

**THE AMBER WITCH: THE  
MOST INTERESTING TRIAL  
FOR WITCHCRAFT EVER  
KNOWN**

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The Amber Witch: The Most Interesting Trial for Witchcraft Ever Known by W. Meinhold & E. A. Friedlaender

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**W. MEINHOLD & E. A. FRIEDLAENDER**

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THE

# AMBER WITCH;

*The most interesting Trial for Witchcraft ever known.*

EXCERPTED FROM A DEFECTIVE MANUSCRIPT OF HER FATHER,

ABRAHAM SCHWEIDLER,

PASTOR OF COSENOW, IN USEDOM.

BY

W. MEINHOLD,

DOCTOR OF DIVINITY, AND PASTOR, ETC.

"Ordinary minds make every thing in the trials of witchcraft to be the work of imagination. But he who has read many such trials finds that impossible."—JEAN PAUL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN,

BY

E. A. FRIEDLÄNDER,

LONDON:

H. G. CLARKE AND CO., 66, OLD BAILEY.

1844.

U. S. PATENT OFFICE

## P R E F A C E.

In submitting to the public this deeply affecting and very romantic trial of witchcraft, which in the foregoing title-page, I have probably not unjustly called "the most interesting hitherto known," I offer in the first place, the following account respecting the history of the manuscript.

In Coserow, upon the Island Usedom, in my former parish and the same, over which upwards of two hundred years ago our venerable author presided, there was under the singers' seat of the parish church, and almost level with the ground, a sort of niche or closet, in which, though I have often seen a number of written papers lying about, I on account of my short-sightedness, and the darkness of the place, took for old hymn-books, as indeed a number of such were lying scattered about. One day however, when engaged in instructing the children at the church, I was seeking for a

paper-mark in the catechism of one of the boys, and not being able to find it immediately, my old Sexton, more than eighty years of age, (who was called Appelman, but altogether unlike his namesake in our biography, and although poor was yet a very excellent man), went under the choir and returned with a folio book, which I had never seen before, and out of which he without any more ado, tore a strip of paper and handed it to me. I immediately laid hold of the book, and I cannot say whether after a few minutes I was more astonished or provoked at the treasure I had found. This manuscript bound in pig's-leather was not only defective at the beginning and at the end, but, I am sorry to say, there was also in the middle here and there some leaves torn out. I gave the old man such a sound talking to, as I had never done before; but he excused himself by saying that one of my predecessors had given him the manuscript for waste paper, as it had been lying about since time immemorial, and that he had often been at a loss for a little paper to wrap round the altar-tapers, etc. The gray headed half-blind pastor must have taken it for old church-accounts, which were of course no longer of any use.\*

Scarcely arrived at home I set about deciphering

\* In the original a few accounts in fact occur which at first sight might very easily lead to this error, and the handwriting

my new found treasure, and after I had with much difficulty read through the book, I was powerfully excited by the matters recorded therein.

I soon felt the want of more light respecting the nature and circumstances of these trials for witchcraft, and indeed respecting the whole period, in which such proceedings took place. But the more I read of these truly astonishing histories, the more I became lost in amazement, and neither the trivial *Becker* (*Die besen-berke Welt*, the enchanted world), nor the more considerate *Horst* (*Zauber-Abhandlung*; magic-library) and other works of the kind to which I had referred, were able to relieve my embarrassment but only served to increase it.

There runs not merely so deep a demonic feature through most of these shuddering histories as fills the attentive reader with horror and dismay, but even the eternal and unchangeable laws which govern our feelings and actions, are also frequently interrupted in such a violent manner as to bring the understanding in the proper sense of the word to a stand still; as for instance, in one of the original trials, which a legal friend in our province had picked up, the relation is found, that a mother, after she had already endured the rack, par-mecover is very difficult to read, and in several parts turned quite yellow and rotten.



taken of the Sacrament, and was about mounting the scaffold, so greatly set aside all maternal feeling, as to feel herself in conscience bound to accuse her only tenderly beloved daughter, a girl of fifteen years, against whom nobody cherished any suspicion, of being also a witch, in order, as she said, to save her poor soul. The court justly astonished at this probably never again paralleled case, caused her state of health to be investigated by ministers and the physicians, whose original testimonies are still found among the legal documents, and purport favourable throughout. The unfortunate daughter who singularly was called *Wise Elizabeth Hegel*, was in consequence of this maternal declaration really executed.\*

It is by no means sufficient to explain these phenomena according to the notions of the most modern times, as of the nature of animal magnetism. How, for instance, would this account for the deep, demoniac nature of old *Lise Kolken*, which is incomprehensible, and renders it quite clear, that the old pastor in spite of the horrible deception played upon him and his daughter, remained as firm in his belief of the existence of witchcraft as in that of the gospel.

The earlier centuries of the middle age knew little or

\* This trial likewise I intend yet to publish, because of its uncommon psychological interest.

nothing of witches. The crime of witchery where once it occurred was punished with lenity. Thus, for instance, the council of Ancyra (314) made the whole punishment of those women to consist in mere excommunication from Christian fellowship; the West-Goths punished them with scourging, and Charles the Great, on the advice of his bishops, caused them to be kept in prison until they did sincere penance.\* Only a short time before the reformation, Ignatius VIII. laments that the grievances of all Christendom about the nuisance of these women were becoming so generally clamorous, and to such a degree, that some most decided step must be taken against them; and at the end of 1489, he caused the most notorious Witchhammer (*malleus maleficarum*) to be prepared, according to which inquisition was made not only in all Catholic, but especially also in Protestant Christendom, which in all respects abominated everything savouring of Catholicism; and, in fact, with such fanatic zeal that the Protestants far outrivalled the Catholics in cruelty, until on the part of the Catholics, the noble Jesuit, J. Spee, and on that of the Protestants, although not until seventy years later, the excellent Thomasius, gradually put a check to this nuisance.

\* Horst's *Zauberbibliothek*.

After a close investigation of the subject of witchcraft, I soon perceived, that among all these somewhat so daring adventurous histories, not one would excel in lively interest my "Amber-Witch," and I determined to throw its fates into the form of a novel. Luckily, however, I soon said to myself: "Why should I do so? Is not the history itself the most interesting novel? Leave it perfectly in its original form; throw out what to the present reader no longer is of any interest, or is otherwise generally known, and though indeed you may not be able to restore the missing commencement and the missing end, see if the context will render it possible for you to supply the missing leaves from the middle, and then go on in the same strain and language of your ancient biographer, so that at least the difference of the representation and the insertions made do not immediately strike the eye.

This, then, with much trouble, and after many fruitless attempts, I have done, but silently pass over the places in which the scenes have taken place, in order not to cloud the interest of the greatest number of my readers. For to criticism, which, however, has never attained to a more admirable height than in our time, such a confession would here be perfectly superfluous, since without this it will very easily distinguish