

“Because of the pronunciation and meaning of cowl, it has been suggested that this word is cognate with caul and the related Scottish *kell*. (14, 71, 98) A fancied similarity of the monk's cowl to the caul is also said to be the basis of the belief that a child born with a caul was destined by Providence for the monastery or convent. (19, 106) In Austria it was expected that a boy would become an archbishop if he carried his caul in his clothes.(50) Notes and Queries, that extraordinary repository of antiquarian and other information, offers a quotation from a British newspaper, the Leeds Mercury, for 14 September 1889. (70) A laborer's wife bore a son on whose head was a caul. “The veil was placed on one side, and no notice was taken of it until some hours after the child's birth. When examined, however, it was found that the words 'British and Foreign Bible Society' were deeply impressed upon the veil. When this discovery was made the greatest excitement prevailed in the neighbourhood, some of the women declaring that nothing short of a miracle had been enacted. The doctor, who inquired into the matter, however, soon explained the affair. The veil, whilst in a pliable condition, had been placed upon a Bible, on the cover of which the words 'British and Foreign Bible Society' were deeply indented. The words were in this way transferred to the veil; but some of the inhabitants still ascribe the affair to supernatural influence...”

Elsewhere in England it was believed that, for as long as he kept his caul, the individual born with it would be a wanderer. (83) In Iceland, in the islands near New Guinea, in the Kentucky mountains, and elsewhere one born with a caul was thought to be clairvoyant.(9, 36, 40, 57, 96) The Dutch and the Negroes of North America and the West Indies believed that he could see and talk with ghosts.(7,41, 47, 57) The caul was also a protection against sorcery, evil spirits, and demons. (9, 57) In Germany the owner carried his caul when he was conscripted, with the hope that this charm would speed his release from military service.(78) Finally, the appearance of the caul gave an indication of the present health of the owner, even if he were absent; a dry, white, crisp caul meant good health, while a damp, black, limp caul betokened illness. (47, 57, 93)