtheris it is womatiue, quhilk also testifeis the het qualitie thairof, farther it geuis gude appetyre to thame quha ar destitute thairof, and gif ony ma drink twentie pound wecht of this Fontaine he findis no charge nor burding of the stomak nor bellie be the watter. Quhilk also approuis the minerall qualitie thairof, be resoun all naturall and pure sweit watter is slaw in passage, difficill of concoctioun, flatuous & heuie in the stomak, and generis distillatiounis, as wrytis Aetius Tetrab. 1. Sermon. 3. Ca. 165. Sa this watter being of contrarious effectis must neidis be of contrarious qualiteis

the vvoman hill.

qualiteis to cōmoū watteris. Ane notabill prufe of the samin hes bene obseruit by ane Indweller in Abirdene, quha laity causit brew Aill of this watter, of the quhilk na beist wald taist, nor eit of the draf thair of, nouthet Hors, Kow, nor Ox, sa it being laxatiue, attenuatiue, liquefactiue, digestiue, and discussiue, it must neidis be of het qualitie, for thir ar ye properteis of het watteris, quhilkis hes bene obseruit be the happy succes in cure of diuers diseis in this watter, quhair of the taist is sūquhar vnpleasand, as gif it wer brint with Iryn, the vte thair of as it rynniss vpon the staines and ground ar of diuers cullouris, the ane cullour sad biew, quhilk promissis Iryn, as the taist dois also, the vther cullour being reid declyning to zallow cullour, testifeis Brasse, quhilkis twa minerallis of proper quahtie cōfortis the stomak and Melt, as sayis Auicen lib. 2. Tract. 2. Ca. 39. Cano. Also wrytis Auicen lib. 1. Fen. 2. doct. 2. ca 16. Sic watter as be of the qualitie of Iryn geuis strenth to the Interior partis of manis body, & keipis the stomak frō corruptiōū, and promouis the haill faculteis quhilkis gouernis mānis body. So ar the wordis of Gal. wrytand vpon Hip. in his buik of Aere watter and places Ca. 3. Sic watter (sayis he) quhilkis ar not abill to burding the stomak and ar of facill digestioun must neidis to be laxatiue, and procure passage of the womb be Medicinall het qualitie. Gif the watter of this notabill Fontaine be builzeit it becūmis of mair blak cullour, & the dreggis thair of beiris witnes

The vvell of

of the minerallis befoir writtin, as als wa being caryit cumis haistely to corruption, quhilk being prontabill as it is for the stomak and Melt it must neidis spring from Iryn, also being na wayis byndand nor of deficcatiue qualitie, bot rather laxatiue and diureticall, thair is na suspitiou to be takin of Alme, zit in respect it is discussiue, laxatiue, remollitiue, and vomitiue, it appeiris be gude resson to be participant of bryntstane, as the cullour thair of also witnessis. And in respect the countrie is of nature minerall, this water being drunkin cuirand sair Eyn, Catarris, sair mouth, prolapsiou of the vult, and delour of the Tonsallis, it must neidis spring from Brasse, as testifeis Aetius Terrab. 1. Serm. 3. Ca. 167. Farther I haue obseruit in diuers persounis quha had drunkin the samin that it mitigatis the heit of the Liuer, stancheis drouth, perfythie cuiris Nephritick dolouris baith of Neiris and Bleder, corroborattis the stomak, takis away obstructiou of the Melt, perfythie cuiris distillatioun fro the harnis, hes cuirit sindrie Hydropicall persounis, specially that kynd callit Anasarca and Aschitis. It is gude also be experience for resolutionn of the body, or ony part thair of callit Paralysis, profitabill also for sterilitie contractit be suffocatiou of the barne bed, or ony vther natural caus, writtin be Hip. lib. de sterilib^o. It is gude also for paltarioun & trymbling of the body being drunkin, in few dayis it cuiris all sort of cauld guttis be purgatiou of sic humouris as at the caus thair of. It

the vvoman hill.

of. It bringis to gude cullour all Cathetik personis quhilkis being of eui habitude & cōstitutioun of body. Being also laxatiue and prouokis vomitine, sa it oppinnis the obstructiounis & oppillatiouis of the Liuer, quhairby mony hes bene cuit of the Gufoch, also it hes cuit mony of ye feuer Terce, & last it perfytlie cuitis (being drunken) the exterior scabbis, wyldesyre, darteris, & vther filthines of the skyn. Sa it is maist profitabil for sic as be of her intemperance of the Liuer, & constitueiō of them quha be burdinnit be greit and heuie cōstitutioun of body, maist propeus to Hydropefic, Apoplefic, or Paralifio. Sa albeit I haue red the qualiteis of the maist anciēt Bathis and springis of Medicinall watteris: I find this spring of the woman hill besyde Abirdene to be not far different from the nature of the Bath of Cornelius callit sa in Aquisgran ane notibil toun in Gallia Belgica, and repugnant to the nature of the Portitanis Bath, quhilkis dois rather gender Grauel & staine in Neiris & Bledder, nor to procure the help or dissolutioun of the samin. Ane greit fault I find in the vse of this watter, that ilk person drinkis thair of at thair awin plesure, nether hauing respect to the present discais, naturall cōstitutioun of body, nor tyme of the zeir, quhair by the said watter be the abnaris thair of is rather vilipendit nor cōmendit. Quhairfoir I wald sic as wald haue profite of the samin preparit thair bodyis conforme to thair nature, strenth, aige, discais, & rest of circūstances requyrit thair to,

The vvvel of the vvomā hil.

fic as the time of the zeir, quantitie of the watter and time of the vse heirof, for it is not aggreabill to all persounis at all times, not to be takin at pleasure of euery one in quantitie, as nane vther minerall watter. Zit this watter is of greitest vertew in the Monethis of Iunij, Iulij. August Ester the xx. day of Septēber it tynes the Medicinal strēth quhill the nixt zeir thairefter. Quhairfoir the comodious time suld be obseruit, aswell of the day, as of the Moneth, and to be drunken at morning, fast and thairefter thre houris, as efter ano Medicinall potioun. The negligent vse heirof hes frustrat mony of thair cure, quha sone efter the drinking of this Medicinall watter, hes takin outhet meit or drink, quhairby thay stoppit the operatioun of the watter drunkin of befoir. I will not mak rehairfall of the mony particular persounis quha hes obtenit thair helth being vexit with diuersis diseases be the vse of this watter, be ressoun it warto lang. I traist albeit I speik na farther at this tyme nor that quhilk hes bene obseruit be experience, the zeirly vse thairof sall giue occasioun to leirmit Phisicianis to Intreit the gude succes thairof mair largely in tymes curaming.

FINIS.



