

XVI. *An Account of Letters found in the Middle of a Beech, by J. Theod. Klein, Secretary of Dantzick, F. R. S. communicated to the ROYAL SOCIETY by Sir Hans Sloane, Bart. Pr. of the R. S. and Physician to His MAJESTY, &c. Translated from the Latin by T. S. M. D.*

IN the Year 1727. a *Beech-tree* was fell'd near *Elbing*, for the domestic Use of *John Maurice Møller*, then Post-master of *Elbing*, now Secretary of his native City. The Trunk being saw'd into Pieces, one of these, three *Dantzick Feet* six Inches long, cleft in the House on the 30th of *June*, discovered several Letters in the Wood about one Inch and a half from the Bark, and near the same Distance from the Centre of the Trunk. The Hewer, having at one Stroke unfolded such a Prodigy, and believing there was Witchcraft at the Bottom of it, ran in all possible Haste for his Master: But this Gentleman, well instructed in sound Philosophy, gave Orders to preserve the Pieces of Wood, and had them brought to my Study, at the same time communicating to me the History, and his Sentiments thereon.

Figure 5. TAB. II. exhibits the Letters conspicuous in the solid Wood, two of which, DB, shew their old Bark smooth and sound. The Wood lying between the Letters and the Bark of the Trunk, as well as that between the Letters and the Heart of the Tree, is likewise solid and sound, bearing not the least

G g Trace

Trace of Letters. The Characters g D , being somewhat hollow, receive the Bark of the Letters D B *.

The same Letters are seen in the Bark of the Tree, only that they are partly ill-shaped, partly almost effaced, whereas those within bear a due Proportion, as if done with a Pencil.

Now should it be ask'd after what manner these Letters reach'd the Middle of the *Beech*? and how it came to pass, that two of them, and no more, had their old dry Bark sticking to them?

Both these Queries are answer'd by the Vegetation of Plants. But as this is not a proper Place to expound it, I will suppose it known, and thus briefly complete the Affair.

'Tis an ancient Custom to cut Names, and various Characters, on the Rinds of Trees, especially on such as are smooth. That this has happen'd to our *Beech*, the mere Inspection of the Bark commands our Affirmation †.

An Incision made, the *Tubuli* conveying the nutritious Juice, and the *Utriculi* in which it is prepared, are divided and lacerated, and more of them, as the Incision was made deeper and wider: and consequently the Sap is not carried on in the Circulation, but extravasated and stopped at the Wounds. Hence the Origin of the Characters in the Bark and Wood.

* *Daniel Barckholtz*, formerly *Cæsarean* Poet Laureat.

† The Characters, besides D B , mark the Names of a noble Family, to which the Land, whereon the Tree was fell'd, formerly belong'd: *Reginæ*, *Dorothea*, *Michael*, *Gertrude*, *Joannes*, *Helwingii*.

Now as a new Circle of *Fibres* grows yearly on the Tree between the Wood and Bark, 'tis not impossible but a Number of these should in a Process of Years more and more surround the ingrav'd Characters, and at length cover them. And this Number was the greater in our *Beech*, on account of better than half a Century elaps'd since the Incision, which was made in the Year 1672. as appears on the Outside of the Bark, as may be seen in the Figure. But while new Circles of *Fibres* are successively added, the *Tunicle* or Skin of the Bark is broken each Time, and the *Utriculi* extended and dilated.

Wherefore 'tis easy, from what has been said, to draw the Reason, why the Bits of Bark cut off on all Sides, in the Letters DB, had the same Fate with the Letters; why the Wood between the Bark and Letters was solid and sound; and why the Shapes of the Letters bore a just Proportion in the Middle of the Wood, and not in the Bark.

So much for our *Beech*.

Now let us see, in few Words, what Authors say of such figured Woods.

Solomon Reiselius, of *Letters found within the very cleft Trunk of a Beech*, *Eph. Nat. Cur. Dec. 1. An. 6. Obs. 4.* has at length, though with some Difficulty, guess'd the genuine Cause from frequent Examples of Incisions.

But *Joannes Meyerus*, on a *Thief hanging from a Gibbet, drawn by Nature's Pencil in a Beech*, *Eph. N. C. Dec. 3. An. 5. Obs. 29.* and *Joannes Petrus Albrechtus*, on a *certain rare Figure seen in a Beech*, *Eph. ibid.* ascribe it to a Sport of Nature, and give this Reason; because they could not discover the

least Sign of Imposture, the deep Situation of the Figures hindering them from having any Suspicion on that head.

On the contrary, *Luke Schräeckius*, on figured Beech-wood, *Eph. N. C. Dec. 3. An. 7, 8. Obs. 118.* follows *Reiseli*'s Opinion; and being vers'd in *Malpighi*'s Anatomy of Plants, writes: "No wonder, if Figures cut in a young Tree, by the Length of Time, and the Accretion of many Barks, appear at last about its Middle, when grown old."

John Christopher Gottwald, on a crucified Man drawn by Nature in the Middle of a Beech-trunk *, *Eph. N. C. Dec. 3. An. 9. Obs. 158.* accusing Nature's simple Violence, or a Disease of the Tree, is corrected by the most celebrated *John James Scheuchzer*, in his *Itinera Alpina*, Tom. 3. pag. 414. and in his *Herbarium Diluvianum*, p. 46. of a little Man in Beech-wood, *Tab. X.* where he makes mention of other Instances.

John Melch. Verdries is of the same Sentiment, treating of a Figure found in the Middle of a Beech, *Eph. N. C. Cent. 3 & 4. Obs. 89.*

There remains, to my Knowledge, the Figure of a Chalice with a Sword perpendicularly erect, and on its Point sustaining a Crown, found in the Heart of a Piece of Wood at the Hague; which the Authors of the Collections of *Breslaw* exhibit to us "as a singular Phenomenon, worthy of being compared to *Aldrovandus*'s *Guaiacum*-tree, and figured Stones, if no Optic Fallacy, Error of Judgment,

* This Wood is kept in the Library of the Council of *Dantzick*.

“ artificial Fiffure of the Wood, or other fuch Deceit,
 “ intervene.”

In fine, the Cafe is thus: Such as were wont to be frighted with Hobgoblins from their Infancy, hear the Rufiling of Phantoms a great way off, and fee them walk at Noon-day; while others, who have learned to inquire into the Caufes of Things, are by thofe accounted dull of Sight and Hearing.

XVII. *Part of a Letter from Sir John Clark, one of the Barons of His MAJESTY'S Exchequer in Scotland, and F. R. S. to Rog. Gale, Efq; Tr. R. S. Nov. 6. 1731.*

— I Was lately in *Cumberland*, where I obferved three Curiofities in *Whinfield-Park*, belonging to the Earl of *Thanet*. The firft was a huge Oak, at leaft fixty Foot high, and four in Diameter, upon which the laft great Thunder had made a very odd Impreffion; for a Piece was cut out of the Tree about three Inches broad, and two Inches thick, in a ftrait Line from Top to Bottom. The fecond was, that in another Tree of the fame Heighth, the Thunder had cut out a Piece of the fame Breadth and Thicknefs, from Top to Bottom, in a fpiral Line, making three Turns about the Tree, and entering into the Ground above fix Foot deep. The third was the Horn of a large Deer found in the Heart of an Oak, which was difcovered upon cutting down the
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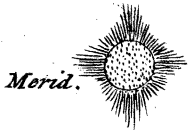
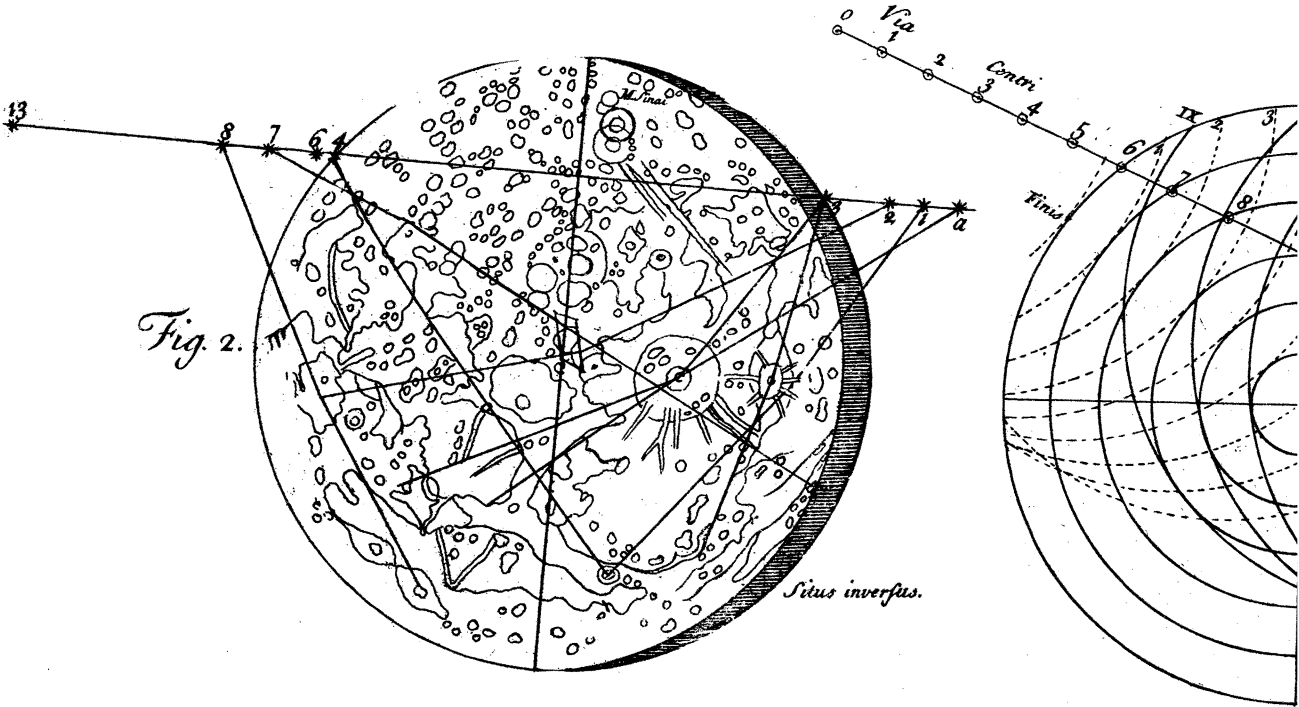
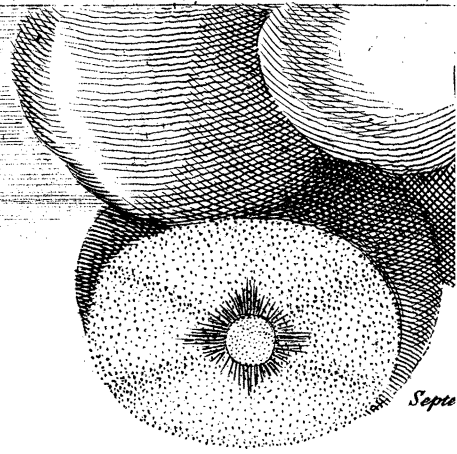


Fig. 1.



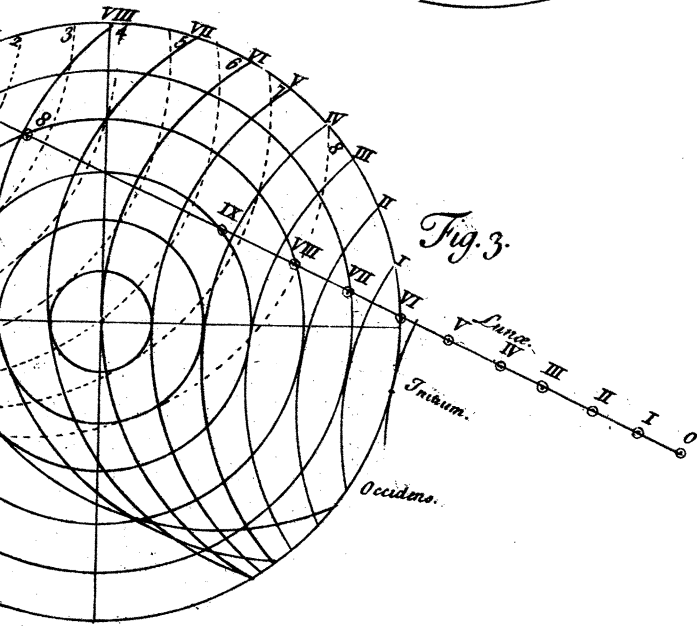
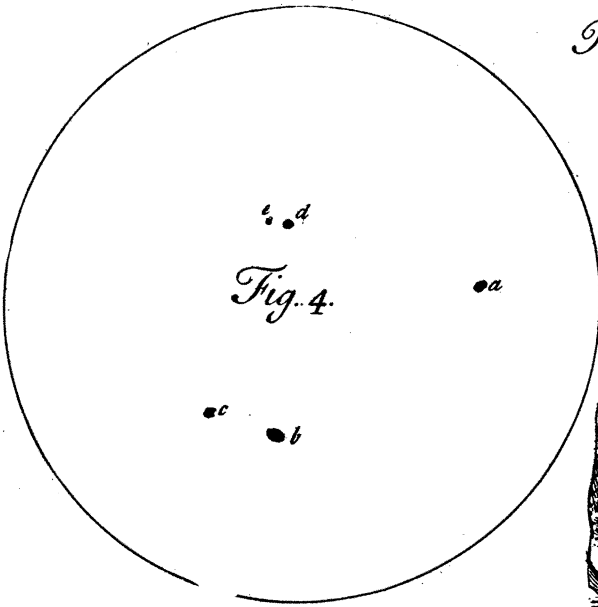
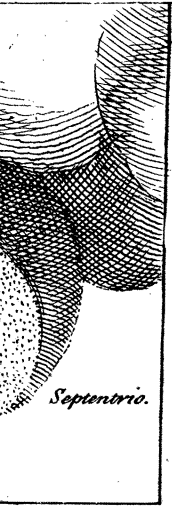
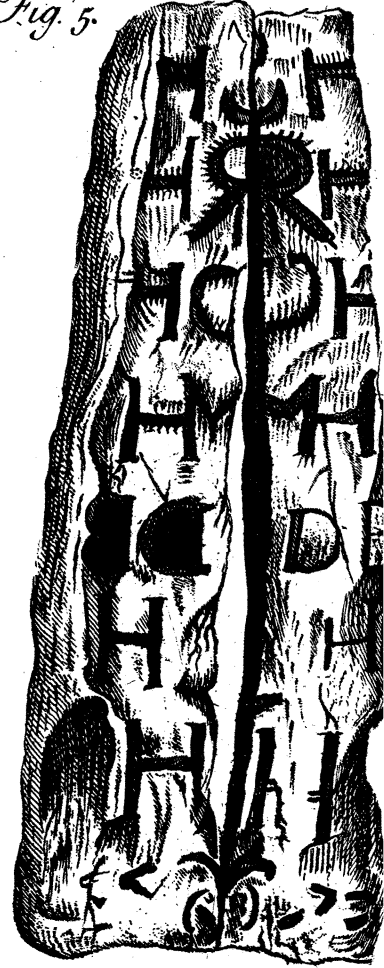


Fig. 5.



AB. II.



Mynde Sculp.



Fig. 1.

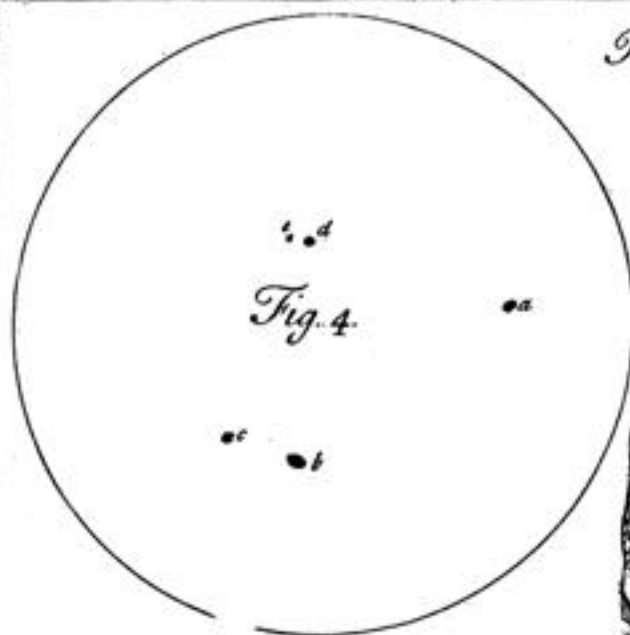
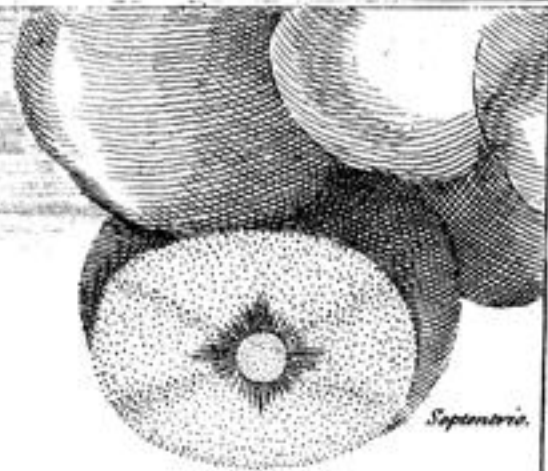


Fig. 5.

