

# Lecture VI: The Medieval Bestiaries

from

*Early Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland  
before the Thirteenth Century*

(The Rhind Lectures in Archaeology for 1885)

by

J. Romilly Allen

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**Author:** John Romilly Allen (1847-1907) was an archaeologist and historian of early British medieval iconography. He graduated from King's College School, London, in 1860 and Rugby School in 1863 before attending King's College, London between 1864 and 1866. He made his living as a civil engineer, and used his leisure time to study archaeology, especially pre-Norman art and artifacts. In 1885 he presented the series of lectures published in 1887 as *Early Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland before the Thirteenth Century*, as the SAS's Rhind lecturer in archaeology. In 1889 he published his first book on monuments, the small *Monumental History of the Early British Church*. The same year he was appointed co-editor of *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, rising to editor by 1892. Allen quit his job as an engineer to devote all his energies to archaeology. Several additional Rhind lectures followed. He was appointed editor of the *Reliquary and Illustrated Archaeologist* in 1893. In England he became a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1896. He was Yates lecturer in archaeology in University College, London, for 1898. The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland funded his excavations in Scotland. In 1899 he published the article "Early Christian Art in Wales" in the journal, the first systematic account of nascent Christian Welsh material culture. Allen and another Rhind lecturer, Joseph Anderson (1832-1916), published *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, in 1903, an analysis and classification of ornament of early medieval sculpture which became a model for medieval art methodology in England.

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## LECTURE VI. THE MEDIEVAL BESTIARIES.

In the present lecture, which concludes the series, an endeavour will be made to explain the apparently incongruous association of all kinds of animal forms with the most sacred symbols of the Christian faith, upon the pre-Norman sculptured stones, and the details of churches of the twelfth century, and to show that these zoomorphic features are not mere grotesques, or freaks of fancy on the part of the designer, but were intended to convey a deep spiritual lesson to the minds of those familiar with their hidden meaning. The line of inquiry to be pursued was suggested in a previous course of Rhind Lectures,<sup>1</sup> by Dr. J. Anderson, and my knowledge of the subject is due, in the first instance, to having had the privilege of hearing these masterly discourses delivered. Dr. Anderson has the honour of being the first to call attention to the subject in this country, and to point out that the explanation of much of the obscure symbolism of the sculptured stones of Scotland was to be found in the mediaeval works on natural history, known as “Bestiaries”, or Books of Beasts.

No one who has examined the early crosses of the East of Scotland, or the details of Norman church architecture, can have failed to notice how largely animal forms of all kinds enter into the scheme of their decoration. Now we must assume that these zoomorphic features are either merely grotesque ornaments due to the extravagant fancy of the mediaeval artist, or that some deep meaning having reference to [335] the doctrines of Christianity is attached. The questions, therefore, to be considered in the present lecture are—(1) whether there is any evidence in contemporary literature that a system of symbolism, founded upon the characteristics of the animal world, existed during the middle ages; and (2) whether it can be proved that such a system was applied to the decoration of Christian monuments and buildings.

The first question is easily answered, for there is hardly any large collection of ancient MSS. which does not contain one or more copies of the different versions of the bestiary, or book of beasts, a treatise on the natural history of animals with spiritual meanings attached. Various titles are given to works of this class, such as the *Bestiarium*, the *Liber de Animalibus*, the *Physiologus*, the *Livre des Creatures*, *Dialogus Creaturum*, and so on.

It is not known who wrote the original bestiary, of which all subsequent versions are only variants. The earliest MS. copies are in Latin, and do not date back beyond the eighth century, and by far the greater proportion of the illustrated editions belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The bestiary differs fundamentally from all modern treatises on natural history, and is really more like a children’s picture-book of animals. The zoologist of the present day dissects all his specimens, and classifies them according to species, as revealed by minute investigations as to the structure of the body. The mediaeval naturalist was a theologian first, and a man of science after. His theories were founded partly on texts of Scripture, rightly or wrongly interpreted, partly on the writings of Pliny, and partly on the supposed derivations of the names, mixed up with all kinds of marvellous stories such as are found in the folk-lore of all nations.<sup>2</sup> The texts from the Bible are quoted verbatim in the bestiaries, being chiefly taken from the list of unclean beasts given by Moses (Levit. xi, and Deut. xiv), which is elaborated and explained in the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas<sup>3</sup> (ch. ix), and from the poetical allusions to animals in the Psalms and the Song of Solomon. The classical authorities [336] mentioned in the bestiary of Philippe de Thaurin are Pliny, Macrobius, Ovid, and Pythagoras, as well as the unknown writers, Nebrot, Turkil, and Cingius the Philosopher. Traces are also shown of a belief in the arts of magic, as in the story of the Woodpecker, who knows of a herb that can unlock all things closed with iron or wood, and is able to unloose all things that are bound,<sup>4</sup>—recalling the

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1 *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 2nd Series, p. 168.

2 Many of the Eastern stories may be traced to the works of Ctesias, a Greek writer of the fifth century B.C.

3 Hone’s edition.

4 Cahier and Martin, *Mélanges d’Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 160.

legend in the *Speculum Sancte Marie Virginis*, of the worm whose blood has power to break glass and allow the young ostrich to escape from the vessel in which it was imprisoned by Solomon.<sup>5</sup> The history of the whale in the bestiary is related in the story of Sindbad the Sailor in the Arabian Nights, and also occurs in the legendary Life of St. Brendan.<sup>6</sup>

The narratives of the Syren, the Centaur, Argus the Cowherd,<sup>7</sup> with his hundred eyes, in the bestiary are of purely classical origin, adapted subsequently to Christian purposes. So much for the sources whence the writers of the bestiary drew their inspiration, now as to the book itself. The number of beasts, including birds, fish, insects, and fabulous creatures, varies from 24 to 40 in the different versions, but they are in all cases treated in a similar fashion: first, there is a miniature of the animal, then a description of its appearance, habits, stories connected with it, and lastly, a moral,<sup>8</sup> pointing out the spiritual significance and its application to the Christian life. It must be admitted that this eternal moralising becomes extremely tedious, and the writers of the bestiaries evidently found it so them-selves, as they are continually telling their readers to pay attention, and not to allow their thoughts to wander from the subject, and are never tired of insisting on the importance of the good to be derived from the concluding moral.

The merit of the different stories and their application varies [337] greatly, some being extremely forcible, such as that of the whale, whose sudden plunge into the depths of the ocean is dramatic to a degree, and sends a thrill of horror through the mind. Some are very poetic and beautiful, such as the eagle flying up towards the sun; some are revolting and indecent; others far-fetched or absurd, as when one learns that the pretty little hedgehog, knocking down grapes off the vine and carrying them away on its spines, is the Devil robbing men of their souls.

An interesting summary of what is known about the bestiary will be found in Prof. J. P. N. Land's article, "Physiologus", in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The origin of the bestiary is hidden in obscurity, but its existence at an early period is proved by the censure passed at a synod of Pope Gelasius, held in 496, upon the "Liber Physiologus, qui ab hæreticis conscriptus est et B. Ambrosii nomine signatus, apocryphus." The story of the phoenix, which is incorporated in the bestiary, is one of the first which occurs in art, being found on the mosaics of Italian churches of the sixth century (see Lecture I, p. 42).

The composition of the bestiary resulted from two causes — (1) the necessity which arose for commenting

on texts in the Bible mentioning animals; and (2) the love of moralising, after the fashion of Æsop in his Fables. At a very early period in the history of the Church, theologians wrote treatises on the six days of the Creation, known under the title of *The Hexameron*, those of Basil, Eustathius, and Ambrosias being the most celebrated. The tendency to moralise soon arose from a desire to distract the thoughts from the things of this world, and concentrate the mind only on such matters as might bring it nearer to spiritual perfection. To anyone holding the view that this life is chiefly a preparation for a better one to come, modern science, which seeks to classify and arrange objects according to their physical properties, must seem little better than the bestiary if it gains less sympathy, and is a (big) mistake, and the result of sheer ignorance, or confounding together words of similar sound; (2) confusing one animal with another from want of zoological

knowledge; and (3) to a wish to identify [338] certain animals mentioned in the Bible with fabulous creatures of classical origin, such as centaurs, syrens, dragons, etc. It will be noticed that in many cases the names of the animals given in the Vulgate version of the Scriptures are entirely different from those found in the

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5 Mrs. Jameson's *Hist. of Our Lord*, vol. i, p. 219 and Didron's *Christian Iconography*, edited by Miss M. Stokes, vol. ii, p. 215. Traces of this story are to be found in the description of the Vulture and the Worm in the bestiary (see *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. iv, p 80).

6 M. L. A. Jubinal, *La Légende Latine de S. Brandaines*, Paris, 1836.

7 *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 181.

8 The idea of the stories with a moral at the end may perhaps have been suggested by Æsop's Fables.

English translation. Prof. Land, in his article on the *Physiologus*, already referred to, gives as an instance of a mistake in translation in the text from the Psalms (xcii, 12), "The righteous shall flourish as a palm tree". The word palm is rendered Phoenix in the bestiary. The other sources of error will be referred to subsequently in describing the Centaur and the Syren.

The older Latin bestiaries are generally more simple in form than the later version's, additions from various sources having been made from time to time. It must not be supposed that the bestiaries contain all the stories that were current in the middle ages concerning animals, but they are the best text-books that have come down to us, embodying at all events the more important views which were held on the subject. There can be no doubt that the bestiaries were very widely read,<sup>9</sup> from the numbers of copies still in existence, and from the continual recurrence of stories taken from them in the Romances<sup>10</sup> and Specula<sup>11</sup> of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Even after the Renaissance, when symbolism became moral instead of doctrinal, and the love of the marvellous had died out, the classical portions are still preserved in the Emblem-books.<sup>12</sup> Although most of the bestiary stories have become obsolete, a few, such as that of the Phoenix and of the Pelican, still survive. However, tracing the bestiary through its different stages belongs rather to the history of literature than to the present branch of inquiry.<sup>13</sup> The following is a list of the MSS. and published texts of the different versions of the bestiary.

*Greek*.—Two MSS. of fourteenth century in the Paris Library, [339] Nos. 390 and 929. Text given in E. Legrand's *Le Physiologus*, Paris, 1869. See also Mai's *Classicorum Auctorum*, vol. vii, p. 589, for text of Vatican MS.

*Latin*.—Two MSS. in the Public Library at Berne in Switzerland (see Sinner's *Catalogue of the Berne Library*). One (No. 223) of the eighth century, entitled *Liber Fisiologi Theobaldi, expositio do natura animalium vel avium seu bestiarium*; the other (No. 318) of the ninth century, entitled *Physiologus*.

A MS. (No. 10,074) of the tenth century, with illustrations, in the Royal Library at Brussels.

MSS. of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, generally illustrated, are common in all the great libraries in this country and abroad. Text of Berne and Brussels MSS. given in Cahier et Martin's *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vols. ii to iv, with illustrations.

*Saxon*.—MS. of the eleventh century in the Cathedral Library of Exeter, known as the *Codex Exoniensis*, presented to the Cathedral by Leofric, bishop (A.D. 1046), containing the fragment of a bestiary with the stories of the Panther and of the Whale. Text published for the Society of Antiquaries, London, 1842, by Benjamin Thorpe. See also C. W. M. Grein's *Bibliothec der Angelsächischen Poesie*.

*Old English*.—MS. of thirteenth century in the British Museum (Arund. No. 292). Text again in R. Morris's *An Old English Miscellany*, published by the Early English Text Society; also given in E. Maetzner's

*Altenglische Sprachproben*, vol. i, p. 55, Berlin, 1867.

*Anglo-Norman*.—Metrical translation from the Latin by Philippe de Thau, called *Livre des Créatures*, dedicated to Adelaide of Louvain, Queen of Henry I of England (married A.D. 1121). Three MSS. in the British Museum (Nero A. v), from Hulm Cultram Abbey in Cumberland, and (Arund. 230), both of twelfth century, and (Slo. 1580) of thirteenth century. One MS. of twelfth century in the Cathedral Library at Lincoln (D. 48). Three MSS. in the Vatican Library at Rome, and one at Petau. Text given in Thomas Wright's *Popular Treatise on the Physiologus*, London, 1842. See also Wright's *Metrical Translation of the Physiologus*, London, 1842. Text given in Thomas Wright's *Popular Treatise on the Physiologus*, London, 1842. See also Wright's *Metrical Translation of the Physiologus*, London, 1842. At least seven MSS.

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<sup>9</sup> The clergy were particularly advised to read the bestiary (Bebelius, *Opuscula Varia*, and Ed. du Ménil, *Poésies populaires latines au moyen-age*, p. 25).

<sup>10</sup> Romance of Alexander (see Berger de Xivrey, *Traditions Tetualogiques*, Paris, 1836).

<sup>11</sup> *Speculum Naturale* of Vincent de Beauvais.

<sup>12</sup> H. Green, *Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers*.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Lacroix. *Science and Literature in the Middle Ages*.

in the Paris Library, [340] one dated A.D. 1267, and one of the fourteenth century, illustrated. Two MSS. in the British Museum (Roy. 16, E. viii), and (Vesp. A. vii). One MS. in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Text given in M. C. Hippeau's *Bestiaire Divin*, Caen, 1852, reprinted from the *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de la Normandie*, vol. xix (1851), and in Cahier et Martin's *Mélanges d'Archéologie*.

*Romance Dialect.*—Translated into French prose by Peter, a priest of Picardy, by the command of Philip de Dreux, Bishop of Beauvais (A.D. 1175-1217). Illustrated MS. of fourteenth century in the Arsenal Library at Paris. Two MSS. of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the National Library at Paris. Text and illustrations of the Arsenal MS. given in Cahier et Martin's *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vols. ii to iv.

*Provençale Dialect.*—MS. in the Paris Library. Text given in Karl Bartsch's *Crestomathie Provençale*, Eberfeld, 1868.

*German.*—Old High German prose translations made before A.D. 1000, the metrical versions being more recent. Text by Von der Hagen.

*Icelandic.*—MS. of thirteenth century in the Copenhagen Library. Text given in Th. Möbius, *Analecta Norræna*, Leipzig, 1877.

*Syriac.*—MSS. of twelfth century in the Vatican Library at Rome, and at Leyden. Texts given in O. G. Tychsen's *Physiologus Syrus*, and in Prof. J. P. N. Land's *Anecdota Syriaca*, vol. iv.

*Æthiopic.*—Text given in F. Hommel's *Die æthiopische Uebersetzung des Physiologus*, Leipzig, 1877.

*Armenian.*—MS. of thirteenth century in the Paris Library. Text given in J. B. Pitra's *Spicilegium Solesmense*.

*Arabic.*—MS. at Paris. Text given by J. P. N. Land.

With regard to the illustrations in the bestiaries, the earliest ones that have been published are taken from the tenth century MS. in the Royal Library at Brussels;<sup>14</sup> but when attention is called to the matter, it is to be hoped that search will be made for older copies, which may be the means of explaining many of the curious figures of beasts on the pre-Norman sculptured stones of Scotland. Cahier and Martin have given in the [341] plates of their *Mélanges d'Archéologie* a complete series of drawings, from a MS. of the thirteenth century, of the French prose version of Peter of Picardy, in the Library of the Arsenal at Paris;<sup>15</sup> another complete series, with religious pictures corresponding to each beast, from a MS. of the fourteenth century in the Imperial Library at Paris (S. F. 632<sub>25</sub>);<sup>16</sup> selections from the illustrations of a MS. of the fourteenth century of the French rhyming version of William of Normandy, in the Imperial Library, Paris (7534);<sup>17</sup> and fourteen woodcuts amongst the text taken from other MSS.

In the British Museum there are nine illustrated MSS. of the bestiary (see W. de Gray Birch's *Catalogue*), several others in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and three in the University Library at Cambridge (see H. R. Luard's *Index of Catal. of MSS.*). One or two woodcuts copied from the MSS. are given in Thomas Wright's *Archæological Album*.

Having shown that a system of mystic zoology existed in the middle ages, we have to inquire whether there is any proof that the spiritualised bestiaries were applied to the decoration of Christian monuments and buildings. The time when animal symbolism attained its highest development in the illuminated MSS. was during the thirteenth century, so that it is at this period we are most likely to find traces of it in the ornamental features of churches.

The first example we will take is on one of the painted glass windows of the thirteenth century in Bourges Cathedral.<sup>18</sup> The central subject represented is the Resurrection of Our Lord, treated in the usual

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14 *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. ii, pls. 23 and 24.

15 Vol. ii, pls. 19 to 23.

16 Vol. ii, pls. 26 to 31.

17 Vol. ii, pl. 25.

18 Cahier and Martin, *Monographie de la Cathédrale de Bourges*, vol. ii; Twining's *Christian Symbols and Emblems*, p1. 22.

way; and surrounding it are four types of the Resurrection, two taken from the Bible—the Raising of Jairus’s Daughter and Jonah’s Deliverance from the Whale—and two taken from the bestiary—the Pelican and the Lion. The former is shown with wings outspread, pecking at its breast, thus causing the blood to flow and fall upon its four young birds below. The word “Pelican” is inscribed at the bottom. Above is King David, seated on a throne, holding a [342] scroll, inscribed “DAVID REX”. He is introduced because he is the author of the text about the pelican in the Psalms (cii, 6), which is quoted in the bestiary. The following is the account given in the MSS. explaining the symbolism.

*The Pelican*<sup>19</sup> (Latin *pellicanus, nocticoracos*;<sup>20</sup> French *pellican*).—David says, “I am like a pelican in the wilderness” (Ps. cii, 6). Physiologus says that the pelican is very fond of its young, but when they begin to grow up they strike their parents in the face with their beaks, and their parents strike them back again and kill them. The parents are then smitten with grief, and weep for three days over the young birds that they have slain, but on the third day the father comes, and striking his side with his beak, causes the blood to flow, which falls upon the dead birds and brings them to life again. The pelican is a type of Christ, who cherished us, and whom we struck. When He was upon the cross He opened His side and allowed blood and water to flow out. The water is that of Baptism, and the blood that of the cup of the New Testament, by which we have eternal life.<sup>21</sup> The other scene on the window at Bourges represents a lioness seated on its haunches, and a lion breathing into the face of its cub, which lies prostrate on the ground. The inscription below is “LEO FORM”. Referring to the bestiary, we find the following description:

*The Lion*<sup>22</sup> (Latin *leo*; French *lion*).—The lion is the king of beasts. He has a frightful face and a great hairy neck; his shape behind is slender, and he has a large tail. The lion has three natures.

(1) He inhabits the mountains, and when he perceives the [343] smell of the hunters pursuing him, he effaces with his tail all trace of the marks of his feet, so that they cannot find his lair to take him. Thus Christ,

the Lion of the tribe of Judah, works in a hidden manner, and His deity and His ways are unintelligible to the ignorant, who cannot find Him.

(2) The second nature of the lion is, that when he is asleep his eyes are on the watch, for they are open, as in the Song of Solomon (ch. v, 2) the spouse testifies, saying, “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” Thus whilst Christ was on the cross and when He was buried His body slept, but his Godhead was awake; for the Psalmist saith (Ps. cxxi, 4), “Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.”

(3) The third nature of the lion is, that when the lioness brings forth a cub it is dead,<sup>23</sup> and in this state she guards it until upon the third day the father comes and brings it to life by breathing in its face. Thus the Almighty Father on the third day brought to life His Son, “who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians i, 15); thus Jacob said well, “He couched as lion, and as an old lion.”<sup>24</sup> Philippe de Thiais gives us many other particulars about the lion, not found in the earlier Latin bestiaries. He tells us that the lion is afraid of the white cock, which signifies the man of holy life, for the cock chaunts in honour of St. Peter the hours of the night and day, and tells us in the same manner the prime, tierce, and

19 *Melanges d’Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 136; Hippeau, *Le Bestiaire Divin*, p. 92; Wright’s *Popular Treatises on Science during the Middle Ages*, p. 115.

20 Probably meant for the owl (see Psalm cii, 6).

21 The pelican has been retained as a symbol of the Resurrection down to a late period. It is carved on one of the *misereres* in the parish church at Wakefield, Yorkshire, and is sometimes used as a heraldic device—for instance, on the arms of Corpus Christi College at Cambridge, with the inscription, “Signat avis Christum qui sanguine pascit alumnos, lilia virgo parens intemerata refert.”

22 *Melanges d’Archéologie*, vol. ii p. 106; Hippeau, *Le Bestiaire Divin*, p. 74; Wright’s *Popular Treatises on Science during the Middle Ages*, p. 75.

23 The Picardy bestiary says that the lioness brings forth a piece of flesh resembling a lion through her mouth.

24 The Latin bestiary says, “as a lion’s cub”, in place of “as an old lion”.



midday. The lion when angry hangs himself with his feet, and he trembles when he first sees man.

An analogy is also made out between the outward appearance of the lion and Christ, his strength in front being typical of the Godhead of our Lord, and his weakness behind, typical of our Lord's manhood; his tail over his back signifies justice which is placed over us, and his claws mean vengeance upon the Jews.

It seems that subjects from the bestiary were not by any means uncommon on the painted glass windows of the thirteenth [344] century in France, as three other instances besides the one at Bourges are given in the magnificent monograph of MM. Cahier et Martin, already referred to. On one of the lancet-windows in the Lady Chapel of Tours Cathedral are four circular medallions, each containing a central scene, surrounded by four others. Amongst these are the Crucifixion, with the Pelican, Moses and the Brazen Serpent, Moses striking the Rock, and Elijah raising the Widow's Son; also Christ carrying the Cross, with Ephraim preferred

to Manasseh, the Murder of Abel, and the Lion breathing into the face of its Cub. On one of the lancet-windows in the Lady Chapel of Le Mans Cathedral is the Crucifixion, surrounded by the Lion breathing into the face of its Cub, the Pelican and its Young, Moses and the Brazen Serpent: and Moses striking the Rock. On one of the lancet-windows in the apse of Lyons Cathedral are the Caladrius, Jonah and the Whale, the Sacrifice of Isaac, Moses and the Burning Bush, the Eagle and her Young, the Lion and its Cub, Moses and the Brazen Serpent, Gideon and the Fleece (?), and the Virgin with the Unicorn.

The class of symbolism under consideration was not confined to painted glass windows only, for there still exists at Strasbourg Cathedral a sculptured frieze, executed in the fourteenth century, of subjects partly Scriptural and partly taken from the bestiary.<sup>25</sup> The first scene is the Sacrifice of Isaac; then comes the Eagle, standing in front of its nest and holding up one of the young birds in its claw to gaze at the sun, which is treated conventionally as a human face with rays issuing from it. Another young bird is in the nest. The one held up by its mother turns its head away from the light. The bestiary gives us the following particulars about the eagle

*The Eagle* <sup>26</sup> (Lat. *aquila*; Fr. *aigle*, or *égle*).—The eagle is the king of birds. It can look at the sun when it is brightest, without blinking, and from aloft can gaze into the depths of the ocean, and see the fish swimming below, which it seizes and drags ashore to eat. When the young birds in the nest are very small, the eagle takes them in its claws, and bearing [345] them upwards, compels them to gaze upon the sun at its brightest. The ones which can look straight at the light without flinching, it cherishes as being its own offspring, but the others which cannot do so it refuses to bring up any longer. When the eagle gets old, and feels its wings heavy and its sight failing, it mounts high in the air and scorches its wings in the heat of the sun, after which the bird dips itself three times in a fountain of clear water and becomes young again.

The eagle signifies Christ, who is far-seeing, and dwells on high. The sea is the world, and the fish are the people in it. God came into this world to obtain possession of our souls, and He draws us towards Him by right, as the eagle catches the fish. Christ can gaze upon God, without being blinded, as the eagle can look at the sun; and as the eagle bears its offspring aloft, so will an angel carry our souls to present them before God, who will receive the good and reject the evil. The restoration of the youth of the eagle, by dipping itself in the water, signifies the baptism of this mortal life. The above is the legend of the eagle, from the bestiary (Deut. xxxii, 2, and Ps. ciii, 5)—“so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's”, quoted in the bestiary:—

The next scene on the Strasbourg sculptures is a man fighting with a unicorn; then a man killing a lion with a club; another man killing one of the cubs; and lastly, the lion breathing into the nostrils of its young, as on the window of Bourges Cathedral. After this comes the unicorn, pursued by the hunter and taking refuge in the lap of a virgin. The story is thus related in the bestiary:—

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<sup>25</sup> Cahier and Martin, *Nouveaux Mélanges d'Archéologie—Curiosités Mystérieuses*. p. 153.

<sup>26</sup> Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, p. 164; Hippeau, p. 100; Wright, p. 109.

*The Unicorn*<sup>27</sup> (Lat. *monoceros, unicornis*; Fr. *unicorn*)—The unicorn is a beautiful animal, with the body of a horse, the head of a stag, and the feet of an elephant, having on its forehead a straight sharp horn, four feet long. In the Psalms (Ps. cii, 10) it says, “My horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn.” The unicorn is so fierce that the elephant hates it, but the claws on the feet of the unicorn are so sharp that it pierces the elephant’s body with them and kills it.

The horn of the unicorn is so powerful that the hunter dares not go near it, but the animal can be caught by stratagem in the [346] following manner. A pure virgin of great beauty is sent on alone in front of the hunters into the wood where the unicorn dwells, and as soon as it sees her immediately it runs towards her and kneels down and lays its head on her lap quite simply. Whilst the unicorn sleeps there the hunters seize it and hasten off with it to the royal palace. Christ is the spiritual unicorn, who became man by being born of the Virgin Mary, and was taken by the Jews, led before Pilate, presented to Herod, and then crucified.

We have next two scenes from Scripture, the Deliverance of Jonah from the Whale, and Moses and the Brazen Serpent in the Wilderness. Beyond these comes the pelican, as on the window at Bourges Cathedral, and the phoenix enveloped in flames, of which the bestiary gives the following account:—

*The Phoenix*<sup>28</sup> (Lat. *fenix*; Fr. *fénis*).—The phoenix is a beautiful bird, crested like a peacock, with a red breast shining like fine gold, and body of azure blue. It comes from India, and when it has lived for five hundred years and would die in the course of nature, it flies to Mount Lebanon, where it builds a nest in the top of a high tree, and fills it with spices and aromatic woods. The phoenix then soars up towards the sun, and brings down fire, which sets its nest in a flame and burns the bird, but on the third day it arises again with renewed life. The Latin bestiary says that this takes place in the month of March or April, and that the phoenix, after having filled its body with aromatic perfumes, burns itself upon the altar of the priests of Heliopolis. The day after, the priests come to the altar and find a worm, from which issues an exceedingly sweet smell; on the second day it becomes a bird; and on the third the phoenix, restored to its original condition.

The phoenix signifies Christ, who died and came to life on the third day. “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again” (John x, 18). The sweet odour means the Old and the New Testament. “I am not come to destroy (the law), but to fulfil (it)” (Matt. ch. v, 17). The phoenix is one of the earliest symbols of the Resurrection, being found on [347] mosaics of the sixth century, as has already been pointed out. It is possible that the birds placed upon the head of Christ on the Irish crosses may be intended for the phoenix.

The remaining sculptures at Strasbourg Cathedral consist of semi-human monsters, fighting, and playing on musical instruments, which do not correspond with the illustrations or text of the bestiaries, and therefore need not at present occupy our attention.

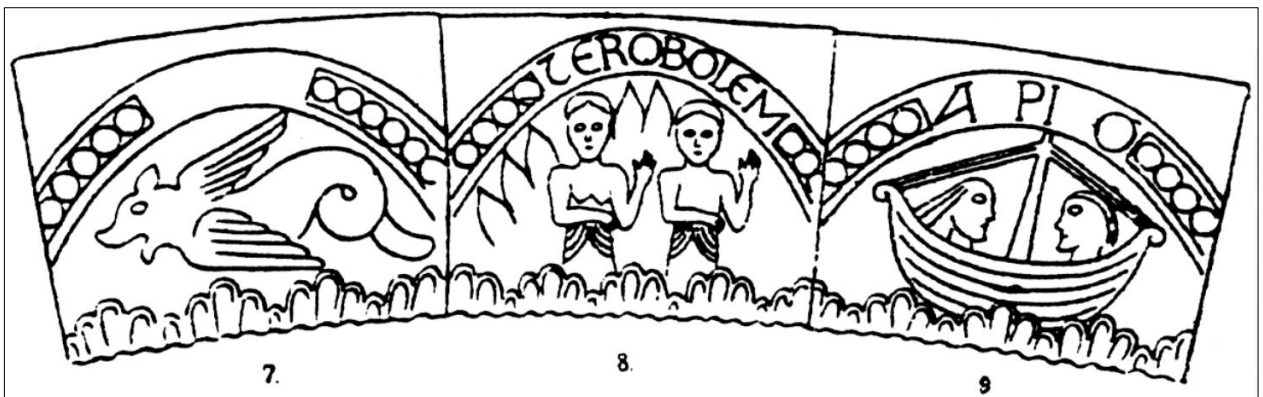
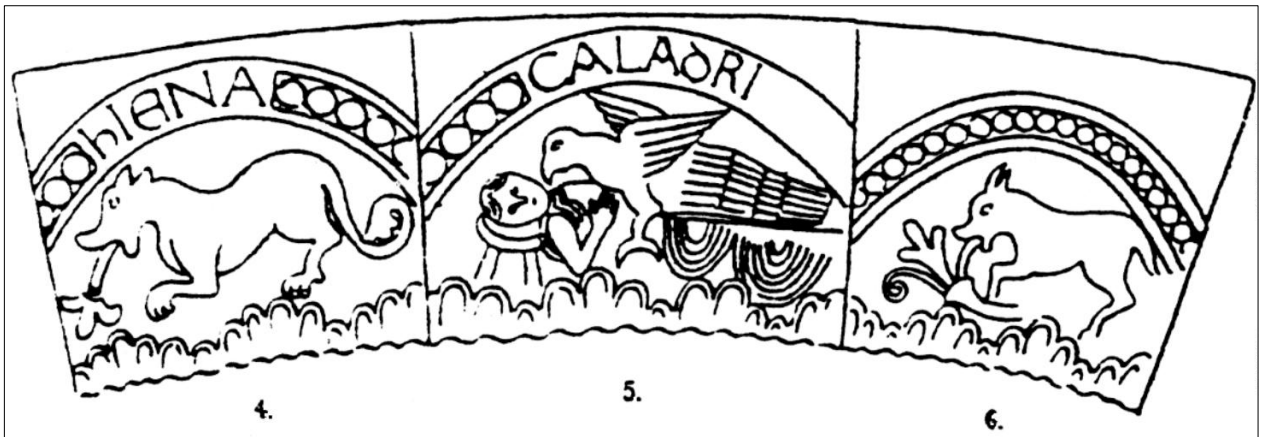
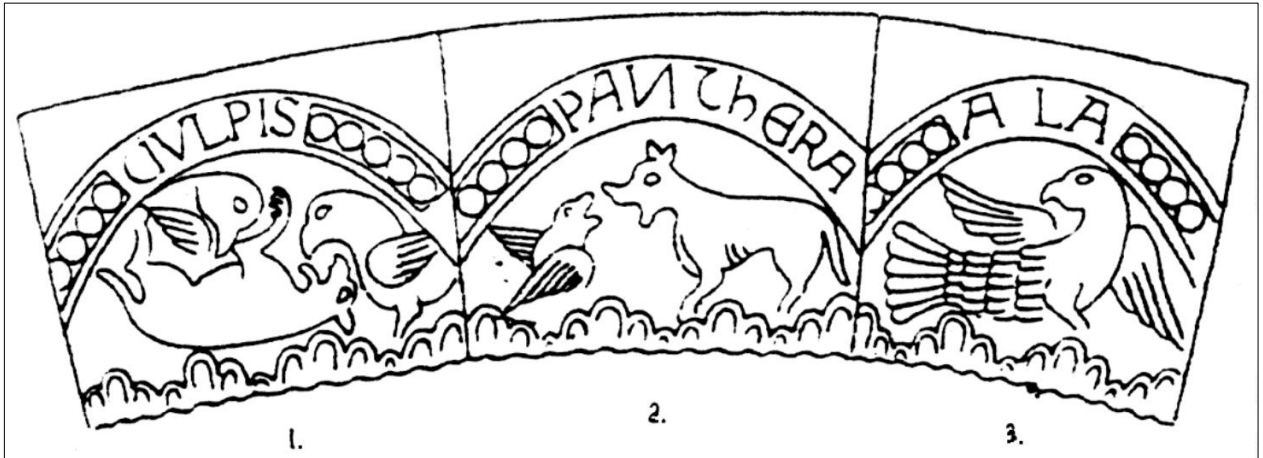
No doubt many other instances of subjects from the bestiary in the sculptured details of churches abroad might be found if looked for diligently. There is not much difficulty in recognising such scenes on sculptures of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, because they generally correspond exactly with the illustrations in the MSS. of the same period.<sup>29</sup> The further back we go, however, the harder the task becomes, both on account of the scarcity of early MSS. containing miniatures, and because of the many fanciful details introduced into the sculptures of the twelfth and preceding centuries.

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27 *Mélanges*, vol. ii. p. 20; Hippeau. p. 126; Wright. p. 81.

28 *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 182; Hippeau, *Le Bestiaire Divin*, p. 104; Wright's *Popular Treatises on Science during the Middle Ages*, p. 113; *Codex Exoniensis*, p. 197.

29 In the church of St. Pierre at Caen in Normandy, there is a sculpture of the thirteenth century representing David or Samson rending the lion's jaw, with the phoenix on one side and the pelican on the other (see Twining's *Christian Symbols and Emblems*, pl. 21). The fox and other subjects from the bestiary occur on the doorway of St. Pietro, at Soletto (see Gally Knight's *Italy*, vol. ii).



SCULPTURED ARCH STONES OF DOORWAY AT ALNE, YORKSHIRE.

We have now proved the truth of the proposition with which we started, as regards foreign countries and the thirteenth century, but it is possible to go further, and show that similar examples existed in England in the twelfth century. The south doorway of the church at Alne in Yorkshire is a fine specimen of Norman architecture, but its chief interest lies in the symbolic sculptures with which it is decorated. The doorway is round-headed, the arch being composed of two orders of mouldings, ornamented on the face with a series of medallions, containing the Agnus Dei and several animals.. The outer arch consists of nineteen voussoirs, seven of which have been replaced in the last century, and three entirely defaced, leaving a residue of nine stones in good preservation. Each voussoir has an animal or other figure carved upon it, with an arch over the top, bearing an inscription in Latin capitals neatly cut in the middle, [348] and a pellet ornament at each side. The following are the inscriptions and subjects.

(1) VULPIS. The fox lying on his back, with his paws up in the air, pretending to be dead, whilst two unsuspecting birds approach, one placing its head within the fox's jaws.

(2) PANTHERA. The panther, with a winged dragon in front, only the upper part of the body of the latter being shown.

(3) A(QUI)LA. The eagle with outspread wings, looking back over its shoulder.

(4) HIENA. The hyena, having a tail terminating in a leaf, and holding an object like a fleur-de-lys in its mouth.

(5) CALADRIUS. The caladrius, a bird perched on the bed of a sick man, and gazing into his face.

(6) Inscription wanting. An animal plucking a conventional flower or plant.

(7) Inscription illegible. A winged dragon with looped tail.

(8) TEROBLEM. The terobolem, or two stones which produce fire, represented by a male and female figure enveloped in flames.

(9) ASPIDO. The whale; only a ship containing two men being shown, and the whale omitted from want of room.

The following descriptions are given in the bestiary.

*The Fox*<sup>30</sup> (Lat. *vulpis*; Fr. *goupil* or *golpis*).—Vulpis is the name of a beast which we call a fox. When it wants to catch its prey the fox lies down on the ground and covers itself over with red earth to look like blood, with mouth open and its tongue hanging out, pretending to be dead. The bird which happens to see the fox thinks that it is mortally wounded, and wishing to devour its flesh, begins by pecking at it, and even dares to put its head and beak between the animal's open jaws, but the fox catches the bird with a sudden spring and eats it.

The fox signifies the Devil, who to those living in the flesh appears to be dead, but when they have entered into evil and are caught in his mouth, he takes them with a spring and devours them. The fox does harm to the earth by the holes he makes in it, which is typical of man ensnared by sin. The texts from Scripture quoted in the bestiaries, upon which the symbolism is founded, are (Ps. lxiii, 9), "Those who seek my [349] soul to destroy it . . . shall be a portion for foxes"; (Cant. ii, 15), "Take us the little foxes that spoil the vines"; (Matt. viii, 20), "The foxes have holes", etc.; and the comparison of Herod to a fox (Luke iii, 31).

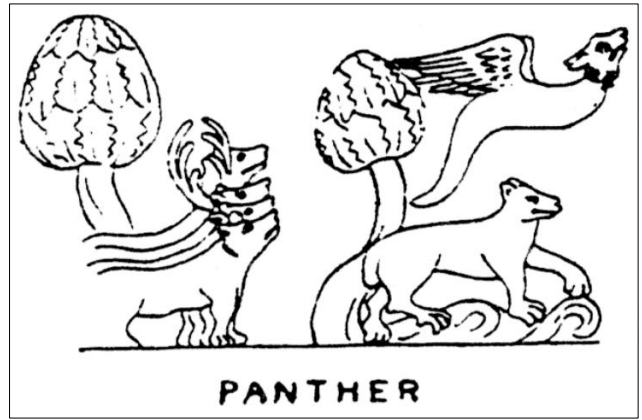
*The Panther*<sup>31</sup> (Lat. *panthera*; Fr. *pantere*, or *panthere*).—The story of the panther is to be found in the Exeter Book, translated, probably from the Latin, into Saxon rhyme, of the same character as Caedmon's metrical *Paraphrase of the Scriptures*. It is much to be regretted that this and the poems upon the whale and the phoenix are all that remain of the only bestiary in the English language, but there is enough at all events to show that Christian symbolism, founded on the habits of animals, was known in this country before the Norman Conquest.

30 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii. p. 207; Hippeau, p. 122; Wright, p. 105.

31 Cahier and Martin, vol. iii, p. 235; Hippeau, p. 145; Wright, p. 82; *Codex Exoniensis*, p. 355.



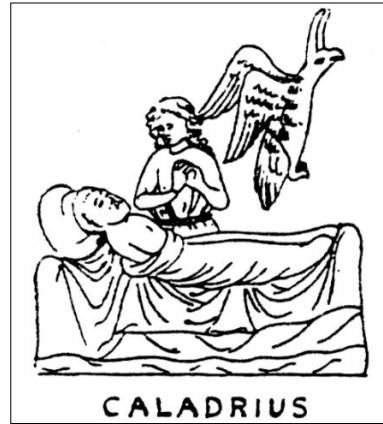
FOX



PANTHER



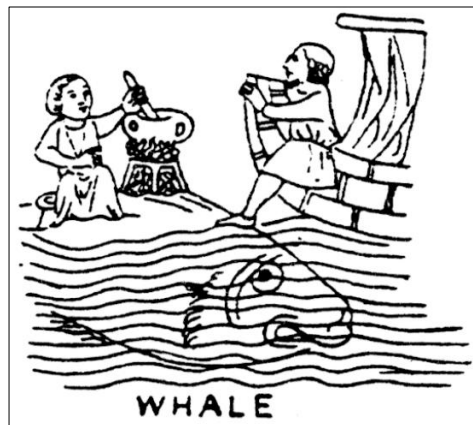
HYENA



CALADRIUS



TURROBOLEN



WHALE

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM BESTIARY MS. IN THE ARSENAL LIBRARY, PARIS.

Philippe de Thaun tells us that the panther's name is derived from the Greek word  $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ , all. Hence it has many characteristics and many colours; or in the words of the Saxon poet: —

“That is a curious beast,  
wonderously beautiful,  
of every hue  
such men tell,  
persons of holy spirit,  
that Joseph's  
tunic was  
of every tinge  
in colours varying,  
of which each more bright,  
each more exquisite  
than other shone  
to the sons of men.  
Thus this beast's hue,  
pale, of every change,  
brighter and fairer  
wonderously shines;  
so that more curious  
than every other  
yet more unique  
and fairer  
it exquisitely glistens  
ever more excellent.”

[  
350] Philippe de Thaun goes on to say that the panther is of a mild and good disposition, being rightly loved by all animals, except the dragon. This little animal eats divers meats, and when satisfied enters into its den and sleeps for three days. Then the Saxon poet says: —

“When the bold animal  
rises up  
gloriously endowed  
on the third day  
suddenly from sleep  
a sound comes  
of voices sweetest,  
through the wild beast's mouth;  
after the voice  
an odour comes out  
from the plain  
a steam more grateful,  
sweeter and stronger  
than every perfume,  
than blooms of plants  
and forest leaves,  
nobler than all  
earth's ornaments.”

When the animals hear the cry of the panther, whether they be near or far, they will assemble and follow the smell that issues from its mouth. The dragon alone, who hates him, will be seized with great fear and fly from the smell, laying himself down on the ground dead, torn and disfigured, as if he were killed. The panther signifies Christ, who is loved by all except the dragon, which means the Devil. The various colours of his coat are the qualities of the wisdom of God,—clearness, holiness, subtlety, etc. God is one in His deity, all ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ ) in His humanity. As the panther sleeps in its den for three days and wakes up upon the third, so Christ descended into Hades and rose again. The animals which are near signify the Jews under the Law, and those afar off, the Gentiles without the Law. When the fame of the Resurrection of our Lord spreads throughout the earth and the voice of the Gospel reaches all peoples, they are filled with the sweet odour of His commands, and cry out with the Psalmist, “How sweet are thy words unto my taste: yea, [351] sweeter than honey to my mouth” (Ps. cxix, 103). The Devil alone is afraid of Christ;

“that is the ancient fiend  
whom he bound  
in the abyss of torments,  
and fettered  
with fiery shackles,  
o’erwhelmed with dire constraints.”

On the sculpture at Alne the panther is shown facing a winged dragon. In the MS. of the Picardy bestiary, in the Library of the Arsenal at Paris, a row of animals, including a stag, are seen following the panther, whilst the dragon is flying away up in the air above his head.<sup>32</sup> In the oldest Latin bestiaries, the text from Hosea (v, 14), “I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah”, is quoted thus: “Factus sum sicut leo domni Juda, et sicut pantera domni Ephraim.”

*The Hyena*<sup>33</sup> (Lat. *hyena*; Fr. *hienne*, *hyène*, and *yenne*).—The descriptions of the appearance of the hyena vary. The French prose bestiary says that it is like a bear, but of a different colour, and has the neck of a fox. Philippe de Thaun calls it the stag wolf which stinks, and is very fierce. The hyena is male and female, and therefore a filthy beast. In this respect it resembles the covetous and luxurious person, who ought to possess the firmness and strength of purpose of a man instead of the weak vacillation of a woman; or like the Jews, who in the beginning worshipped God in a manly spirit, but afterwards gave themselves up to effeminate luxury and the worship of idols.<sup>34</sup> In the bestiaries the text from Jeremiah (xii, 9), “Mine heritage is unto [352] me as a speckled (or taloned) bird” is quoted thus: “Spelunca hyaenae hereditas mea facta est.”

The hyena inhabits the tombs and devours dead bodies, being generally shown in the illustrations of the MSS. dragging a corpse out of a grave and gnawing it.<sup>35</sup> There are two other stories told about the hyena—(1) that he has in his eye a stone, which, if placed under the tongue, confers the gift of prophecy; (2) that he can imitate the human voice, and thus entices shepherds from their houses at night to devour them by calling their names. On the sculpture at Alne the hyena is represented with a floriated tail and an object

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32 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, pl. 22, fig. B. A.

33 *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 303; Hippeau, p. 131; Wright, p. 94.

34 This is evidently taken from the list of unclean animals given by Moses (Levit. xi), and elaborated in the apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas (ix, 8), “Neither shalt thou eat of the hyena, that is again be not an adulterer, nor a corrupter of others; neither be like to such. And wherefore so? Because that creature every year changes its kind, and is sometimes male and sometimes female.” The view that the hyena is an hermaphrodite was held by Pliny (Bk. VIII, ch. xxx), and adopted by Eustathius in the *Hexameron*, and by Tertullian (*De Pallio*, ch. iii).

35 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, pl. 21, figs. A. R.; Brit. Mus. (Harl. 4751, fol. 10). This characteristic is referred to by St. Jerome, and seems to be founded on the text in Isaiah (lxv. 4), “which remain among the graves and lodge in the monuments.”

in its mouth, but it does not resemble the drawings in the MSS. very closely. However, the inscription leaves no doubt as to the intention of the artist.

*The Caladrius*<sup>36</sup> (Lat. *calatrius*, *kaladrius*, *charadrius*, and *kalandria*; Fr. *caladres*<sup>37</sup>).—Caladrius is the name of a bird found in the country of Jerusalem. It is perfectly white, is shaped like a thrush, and has two upright horns on the top of its head. Moses forbids the caladrius to be eaten (Deut. xiv, 18). This bird is found in the courts of kings,<sup>38</sup> and when anyone is ill it can tell whether he will live or die. If the disease is dangerous the caladrius will turn away its head and the man will die; but if it is not fatal the bird looks towards the sick man, thus drawing the disease to itself, and the patient will live. The caladrius flies up in the air towards the sun, and all his infirmity disappears. The bird has a great bone in its thigh, the marrow of which, if used as an ointment, will restore sight to the blind.

The caladrius signifies Christ, who is free from all blemish of sin, and in the whiteness of whose purity the Devil can discover no dark spot. The Lord came down from heaven to save the Jews, but He averted His face from them on account of their unbelief, and turned towards the Gentiles, taking our infirmities upon Him, and bearing our transgressions. As the caladrius [353] flies up in the air, so Christ, when He ascended on high, led captivity captive (Ephes. iv, 8). The curative property of the marrow of the bird's thigh-bone is typical of the anointing of the chrism, by which the spiritual eyes of the Christian are opened. The allegory of the caladrius is probably founded partly on the texts in the Bible speaking of God showing His displeasure by turning away His face (Ezek. vii, 22), and the verse in the Psalms (lxxx, 7), "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

The illustrations in the MSS. generally correspond exactly with the text, and show a bird perched on the end of the sick man's bed, either looking towards him or away from him. The sick man often wears a crown, in reference to the passage in the bestiary, which says that the caladrius is found in the courts of kings. In the Paris Arsenal MS.<sup>39</sup> the caladrius with two horns on its head is seen flying away towards heaven to get rid of the disease. Upon the sculpture at Alne the bird is looking into the face of the sick man, who is therefore destined to recover.

*The Terrebolen, or two Stones which emit Fire*<sup>40</sup> (Lat. *lapides igniferi*, *turobolem*, *terrebolen*, *terrebuli*, and *caerobolim*; Fr. *les deux pierres qui rendent feu*).—Philippe de Thaun tells us that "turrobolen"<sup>41</sup> are stones of such a nature that when near together they will emit fire, but when far apart they will not do so. These stones are found in the East, upon a mountain, and one has naturally the semblance of a man, and the other takes the form of a very beautiful woman. The two stones which emit fire typify the love between the opposite sexes, which is kindled by close contact, and those who wish to lead a life of chastity should avoid the society of women, and thus escape the temptations that assailed Adam, Solomon, David, and Samson.

In the illustrated bestiaries<sup>42</sup> the lapides igniferi are always represented, as at Alne, in the shape of a man and woman enveloped in flames, which consume the whole mountain where they are found. The miniature in the tenth century MS. at [354] Brussels<sup>43</sup> differs in the treatment of the subject from that found in the later MSS. It shows a woman holding the two stones in her hand, one being ring-shaped, and the other a round ball bursting out into flame. In front stands a man extending his hand towards the stones, and behind is an angel of darkness.

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36 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, p. 129; Hippeau, p. 89; Wright, p. 112.

37 Calandre in modern French is equivalent to the English "lark".

38 Perhaps suggested by Dan. i, 4. in reference to the knowledge of the caladrius.

39 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, pl. 19, fig. F.

40 *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 125; Hippeau, p. 84; Wright, p. 124.

41 Perhaps *πυροβάλοι λίθοι*, or fire stones.

42 Cahier and Martin, vol. ii, pl. 19, fig. E.

43 Cahier and Martin. vol. ii, pl. 24, fig. B, Y.



*The Whale*<sup>44</sup> ( Lat. *cetus magnus aspidohelones, aspis chelone, aspedocalane, aspidotestudo*; Fr. *lacovie*; Sax. *fastitocalon*).—The whale is a great monster called “fasticalon”, that dwells in the ocean. It covers its back with sea-sand, and raising itself out of the water, remains motionless, so that the sailors mistake it for an island.

“And they fasten  
the high prowed ships  
to that false land  
with anchor ropes  
settle their Seahorses  
at the sea’s end,  
and then on to that island  
mount  
bold of spirit;  
the vessels stand  
fast by the shore  
by the stream encircled  
then encamp  
weary in mind,  
the sea farers  
(they of peril dream not)  
on that island,  
they waken flame  
a high fire kindle.”

Then the whale, feeling the heat and the weight of the ship with its freight, makes a sudden plunge, and—

“into the salt wave  
with the bark  
down goes,  
the ocean’s guest  
seeks the abyss,  
and then, in the hall of death  
to the flood commits  
ship with men.”

[<sup>355</sup> The whale signifies the Devil; the sands are the riches of this world; the ship is the body that should be guided by the soul, acting as steersman, and the sea is the world. When we put our trust most in the pleasures of this life, and think we are quite safe, suddenly, without any warning, the Devil drags us down to hell. The whale has another property; when he is hungry and—

“lusts after food  
then oceanward  
his mouth opens  
his wide lips,  
a pleasant odour

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44 *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 151; Hippeau, p. 151; Wright, p. 108; *Codex Exoniensis*, p. 360.

comes from his inside,  
so that thereby other  
kinds of sea fishes  
are deceived;  
eager they swim to  
where the sweet odour  
cometh out;  
they there enter  
in heedless shoal,  
till the wide jaw  
is filled;  
then suddenly  
around they prey  
together crash  
the grim gums.”

The whale is the Devil, and the sweet smell which issues from his mouth signifies the seductive nature of the snares of the Tempter, who having caught his victim—

“then he his grim  
gums dashes  
after the death-pang  
fast together,  
Hell’s latticed doors have not  
return or escape,  
outlet ever,  
for those who enter  
any more than the fishes,  
sporting in the ocean  
from the whale’s gripe  
can turn.”

The illustrations in the MSS. show a huge sea-monster, supporting [356] a ship on its back, together with a lighted fire, over which a cooking-pot is boiling: trees are also growing out of its body. A shoal of small fishes are rushing into the whale’s open jaws.<sup>45</sup>

Upon the sculpture at Alne the ship only is seen, the whale and other accessories being omitted, probably from want of room.

*The Dragon.*—The inscription round one of the medallions at Alne has been obliterated, although the blank space in the ornament for it still remains. The animal represented is a winged dragon, the appearance of which we are familiar with from its frequent occurrence in the contest with St. Michael and St. George, and in the curious legend of St. Margaret. We do not find the dragon described by itself like the other animals in the bestiary, but it is noticed incidentally as flying away from the panther,<sup>46</sup> as attacking the young elephants,<sup>47</sup> and as being afraid of the doves upon the Tree of Life, or *Arbor peredixion*.<sup>48</sup> In all cases the dragon is the personification of evil, the symbolism being founded on the text in the Revelations (xx, 2),

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45 Cahier and Martin, vol. iii, p. 251, and vol. ii. pl. 22, fig. B. C.

46 *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 235.

47 *Ibid.*, vol. iv, p. 55.

48 *Ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 284.

speaking of “the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan.” In Norman sculpture the dragon is represented with a scaly body ending in a serpent’s tail, either looped or knotted. It has two wings, and two forefeet armed with formidable claws. The head is that of a ferocious beast with ears, and its power of doing harm is shown by the sharp teeth and barbed sting.

Dragons<sup>49</sup> are frequently referred to in the Old Testament—(1) as inhabiting desert places, the resort of doleful creatures, owls, satyrs, and wild beasts, and thus signifying utter desolation (Isaiah xiii, 22; Jeremiah ix, 11; Job xxx, 29; Micah i, 8; Psalm xlv, 19); (2) as sea monsters, in connection with the passage of the Red Sea (Psalm lxxiv, 13; Isaiah li, 9; Ezekiel xxix, 3); (3) as venomous reptiles (Deut. xxxii, 33; Psalm xci, 13).

[<sup>357</sup> We have now succeeded in showing that the system of mystic zoology contained in the mediæval bestiaries was not only recognised by the Church as a means of conveying religious instruction as far back as the eighth century, but also that animal symbolism, corresponding exactly with that of the MSS., was used for the decoration of ecclesiastical buildings of the twelfth century, side by side with scenes from Scripture and such sacred devices as the Agnus Dei. It must, however, be clearly understood that the bestiaries only explain part of the symbolism found on early sculptures, and that there is much which is still very obscure.

We shall endeavour, first, to see what further light can be thrown on the art of the twelfth century by means of the bestiaries, and then to find out whether there are any connecting links between the decorative features of the Norman churches and the subjects on the Celtic crosses. The only method of investigation which holds out any prospect of success is to start from the known and gradually work backwards to the unknown. Thus, with regard to the examples already considered, we stand on firm ground, as the subjects have been identified either by inscriptions, or by their exact correspondence with the illustrations and descriptions found in contemporary MSS. One great difficulty which meets us at the outset is, that the artists who carved the animals were often quite ignorant of the outward appearance of those belonging to foreign countries, and consequently they had either to draw on their imagination, or follow the written descriptions as best they could. Even supposing them to have illuminated MSS. to copy from, the miniatures are often wholly unlike the real animals. Thus, a tiger is described as a kind of serpent, and is actually drawn as a dragon with wings. A crocodile is represented as a four-legged beast like a bear. The sculptures at Alne do not in the least resemble the subjects specified in the inscriptions. Then, again, the names of the beasts in Hebrew are differently rendered in the Vulgate and in our version of the Bible. Some of the animals may be identified by comparison with those occurring in scenes from Scripture and on the signs of the Zodiac, as follows:—

Ass—Nativity; Flight into Egypt; Entry into Jerusalem.

Basilisk—Christ treading on.

Bear—and children who mocked Elisha: slain by David. [358]

Beasts—named by Adam; going into the Ark.

Bull—symbol of St. Luke; sign of Zodiac.

Calf—of gold in the wilderness; symbol of St. Luke.

Camel—Rebekah at the Well; Joseph sold to the Ishmaelites.

Cock—St. Peter denying Christ.

Dove—leaving the Ark. [359]

Dragon—St Michael and; Christ treading on; of the Apocalypse.

Eagle—symbol of St. John.

Fish—Miracle of Loaves and Fishes; sign of Zodiac; miraculous draught of.

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<sup>49</sup> Two distinct Hebrew words, *Tan* and *Tammin*, are translated dragons in our version of the Bible (see Tristram’s *Nat. History of the Bible*, p. 81.



Fig. 128.—Irish Zodiac, with names of the twelve Apostles and twelve Tribes of Judah, from the *Liber S. Isidori*, in the library at Bâle, in Switzerland.



Fig. 129.—The Lion of St. Mark and the Calf of St. Luke. from the Gospels of Darrow.



Fig. 130.—Lion (?) on Cross at Papil, Isle of Burra, Shetland.

Goat—sign of Zodiac.

Horse—Passage of Red Sea; Ascent of Elijah; of the Apocalypse.

Lamb—Agnus Dei.

Lion—Samson and; David and; Daniel and; symbol of St. Mark; sign of Zodiac; Christ treading on; of the Tribe of Judah, opening the Book with the Seven Seals in the Apocalypse.

Ox—Nativity.

Ram—Sacrifice of Isaac; sign of Zodiac.

Raven—leaving the Ark; bringing food to Elijah.

Serpent—Temptation of Adam and Eve; Christ treading on.

Sheep—Shepherds and flocks, and the Nativity; David and his flock.

Swine—Miracle of Healing the Demoniac.

Turtle-doves—Presentation in the Temple. [360]

The two fabulous creatures which occur most frequently in Norman sculpture, and also on Celtic crosses, are the Syren and the Centaur. We are familiar with the appearance of both, from their having been copied from classical originals. The Centaur is mentioned in the bestiary in connection with the Syren, and also as Sagittarius fighting with the savage man. The following are the descriptions given.

*The Syren and Centaur*<sup>50</sup> (Lat. *serena et unocentaurus, syrena, honocentar*; Fr. *seraine, uncor*).—Isaiah the Prophet says (ch. xiii, 21) of Babylon, “Their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs<sup>51</sup> shall dance there”; which is quoted thus in the bestiaries:

“Syrens and demons shall dance there, and ‘herenacii’ and centaurs shall dwell in their houses.” The Picardy bestiary tells us that there are three kinds of syrens, two of which are half woman and half fish, and the other half woman and half bird. The older Latin bestiaries only mention the latter kind; and Philippe de

<sup>50</sup> *Mélanges d’Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 172; Hippeau, *Le Bestiaire Divin*, p. 114; Wright’s *Popular Treatises on Science during the Middle Ages*, pp. 93 and 98.

<sup>51</sup> Hebrew *sa’ir* or he-goat, translated “devils” in Lev. xvii, 7, and 2 Chron. xi, 15; see Tristram.—*Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 131.

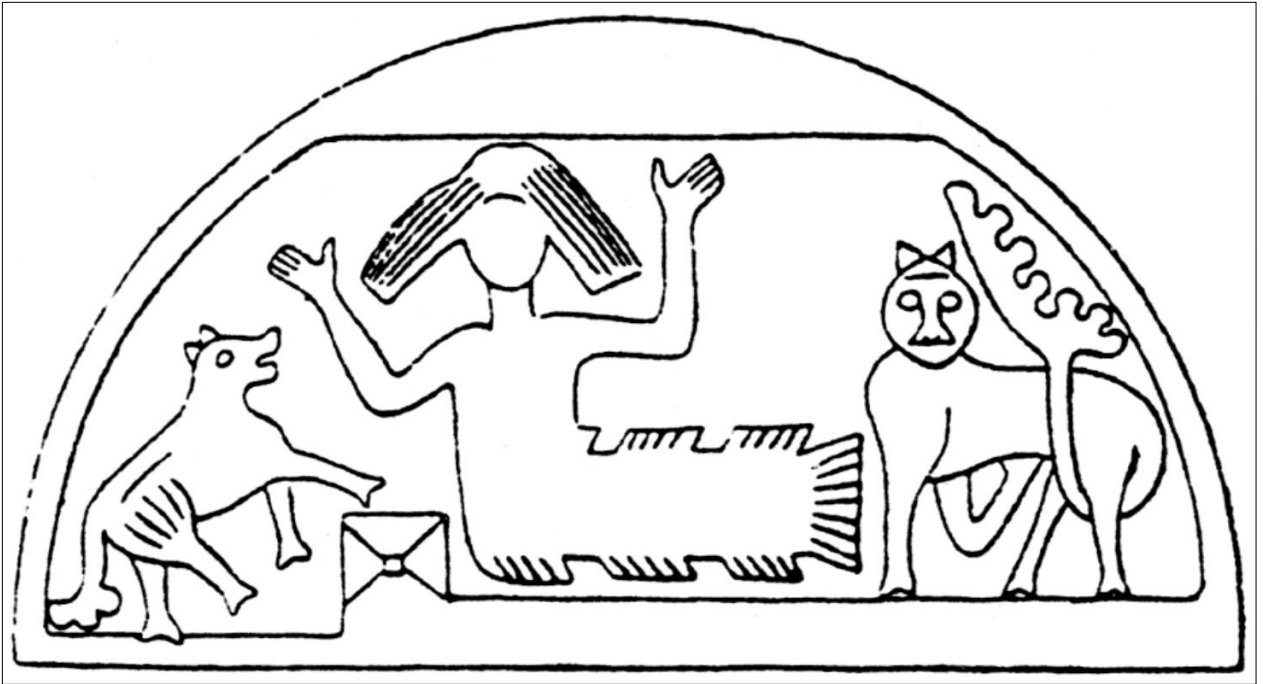


Fig.131.—Siren on tympanum of doorway at Stow Longs, Huntingdonshire.

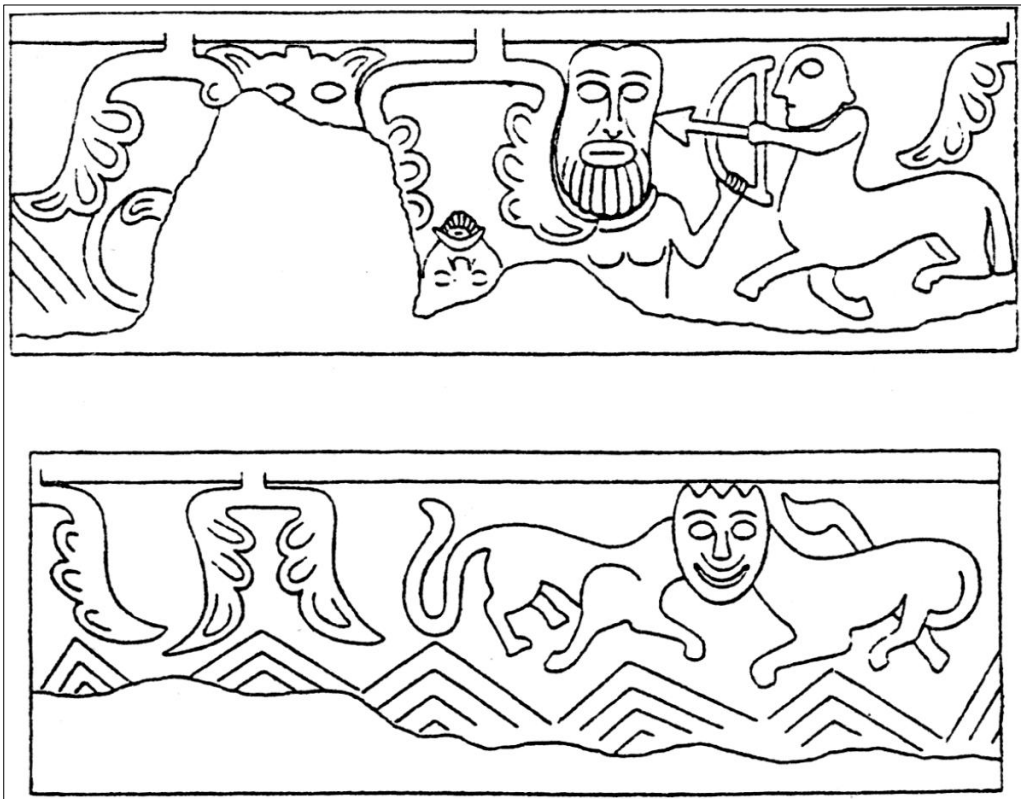


Fig. 132.—Sagittarius and the Savage Man, on font at West Rounton, Yorkshire.

Thaun describes the syren as being a woman down to the waist, with the feet of a falcon and the tail of a fish.

The syren is death-bearing, and sings at the approach of the storm, but weeps in fine weather. [361]

The Picardy bestiary says that the three kinds of syrens each produce a different sort of music, one playing on a horn, another on a harp, whilst the third sings. When the sailors hear the delicious strains of music wafted over the deep, they are drawn towards the place whence the sound proceeds, and the soft modulations of the syren's voice fall sweetly on their ears, charming their senses, and lulling the seafarers to sleep. As soon as the syrens see that the sailors are wrapped in deep slumber, they seize them and tear their flesh to pieces. Thus the Devil deceives those who listen to his seductive voice, luring them on to destruction, and when he has rendered their souls insensible by the pleasures of the world, he falls upon them and kills them.

The onocentaur (which is called Sagittarius<sup>52</sup>) has the front part like a man, and the hind-quarters and legs of an ass. The onocentaur may be compared to double-hearted and double-tongued men, who appear in front to be good but are evil behind. [362]

*Sagittarius and the Savage Man*<sup>53</sup> (Fr. *sagetaire, salvage home*).—In the deserts of India there are savages who have one horn in the middle of the forehead. They inhabit high trees, on account of the wild beasts, such as serpents, dragons, griffins, bears, and lions, which are very plentiful in those parts. These savages are all naked, except when one of them has fought with a lion and killed it, and then he uses the skin as a garment. The savages make war on the Sagittarii and the Sagittarii on them.

The war between the savages and the Sagittarii signifies the contest between the soul and the flesh. The savages living in trees for fear of the wild beasts, signifies the soul which is peace-able and dislikes war, loving his Creator. The savage fighting with the lion is like the soul which battles with the flesh and overcomes it.

Sagittarius is represented in the illustrations of the bestiary, as on the signs of the Zodiac, half horse, half man, shooting with a bow and arrow at a savage clothed in a lion's skin, having a horn on the top of his head.<sup>54</sup> He is thus seen on the west front of [363] Chartres Cathedral.<sup>55</sup> on a Norman font at West Rounton in Yorkshire, and on the arch of the doorway at Bishop Wilton, Yorkshire. In other cases Sagittarius is contending with a [364] lion,<sup>56</sup> or a dragon,<sup>57</sup> or suckling its young.<sup>58</sup> The centaur is some-times represented, as on the maps of the stars, holding up a hare which it is transfixing with a spear;<sup>59</sup> or as Chiron, with a herb or branch in its hand.

In the latter form we find it in an eleventh century Saxon herbal of Apuleius in the British Museum, both as the frontispiece of the volume and in illustration of the mugwort, or artemisia, the curative properties of which are supposed to have been revealed to Chiron by Artemis.<sup>60</sup>

On the tympanum of the west doorway of Ault Hucknall Church in Derbyshire, is a very remarkable figure of a centaur with a nimbus round the head, holding a branch in its right hand and the cross in the left. Facing the centaur is a huge beast followed by a small animal. On the cross at Meigle in [365] Perthshire,

52 Picardy bestiary.

53 *Mélanges*, vol. iv. p. 76.

54 Cahier and Martin.

55 Cahier and Martin, *Nouveaux Mélanges d'Archéologie—Curiosités Mystérieuses*, p. 191.

56 Tympana at Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset (inscribed); Kencott, Oxon; Cormac's Chapel, Rock of Cashel, Ireland; capital of column, Adel, Yorkshire; also on the eleventh century bronze doors of Augsburg Cathedral, Germany.

57 Fonts at Darenth, Kent; Hook Norton, Oxon (inscribed); and on capital of column of west doorway of Tutbury Church, Stafford. Sagittarius shooting at a stag is represented on the tympanum at D'Urville in Normandy (*Proc. Soc. Ant. de la Normandie—Atlas*), and on the capitals of the columns of the crypt at Parize le Chatel, Nièvre, France (De Caumont, *Abécédaire d'Archéologie*, p. 272).

58 Capital of column of south door of Iffley Church, Oxon; also in Catacombs (D'Agincourt, vol. v, pl. 6).

59 Brussels bestiary: Cahier and Martin, vol. ii.

60 Harl. 1795: Cockayne's *Anglo-Saxon Leechdoms*, p. 103.

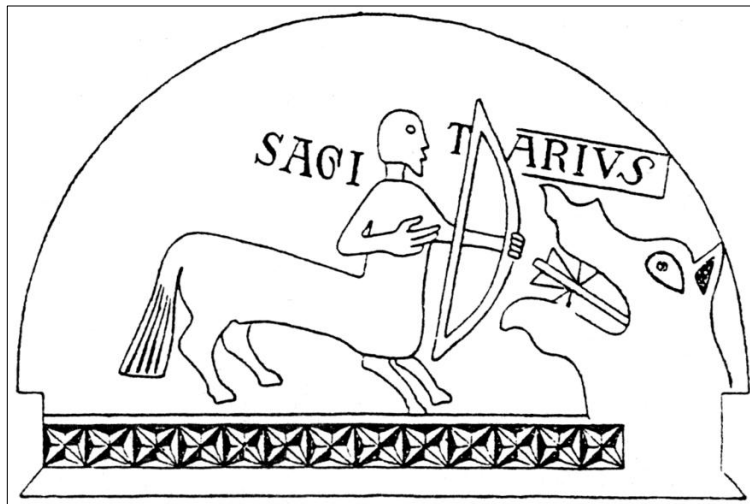


Fig. 133.—Sagittarius shooting a monster, on tympanum of doorway at Kencott, Oxfordshire.

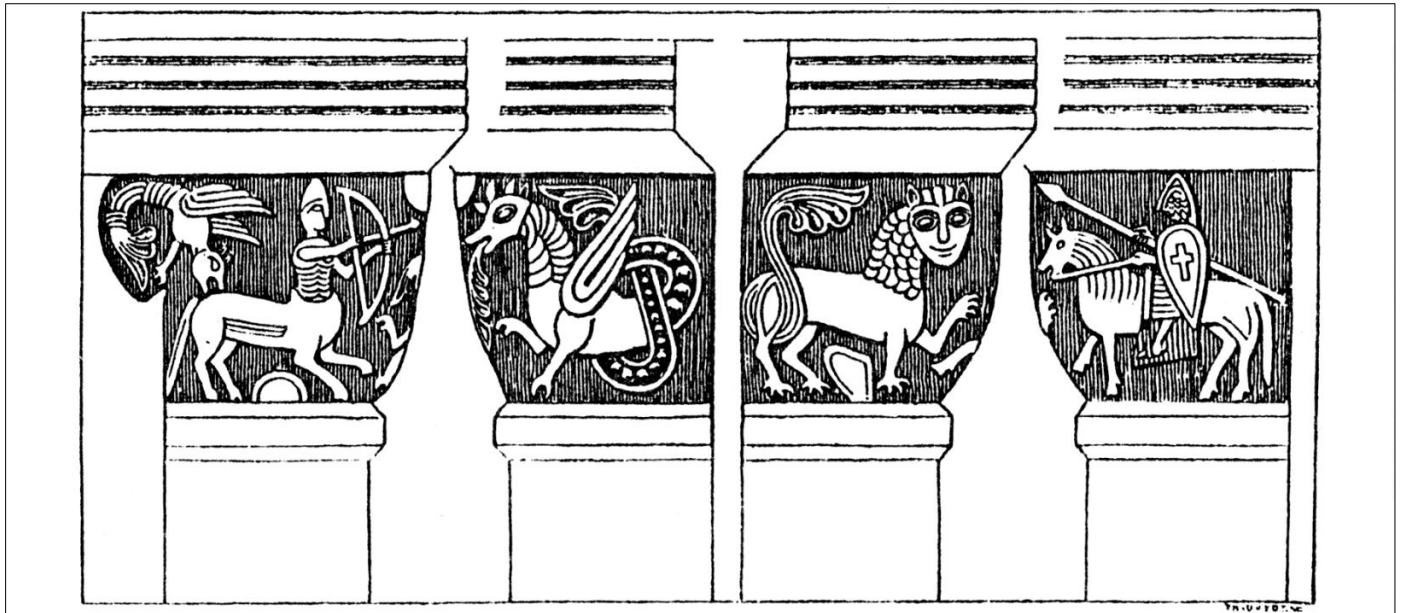


Fig. 134.—Sagittarius shooting at a Dragon, on capital of pillar of chancel at Adel, Yorkshire.

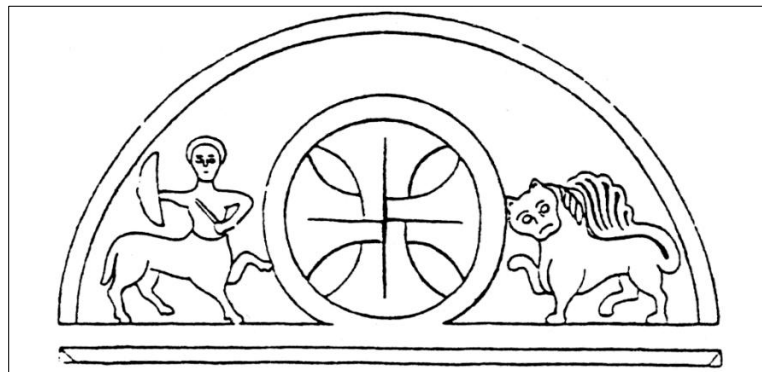


Fig. 135.—Centaur and Lion, on tympanum of doorway at Salford, Oxfordshire.



is a centaur with a branch and an axe in each hand on the cross at Glamis Manse in Forfarshire there is a similar figure, but without the branch; on the cross at Aberlemno in Forfarshire the centaur holds a branch and a club.

Centaur is also sculptured on the bases of the crosses at Monasterboice and Sells (Street) in Ireland (see figs. 78 and 81).

Occasionally centaurs are seen without the bow and arrow, or any other object held in the hand. Thus, on the font at Bridekirk, Cumberland, one of these creatures is represented strangling two dragons; and on the jambs of the chancel-arch at Beckford, Gloucestershire, we have a beast half man, half [366] horse, holding up one hand, and with a spear upright in front. On one of the medallions on the arch of the doorway of St. Margaret's Walmgate, York, is a fight between a centaur and a serpent.

There is a curious incident related in St. Jerome's *Life of St. Paul*, of how St. Anthony met a satyr, and was directed by a centaur<sup>61</sup> to the cave of St. Paul in the desert. This story is [367] also incorporated in the Greek bestiary,<sup>62</sup> and is intended to show that the beasts acknowledge Christ, although man denies Him, and that man tries to preserve the divine character which heaven has impressed upon him.

The story of Ulysses and the Syrens was adapted to Christian purposes as early as the third century, being referred to by the author of the *Philosophumena*,<sup>63</sup> and by St. Clement of Alexandria.<sup>64</sup> The scene is represented on a sculptured sarcophagus from the crypt of Lucina at Rome,<sup>65</sup> the syrens being shown with human bodies, and the wings and feet of a bird. In the [368] tenth century bestiary at Brussels the syrens are of similar shape, but in later times the half-woman, half-fish form was preferred.

A very interesting article on this subject, by Miss Jane E. Harrison, appeared in *The Magazine of Art* for February 1887, in which illustrations of the different shapes of syrens are given from Greek vases, and from the twelfth century MS. of Herrade's *Hortus Deliciarum*, formerly existing at Strasbourg. On the West Highland cross at Campbeltown in Argyleshire we have both shapes together. The mermaid is a favourite subject in Norman sculpture, and is generally shown holding out tresses of hair on each side of the body.<sup>66</sup> In the illuminated MSS. she holds a looking-glass and a comb, or a fish, or is playing on a musical instrument. Mermaids are often carved on the *misereres* of the stalls in cathedrals and churches.<sup>67</sup> There are extremely curious sculptures of syrens suckling their young<sup>68</sup> on the capitals of columns at Bâle and Fribourg en Brigsau Cathedrals in Switzerland,<sup>69</sup> recalling the centaurs at Iffley, previously referred to.

The syren is often portrayed with a double tail, the ends of which are held up by the hands at each side,<sup>70</sup> but examples of this class seem to be more common abroad<sup>71</sup> than in this country. Sometimes the syren carries a fish in each hand, as on the curious sculptured capital of a column at Cunhault-sur-Loire in France,

[ 369] illustrated in Cahier and Martin's *Nouveaux Mélanges d'Archéologie*. In connection with the subject of marine monsters, the tympana of the west and south doorways at Long

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61 Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, vol. xxiii; Hieronymi, *Vita S. Pauli Eremitæ*.

62 Emile Legrand, *Le Physiologus*, fourteenth century Greek MS. in the Paris Library.

63 Vii, 1. Ante-Nicene Lib., p. 267.

64 *Exhort, ad Gentes*, c. xii.

65 Northcote and Brownlow, *Roma Sotterranea*, vol. ii. p. 240.

66 On the tympanum of the doorway of the chancel of Stow Longa Church, Huntingdonshire, the syren is holding up both hands; other examples occur on the details of doorways at Bishop Wilton, Barton-le-Street, and Alne in Yorkshire. A syren with a knotted tail is sculptured on the tympanum of the west doorway of Long Marton Church, Westmoreland.

67 Exeter, Winchester, Chichester, and Bristol Cathedrals, and Boston Church, Lincolnshire (see Reliquary, vol. xix, p. 200).

68 See Lamentations (iv, 3), "Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones."

69 *Nouveaux Mélanges d'Archéologie—Curiosités Mystérieuses*, p. 142.

70 The font at St. Peter's, Cambridge, has figures of this kind at the four corners.

71 As on the capitals at Puce, Gironde, and Parize le Chatel, Nièvre, France; Zurich Cathedral, Switzerland. (See Baring Gould's *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, article "Melusina"; De Caumont, *Abécédaire d'Archéologie*, and *Mittheilungen der antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich*, vol. ii.)

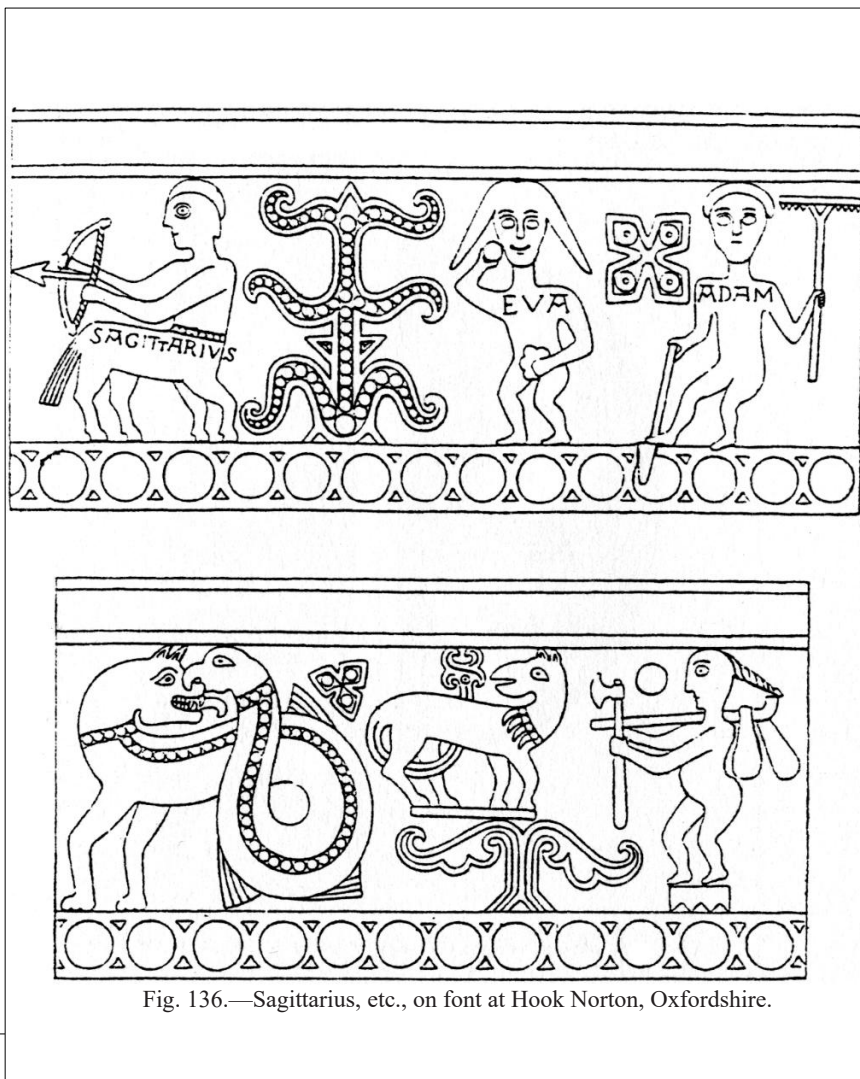


Fig. 136.—Sagittarius, etc., on font at Hook Norton, Oxfordshire.



Fig. 137.—Centaur, with branch of tree and cross, on tympanum of doorway at Ault Hucknall, Derbyshire.



Fig 138.—Centaur with pair of axes, on Cross at Glamis Manse.

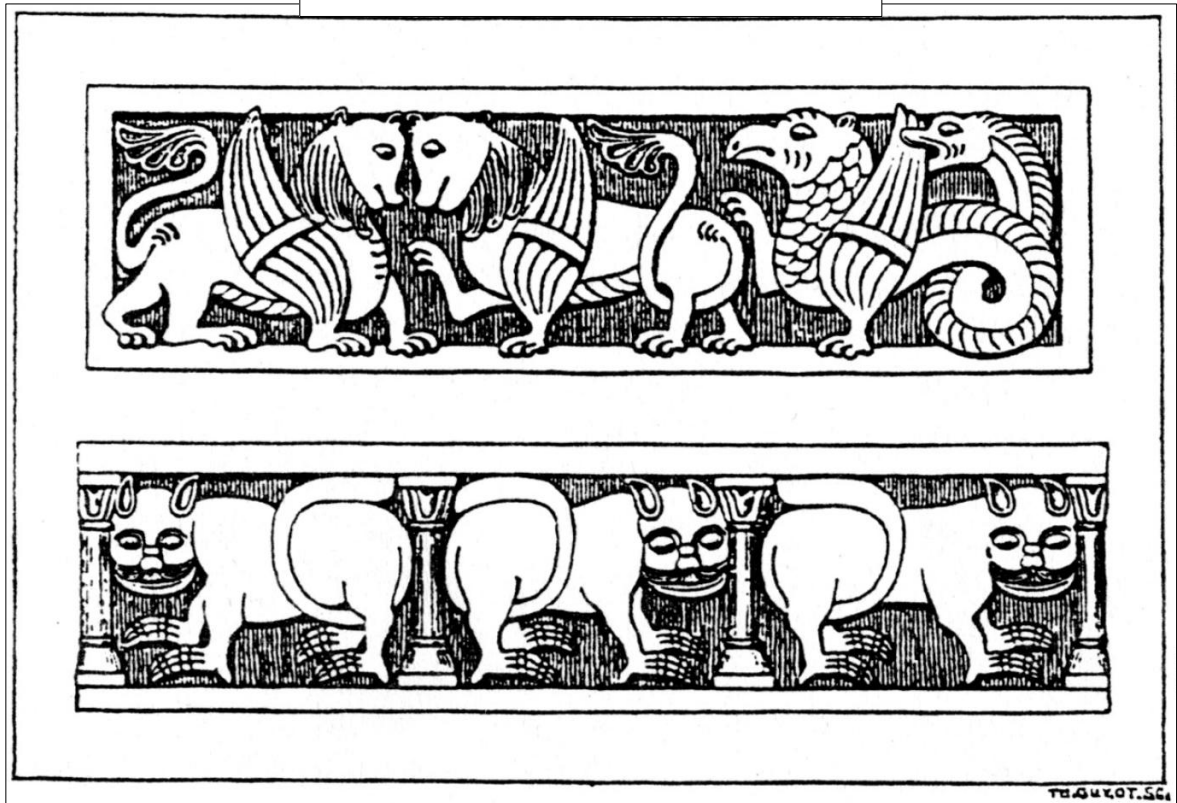


Fig. 139.—Griffin and other beasts, on fonts at Lincoln Cathedral and St. Peters, Ipswich.

Marton in Westmoreland present some curious features. The winged dragon with its knotted tail occurs on both tympana, in one case associated with the figure of a male syren or merman, and in the other side by side with a huge beast with outstretched wings, possibly intended for the Serra, which is thus described in the bestiary.

*The Serra*<sup>72</sup> (Lat. *serra*; Fr. *serre*).—The serra is a sea monster, with the head of a lion and the tail of a fish. It has immense wings, which it spreads out in order to catch all the wind, and then follows ships, trying to overtake them. But after having gone thirty or forty stadia, and found its efforts to overtake the ship unavailing, it folds its wings and disappears beneath the waves. The ship is the good man who keeps steadily on his way, “persevering to the end” (Matt. xxiv, 13), and thus passes safely through the tempests of this world with-out shipwreck. The serra is the man of good intentions, who begins by pursuing the path of virtue, but is gradually led away by the pleasures and temptations of this world, till at last he is overwhelmed by the waters of destruction.

There are many passages in the Old Testament<sup>73</sup> referring to monsters of the deep, the most striking being that in Isaiah (xxvii, 1), “In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” I am not aware that there is any direct evidence connecting these texts with the Norman sculptures, but they are sufficient to show that it is not necessary to go beyond the Scriptures for an explanation of the dragons with knotted and twisted tails, which are of such frequent occurrence on the decorative features of buildings of the twelfth century.

On the font at Lincoln Cathedral we have a fabulous creature represented with wings and the beak of a bird, but the body [370] and feet of a large beast like the lion. This corresponds with the illustrations of the griffin in the bestiaries, of which the following description is given.

*The Griffin*<sup>74</sup> (Fr. *gripons*).—The griffin is a kind of bird which inhabits the deserts of India, where it can find nothing to eat. This bird is so strong that it can fly away with a live cow and carry it to feed its young with. The griffin signifies the Devil, who carries off the soul of the wicked man to the deserts of hell.

The above story may perhaps explain the winged beast seizing a horse or other animal by the back of the neck, preparatory to flying away with it, on an early sculptured slab at St. Andrew’s, Fifeshire.<sup>75</sup>

The most important Christian types to be found in the bestiary are the ones which symbolise the Resurrection of our Lord. These may be divided into two classes—(1) where the young of some animal (like the lion) or bird (like the pelican) are brought [371] to life after being dead three days; and (2) where a man or beast is disgorged by a monster, or breaks through his body. To the latter class belong the stories of Jonah and the Whale, St. Margaret and the Dragon, and the Crocodile and the Hydra, which latter is as follows.

*The Crocodile and the Hydra*<sup>76</sup> (Lat. *crocodilus*, *crocodrillus*, *corchodrillus*, *ydris*, *hildris*; Fr. *cocodrille*, *coquatrix*, *crocodile*, *hydre*, *ydres*).—The crocodile is a reptile dwelling in marshes, and the hydra is a long, thin serpent. Both live on the banks of the Nile, and there is a deadly hatred between them. When the hydra sees the crocodile asleep with its mouth open on the banks of the river, it rolls itself in the mud, so that it can the more easily insert itself stealthily between the crocodile’s jaws, who then swallows the hydra unawares. As soon as the hydra gets into the inside of the crocodile it bursts the entrails of the beast asunder and comes

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72 *Mélanges*, vol. ii. p. 121; Hippeau, p. 86; Wright, p. 103.

73 Psalms lxxiv, 13; Ezekiel xxix, 3, and xxxii. 2; Isaiah 9, in connection with Pharaoh and the Passage of the Red Sea, as displaying the power of God.

74 *Mélanges*, vol. ii, p. 226.

75 Stuart’s *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. i, p1. 61. Griffins are the creatures which are supposed to have carried Alexander up to heaven (see p. 285).

76 *Mélanges*, vol. iii, p. 212; Hippeau, p. 134; Wright, p. 85.

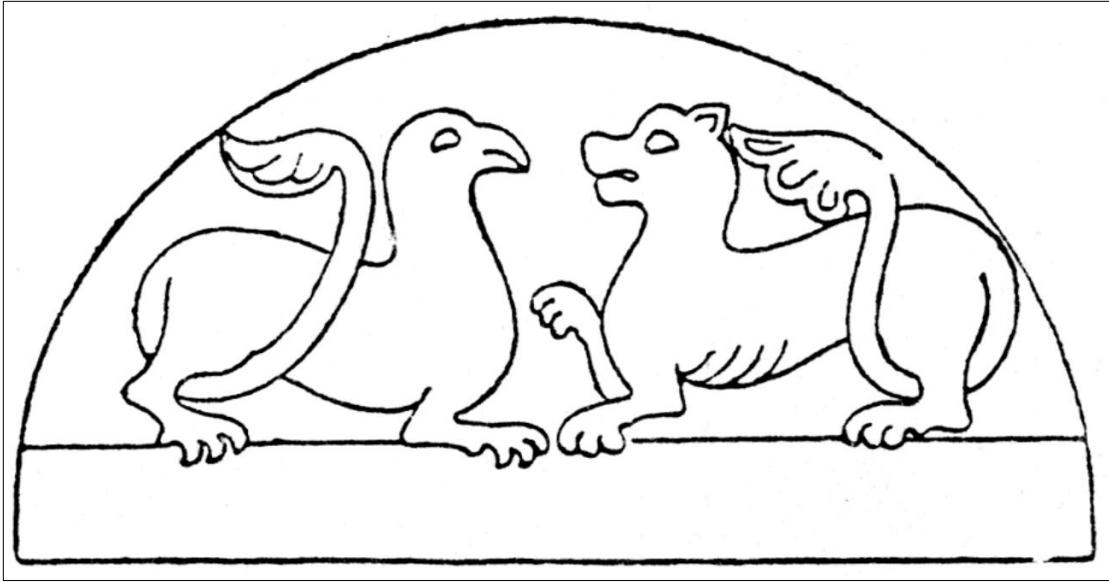


Fig. 140.—Griffin (?) on tympanum of doorway at Covington, Huntingdonshire.

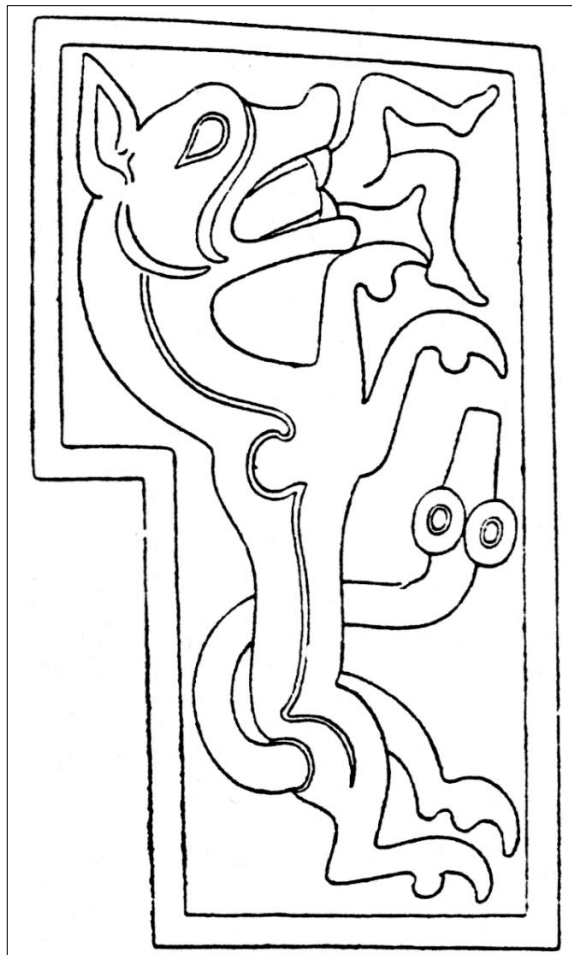


Fig. 141.—Monster disgoring or swallowing man, on Cross at Abbotsford, formerly at Woodwray, Forfarshire.

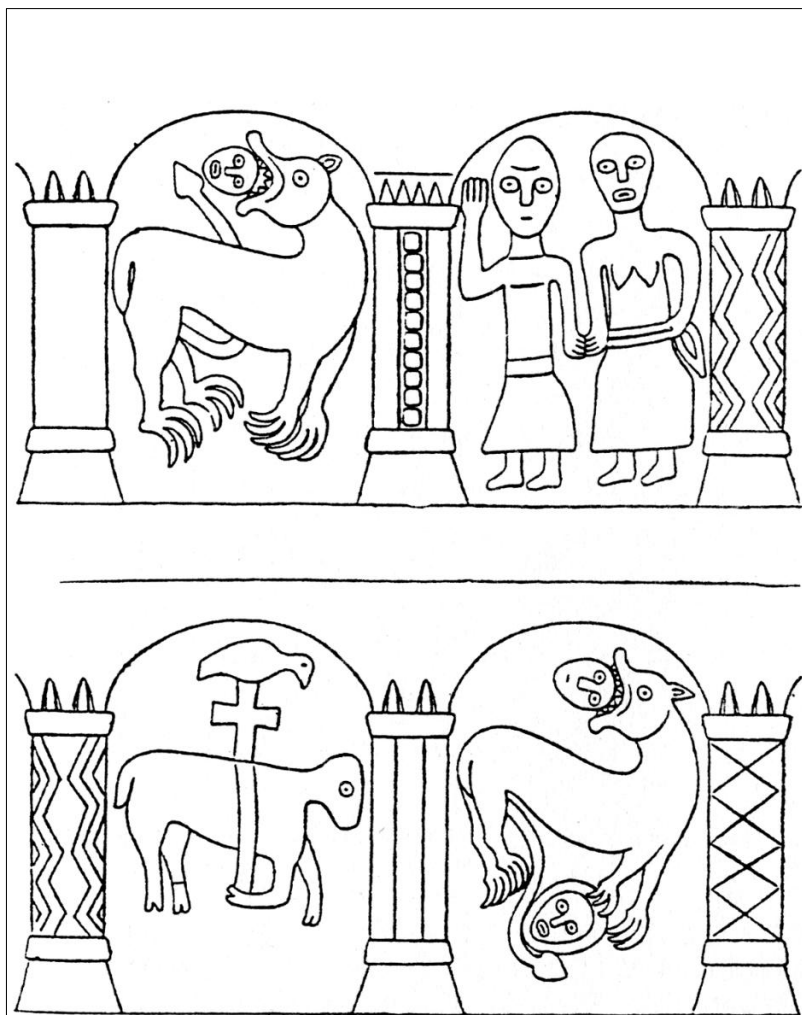


Fig. 142.—Beast with human head in its mouth, on font at Ilam, in Staffordshire.

forth alive. Thus, ~~Christ having taken our human nature upon Him, descended into hell, and bursting its bonds, led forth those He wished to save, alive, as the Evangelist testifies (Matt. xxvii, 52), “The graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose.”~~

Representations of monsters swallowing or disgorging human beings are to be found both on Celtic crosses<sup>77</sup> and in Norman sculpture.<sup>78</sup>

[372] In the Greek Painter’s Guide from Mount Athos,<sup>9</sup> it is specified that in the scene of the Last Judgment, “the sea giving up the dead” (Rev. xx, 13) shall be shown; and in the twelfth century MS. of the Hortus Deliciarum, formerly at Strasbourg, the following inscription is placed under the picture of this subject:—“Corpora et membra hominum a bestiis, et volucris et piscibus olim devorata nutu Dei repraesentantur, ut ex integra humana massa resurgant incorrupta corpora sanctorum quae non tantum per bestias, ut depictum est, afferentur, sed nutu Dei praesentabuntur.”

On the fonts at Ilam in Staffordshire, and Tissington in [373] Derbyshire, and on the tympanum at Barton Seagrave in Northamptonshire, beasts are sculptured having a human head in their

77 Dunfallandy and Gask, Perthshire, Woodway, Forfarshire (now at Abbotsford). See curious text in Isaiah (li, 44) in reference to this subject.

78 Bradbourne, Derbyshire.

79 Didron, p. 266.



Fig. 143.—Human head between two beasts, on wheel Cross at Kirk Braddan, Isle of Man.

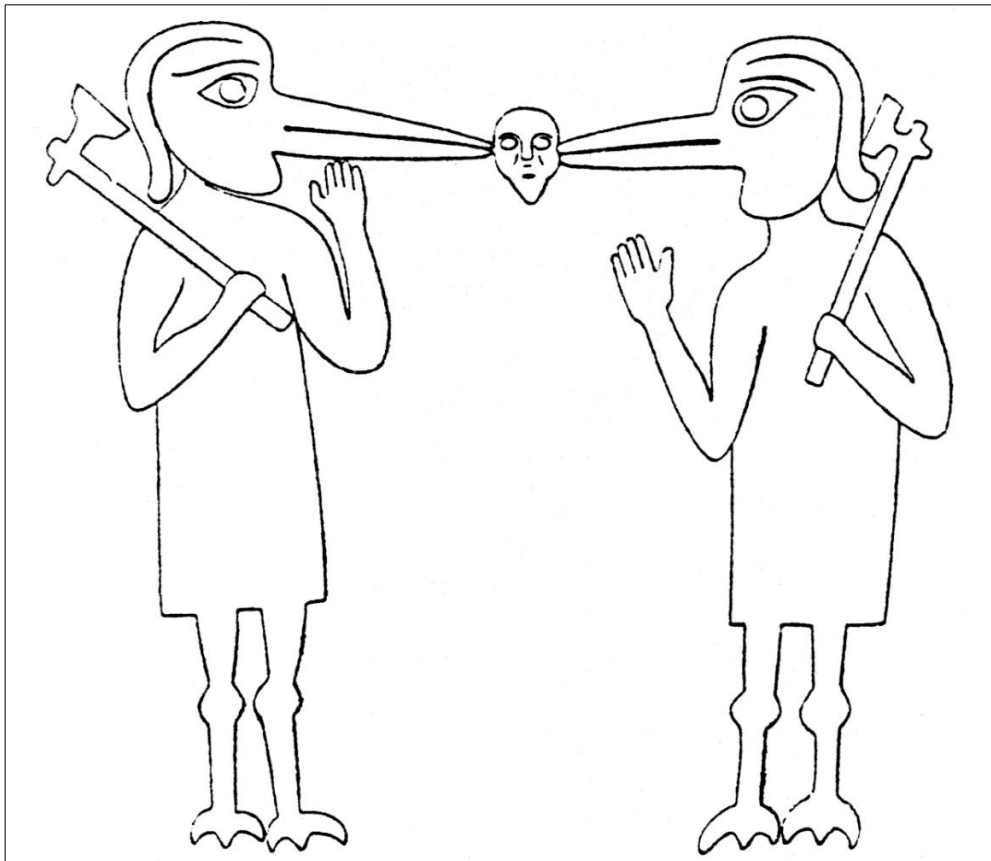


Fig. 144.—Human head between two beasts, on Cross at Papil, Isle of Barra, Shetland.

mouths, which may belong to the class of disgorging monsters. On some of the Celtic crosses<sup>80</sup> and in Norman sculpture<sup>81</sup> a human head is placed between two beasts,<sup>82</sup> but the meaning is not very clear,—unless, perhaps, it is a reduction of Daniel in [374] the Lions' Den to its simplest elements. In the last lecture reference was made to the frequent occurrence of a man between two beasts on Norman tympana.

The best groups of animals with which I am acquainted are on the tympana at Hognaston and Parwich, Derbyshire, and on the font at Melbury Bubb, Dorsetshire. On the two latter the stag<sup>83</sup> and the serpent are represented, of which we get the following explanation in the bestiary.

*The Stag* (Lat. *cervus*; Fr. *chers*, *cerf*).—It is said in the serpent's hole. The serpent is thus driven out, and the stag kills it with his feet.

The stag is the Lord Jesus Christ, who followed the dragon into the lower places of the earth, and by pouring forth blood and water from His side, drove away the Devil with the water of regeneration. David says (Ps. civ, 18), "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats" (quoted "stags" in the bestiary). The mountains are the Apostles and Prophets. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help" (Ps. cxxi, 1). The stag is of very frequent occurrence on Celtic crosses, gene-rally being hunted by men on horseback followed by hounds. In Norman sculpture hunting scenes I are less common, and the [376] wild boar takes the place of the stag. We occasionally see serpents and men together on the details of twelfth century buildings, in connection with which the following description from the bestiary may prove interesting.

*The Serpent*<sup>84</sup> (Lat. *Serpens*, and the same story is told of an animal whose name in French is *woutre*).—The third nature of [378] the serpent is, that if it sees a naked man it is afraid of him, but if it sees him clothed it makes a spring at him.

We understand this spiritually to mean that when the first man Adam was naked in Paradise the serpent could not harm him, but when he put on garments, that is to say, this mortal body, the serpent had then power over him. So, also, the Devil assaults the covetous man who is clothed in riches and vice, but he fears the man who is devoid of sin.

It is a curious fact that the elephant,<sup>85</sup> which is so common a subject in the later mediaeval MSS., does not appear to be represented in Norman sculpture, the earliest example in connection with an ecclesiastical building being on one of the carved misereres of the thirteenth century at Exeter Cathedral.<sup>86</sup> The description of this animal given in the bestiary is as follows.

*The Elephant and the Mandragora*<sup>87</sup> (Lat. *eliphans*, *mandragora*; Fr. *oliphant*, *oliphans*, *mandragloire*, *mandegloire*).—The elephant is a large beast, and so strong that it can easily carry a wooden tower full of armed men, once it is firmly fixed on his back, being thus made use of in battle by the Indians and Persians. The elephant lives 300 years, and the female requires two years to bring forth her young. When the time comes for the elephants to pair, the male takes the female to the river of Paradise in the East, where the mandragora grows. The female gives the herb to her mate to eat. When the mother is about to bring forth,

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80 Kirk Braddon, Isle of Man; Bressay, Shetland; Dunfallandy, Perthshire.

81 Glendalough, Ireland.

82 Perhaps this and the preceding may be explained by the texts in the Psalms. xxii, 20, and 2 Timothy iv. 17.

83 As on the tympanum at Little Langford, Wilts; on the font at St. Mary Church, Torquay: and on the capitals of the chancel-arches at Caistor, Northamptonshire, and Liverton in Cleveland, Yorkshire.

84 *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 144.

85 The elephant is not mentioned in our version of the Bible, except in the Apocrypha, although its existence may be inferred from the occurrence of the word ivory (1 Kings x, 22; and Ezek. xxvii, 17). Behemoth, which has been supposed to refer to the elephant, is simply the Hebrew word for a great beast (see Canon Tristram's *Natural History of the Bible*).

86 See *Building News*, Feb. 12, 1886. Many of the other misereres at Exeter seem to be taken from the bestiary, such as the syren holding up a fish, a male and female centaur, the basilisk with the head of a cock, the Tree of Life, with a head in the middle of the branches, the bird which lays its eggs in the sea, the lion, etc.

87 *Mélanges*, vol. iv. p. 55; Hippeau. p. 81; Wright, p. 99.



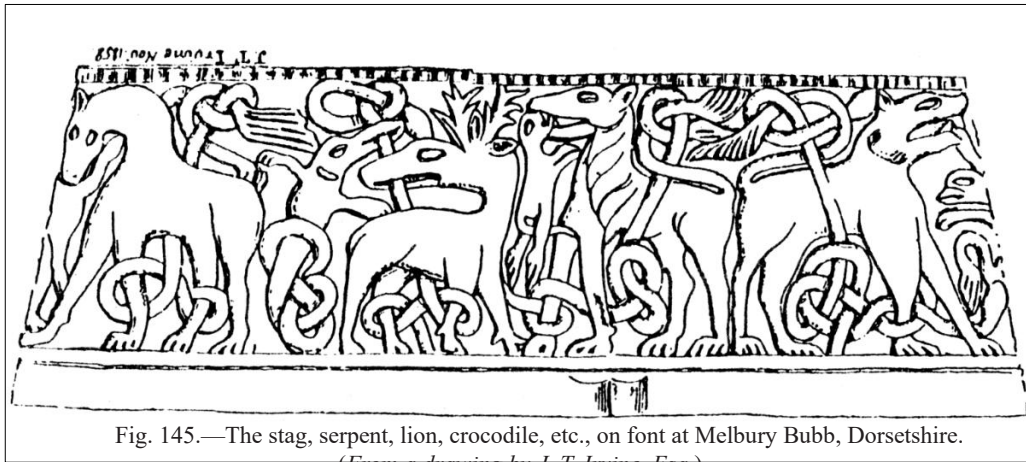


Fig. 145.—The stag, serpent, lion, crocodile, etc., on font at Melbury Bubb, Dorsetshire.  
*(From a drawing by J. T. Irvine, Esq.)*

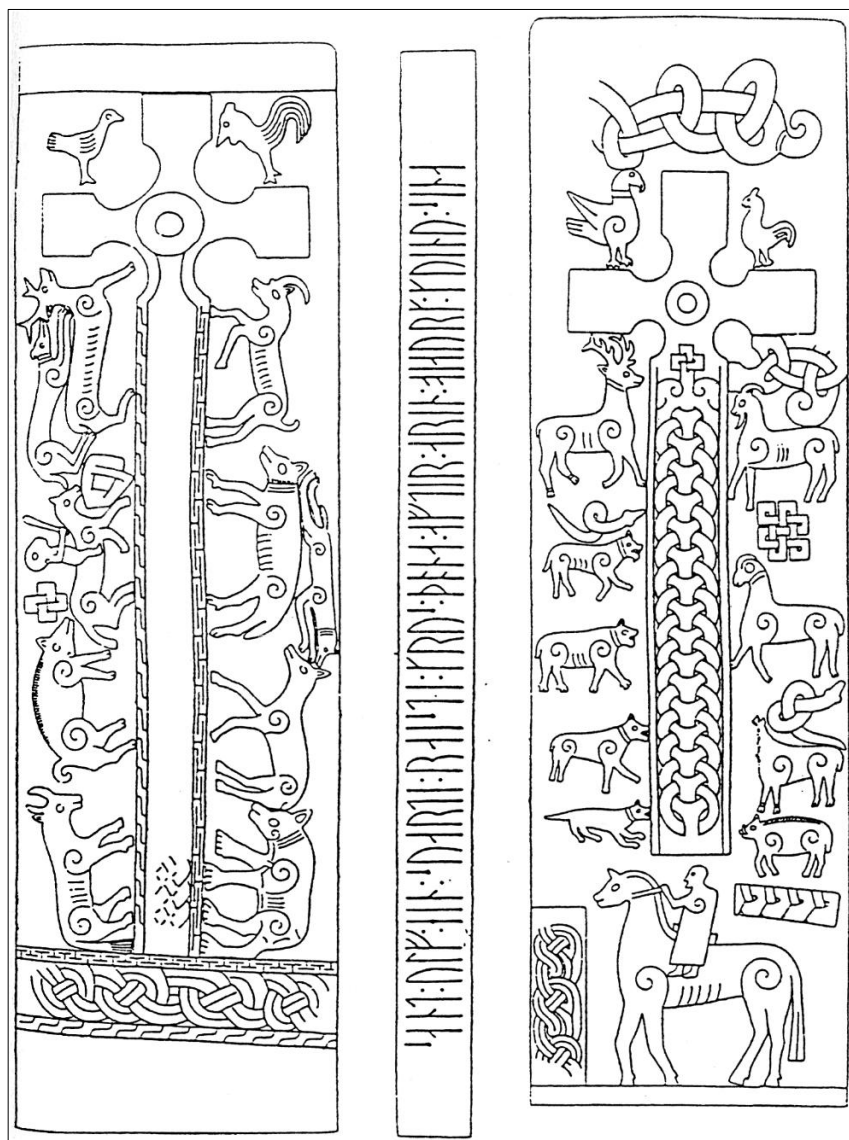


Fig. 146.—Stag-hunt, wild-boar, goat, etc., on Cross of Arinbiorg, at Kirk Andreas, Isle of Man.

she goes into the water until it comes up to her breasts. The father guards the mother whilst the young are being born, because of the dragon, who is the [379] elephant's enemy.<sup>88</sup> If the elephant discovers the dragon, he kills him by stamping on him with his feet.

The male and female elephant are like Adam and Eve, who received the knowledge of good and evil by eating of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden, and after they had been driven out of Paradise "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain" (Genesis iv, 1). The world outside Paradise is full of deep waters, like those in which the elephant brings forth her young; for as David says (Ps. lxxix, 1), "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul." As soon as Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden the Serpent overthrew them, but afterwards our Saviour came and lifted them up.

*The Mandrake*<sup>89</sup>.—"This wort, which is named *μανδραγόρας*, is mickle illustrious of aspect, and it is beneficial. Thou shalt in this way take it when thou comest to it, then thou understandest it by this that it shineth at night altogether like a lamp. When first thou seest its head then inscribe thou it instantly with iron, lest it fly from thee; its virtue is so mickle and so famous that it will immediately flee from an unclean man when he cometh to it, hence, as we before said, do thou inscribe it with iron, and so shalt thou delve about it as that thou touch it not with the iron, but thou shalt earnestly with an ivory staff delve the earth. And when thou seest its hands and feet then tie thou it up. Then take the other end and tie it to a dog's neck, so that the hound be hungry; next cast meat before him, so that he may not reach it except he jerk it up with him. Of this wort it is said that it hath so mickle might that what thing soever tuggeth it up it shall soon in the same manner be deceived. Therefore as soon as thou see that it be jerked up take it immediately in hand."

In the illustrations of the bestiaries the elephant is drawn with a castle full of armed men on his back; and the dog is shown chained to a plant formed like a human being, which is [380] intended for the mandragora. The goat, which sometimes occurs in Norman sculpture,<sup>90</sup> is thus described in the bestiary.

*The Goat*<sup>91</sup> (Lat. *capra*, *corcon*; Fr. *chièvre*, *porcon*).—The goat loves the high mountains, and is so far-seeing an animal that it can tell whether the men it spies walking in the distance are wayfarers or hunters. Thus Christ loves the high mountains, that is, the Prophets, the Apostles, and the Patriarchs. Thus, in the Song of Solomon (ch. ii, 8), it says, "Behold my beloved cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart." As the goat can discern its enemies from afar, so Christ foresaw the deceit of the Devil, and His betrayal by Judas.

The difficulty of recognising the various animals from their appearance, unaided by inscriptions, has been already referred to. It is possible that some of the beasts found in twelfth century art may be intended for the tiger. At all events, the story about this animal is sufficiently interesting to be inserted here.

*The Tiger*<sup>92</sup> (Fr. *tigre*).—The tiger is a kind of serpent,<sup>93</sup> which is so fierce that no living man dare go near it. When the tigress has cubs the hunters find out where they are and carry them off in the following manner. They wait until she leaves her den, and then place mirrors in the track by which she will return. When the tigress sees the beauty of her appearance in the glass she is so delighted that she forgets all about her cubs, and remains fixed to the spot as if she were caught. The hunters are thus able to rob her of her cubs in safety. We are the tigers and the cubs are our souls, for if we are put off our guard by the illusions of this world, such as fine clothes, horses, and beautiful women, the Devil will take advantage of our preoccupation to obtain possession of our souls. The illustrations show the tigress looking at herself in a mirror hung against

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88 The enmity between the elephant and the dragon is mentioned by Pliny.

89 Cockayne's *Saxon Leechdoms*, vol. i. p. 245, from the Saxon *Herbal* of Apuleius.

90 At Thames Ditton, Surrey; Adel, Yorkshire; and Ely Cathedral.

91 *Mélanges*, vol. iii, p. 218; Wright, p. 84.

92 *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, vol. ii, p. 140.

93 He is shown in the miniatures of the MSS. as an animal with wings.

a tree, whilst the hunters carry off her young ones.

In the bestiary the stories about the various animals do not [381] seem to be arranged on any definite plan as regards the order in which they come. It is probable that the original work, from which the later MSS. were copied, contained descriptions of only a few animals, and that the number was increased from time to time. If, however, we wish to be able to interpret the meaning of the system of Christian symbolism, suggested by the habits of animals and the properties of the vegetable and mineral world, it will be necessary to classify the different representations under some such headings as the following.

I. Representations, more or less conventionalised, of creatures which really exist, under the subdivision of—(a) beasts; (b) birds; (c) fish; (d) reptiles; (e) insects.

II. Fabulous creatures and sea monsters, chiefly derived from classical sources.

III. Mystical creatures from the visions of Daniel, Ezekiel, and St. John.

## I.

### Beasts.

In order to identify the various beasts found on Celtic crosses and in Norman sculpture, it will be necessary to examine their peculiarities very minutely. There is not much difficulty with regard to the animals which inhabit the British Islands, as they are generally accurately portrayed; but the case is different when we come to deal with foreign animals, whose appearance was unfamiliar to the artist. In connection with the subject now under consideration, the reader is recommended to study Canon Tristram's admirable little book on the *Natural History of the Bible*, where all the passages in Scripture relating to zoology are quoted. Some of the animals described in the bestiary are not mentioned in our version of the Bible under the same names. Thus, the hyena of the bestiary is translated "a speckled bird" (Isaiah xii, 9), and the panther a young lion (Hosea v, 14), or leopard (Hosea xiii, 7).

The place of honour in the bestiary is given to the lion, which comes first in the series. The lion of the tribe of Judah (Gen. xlix, 9, and Hosea v, 14), which prevailed to open the book with the Seven Seals in the Revelations (v, 5), is a type of Christ, and also is one of the mystical beasts [383] which symbolise the Four Evangelists (Rev. iv, 7). It is not surprising, therefore, that it should occur more frequently in early Christian art in this country than any other foreign animal. There are several examples of the lion being represented in Celtic MSS.<sup>94</sup> and on pre-Norman sculptured stones.<sup>95</sup> The two chief peculiarities which enable the lion to be distinguished are its flowing mane and long tail, with a tuft of hair at the end. In the scene of David and the Lion on the pre-Norman stones at St. Andrew's<sup>96</sup> and Drainie,<sup>97</sup> the mane and the tuft at the end of the tail are clearly shown, the tail being bent between the legs. In the scene of Daniel in the Lions' Den, however, on the cross at Meigle,<sup>98</sup> the tails terminate in a spiral, and are bent over the back, which appears to be the older method of treatment, for in the twelfth century the tail is generally bent between the legs, and ends in a conventional leaf.

In Norman sculpture we have an inscribed example of the lion on the tympanum at Stoke-sub-Hamden, Somerset, which shows the way of representing the animal in the twelfth century. At this period the mane of the lion is very highly conventionalised, being drawn with a large number of small tufts curled up at the ends.<sup>99</sup> The lion is usually represented standing on his four feet, and with the head in profile, but there are

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94 The lion of St. Mark, in the Gospels of Darrow; Leo, in the Irish Zodiac, in the *Liber S. Isidori* at Basle in Switzerland; David and the Lion in Irish Psalters at St. John's College, Cambridge, Boulogne, and British Museum (Vesp. A. i).

95 See Daniel in Lions' Den, and David or Samson and the Lion.

96 Stuart's *Sculptured Stones*, vol. i, pl. 61.

97 *Ibid.*, vol. i, pl. 130.

98 *Ibid.*, vol. i, pl. 74.

99 As on font at Lincoln Cathedral.

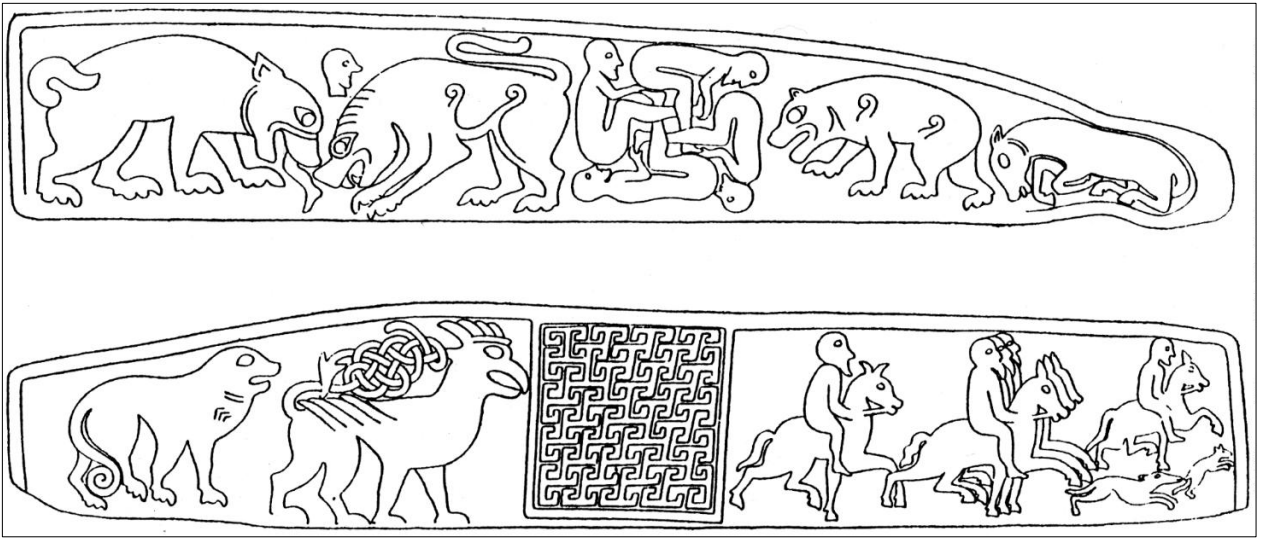


Fig. 147.—Beasts devouring man, etc., on sides of recumbent sepulchral stone at Meigle in Porthshire.

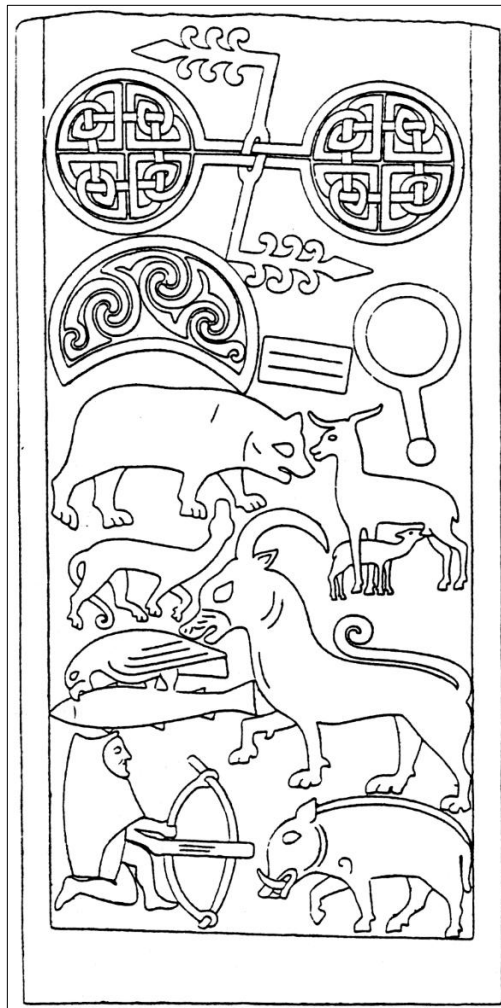


Fig. 148.—Wild boar, etc., on Cross of Drosten, at St. Vigean, Forfarshire.

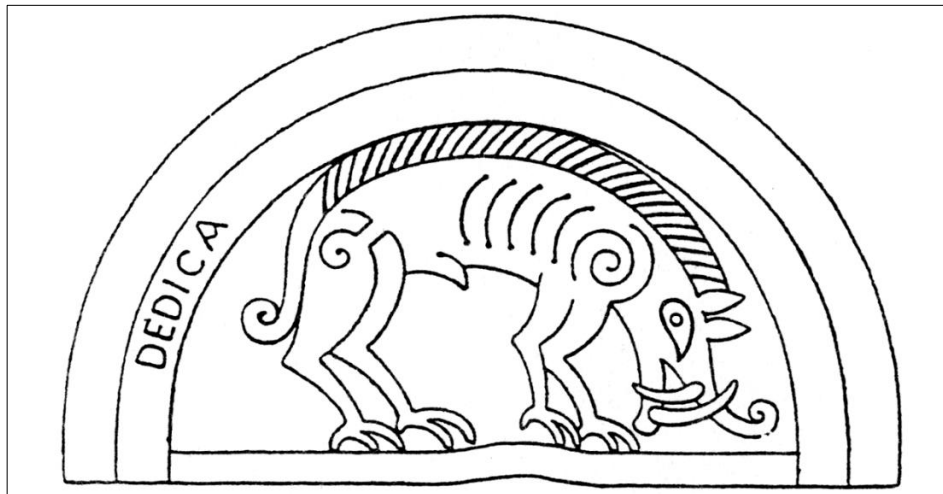


Fig. 149.—Wild boar on tympanum of doorway of St. Nicholas Church, Ipswich.

instances, as on the tympanum at Cormac's Chapel, Rock of Cashel, Ireland, where the face of the beast is turned fully towards the spectator, giving it a semi-human appearance.<sup>100</sup> In a few cases an animal, which may be intended for a lion, is shown rampant.<sup>101</sup>

With the exception of the lion we are unable to distinguish [385] any of the foreign animals mentioned in the Bible or the bestiaries by their outward appearance. On the doorway at Alne in Yorkshire there are sculptures of the hyena<sup>102</sup> and the panther, but if it were not for the explanatory inscriptions, we should not be able to recognise them. The camel is found in the Saxon Heptateuch of Ælfric in the British Museum (Claud. B. iv); but the scenes from Genesis, in which it occurs, are not those usually used for purposes of symbolism. The so-called elephant-symbol on the Scotch stones is probably nothing of the kind, as we have before observed that this animal belongs to a much later period of Christian art in Great Britain, although there are early examples abroad on mosaic pavements at Aosta<sup>103</sup> and at Sour.<sup>104</sup> Monkeys are seen in the decorative features of churches of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,<sup>105</sup> but not earlier.

[386] The animals belonging to this country, which can be identified on sculpture previous to the year 1200, are the ass, bear, boar, bull, cow, dog, fox, goat, horse, ram, sheep, stag. The ass occurs in the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem on the tympanum at Aston Eyre, Shropshire, and in the scene of the Nativity on the font at Fincham, Norfolk; the muzzled bear on coped tomb-stones at Brompton, Yorkshire, and on corbels of Norman churches; the horse, dog, wild-boar, and stag, in hunting scenes already mentioned; sheep and ram on Scotch crosses, generally in connection with David;<sup>106</sup> the fox on Norman doorway at Alne, Yorkshire, with inscription; the goat, with horns and beard, on capitals of columns of chancel-arch at Adel, and on jambs of doorway at Ely Cathedral; cattle chiefly on Scotch crosses,<sup>107</sup> and but rarely in

100 Also on tympanum at Salford, Oxon, and font at Lincoln Cathedral.

101 As on fonts at Darenth, Kent; Belton, Lincolnshire: Hutton Cranswick, Yorkshire.

102 The hyena here has an object like a flower in its mouth, and a somewhat similar feature occurs on the font at Walton-on-the-Hill, near Liverpool. On some of the Scotch pre-Norman stones, as at Meigle, Perthshire, Inchinnan, Renfrewshire, and on the round tower at Brechin, Forfarshire, is a beast with what looks like a human leg in its mouth (Stuart's *Sculptured Stones*, vol. ii, pls. 1 and 76).

103 Didron's *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. xvii, p. 389.

104 *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv, p. 264.

105 On one of the capitals of St. Mary's, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, is a monkey playing a harp, and there are also gargoyles on the exterior in the shape of monkeys.

106 At Mortlach, Shandwick, Nigg, St. Andrew's, and Aldbar (see Stuart's *Sculptured Stones*).

107 Shandwick, St. Vigeans, Meigle, Eassie, Abbotsford (see Stuart).



Fig. 150.—Beast with its tail in its mouth, on tympanum of doorway at Penmon Priory, Anglesey.

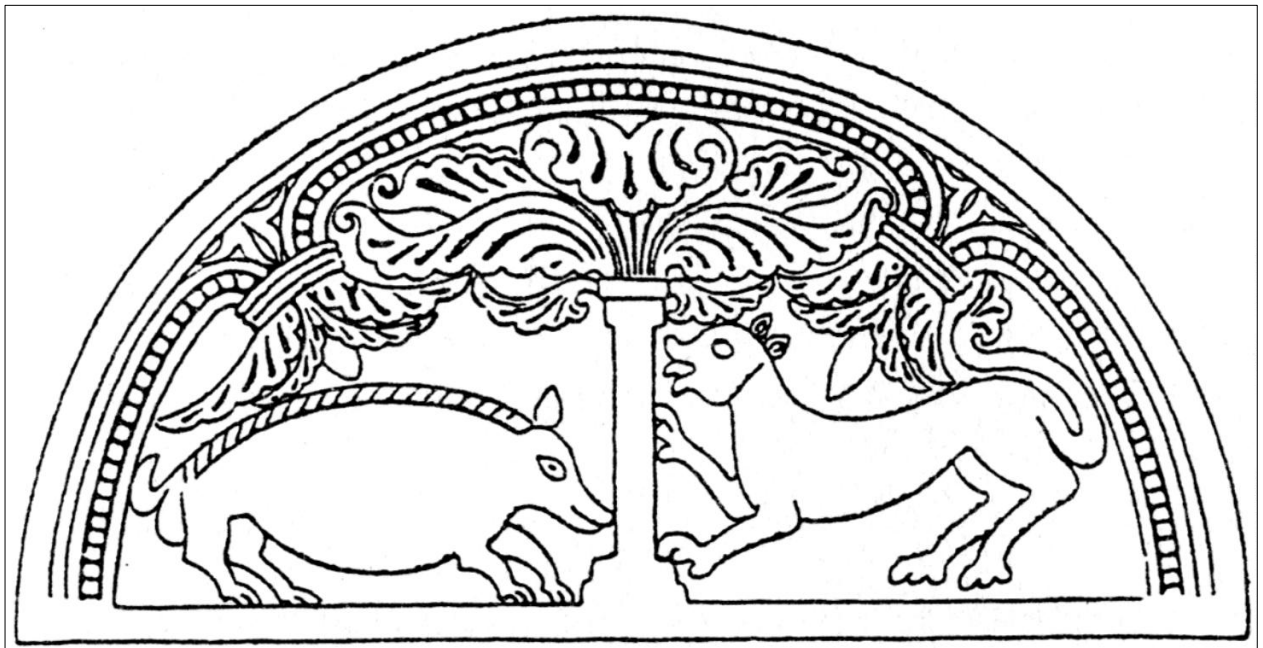


Fig. 151.—Tree with wild boar on one side and a lion (?) on the other, on the tympanum at Ashford in Derbyshire.

Norman sculpture,<sup>108</sup> except the ox at the Nativity. [387]

### Birds.

Birds appear frequently in early sculpture, but it is difficult to distinguish one species from another. Where a bird occurs in a hunting scene<sup>109</sup> it may be presumed that a hawk is meant. The dove may be identified when it represents the Holy Spirit, or Noah's dove,<sup>110</sup> or pairs of doves, drinking from a vase or pecking at grapes, as on the fonts at Winchester Cathedral and East Meon, Hants. On the Norman doorway at Alne, Yorkshire, we have an inscribed example of the eagle, and other representations may be found amongst the symbols of the Four Evangelists. Birds in trees are sculptured on Norman tympana at Stoke-sub-Hamdon, Somerset, at Lower Swell, Gloucestershire, and Little Langford, Wilts, on which the following descriptions from the bestiary may throw some light.

*The Tree which, produces Birds that fall off when they are ripe*<sup>111</sup> (Fr. *l'arbre dont li oisel naisent fors et chient jus quant il sont meur*).—There is a tree growing by the sea-coast which brings [388] forth birds. When the birds grow they hang by their beaks until they are ripe and then fall off. Those which fall into the water live, but those which fall on the earth die. This signifies that those who are baptised with water will receive spiritual life, but those who do not will perish.

*The Tree of Life*<sup>112</sup> (Lat. *perindex, peredexion*; Fr. *arbre de Judée*).—The tree called “peredexion” is found in India, and its fruit is very sweet. Doves live in its branches, and delight in eating the fruit. The dragon is the enemy of the doves, and is afraid of both the tree and its shadow, not daring to go near either. If the shadow falls from the west the dragon flees to the east, and vice versa. If the dove is found beyond the limits of the tree it is killed by the dragon.

The tree is the Father Almighty; the shadow is the Son. As Gabriel said to Mary (Luke i, 35), “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” The dove is the Holy Spirit; the fruit of the tree, wisdom. As the Evangelist says (Matt. x, 16), “Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”; harmless that you do no evil, wise that you be not caught by the dragon (i.e., the Devil) whilst straying beyond the Holy Church.

### Fish.

The symbolism of the fish has been referred to in a previous lecture. The smaller inhabitants of the deep are not divided into species in the Bible, but merely referred to as fish; the larger marine creatures are called in our version whales (Gen. i, 21); sea monsters (Lam. iv, 3); leviathans (Isaiah xvii, 1); and dragons (Ezekiel xxix, 3). I propose to class dragons amongst the fabulous creatures, since they are associated with imaginary animals in the bestiary, and the descriptions do not apply to any real kind of fish.

### Reptiles.

All forms of reptiles are used to symbolise the power of evil. We have already referred to the serpent, and the following description of the basilisk explains its representation with the [389] head of a cock in the scene of Christ treading on the Asp and the Basilisk.

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108 On doorway at Shobdon, Herefordshire; font at Fincham, Norfolk.

109 St. Andrews (Stuart, *Sculptured Stones*, vol. i, pl. 61).

110 The raven leaving the Ark is not often represented in art; a curious example will be found in Ælfric's *Heptateuch* in the British Museum (Claud. B. iv), where the raven is pecking out the eye of the head of a dead man, stuck upon the prow of the Ark.

111 *Mélanges*, vol. ii, p. 216.

112 *Mélanges*, vol. iii, p. 283; Hippeau, p. 177.



Fig. 152—Pair of fish reptiles, on sepulchral stone at Meigle, Perthshire.

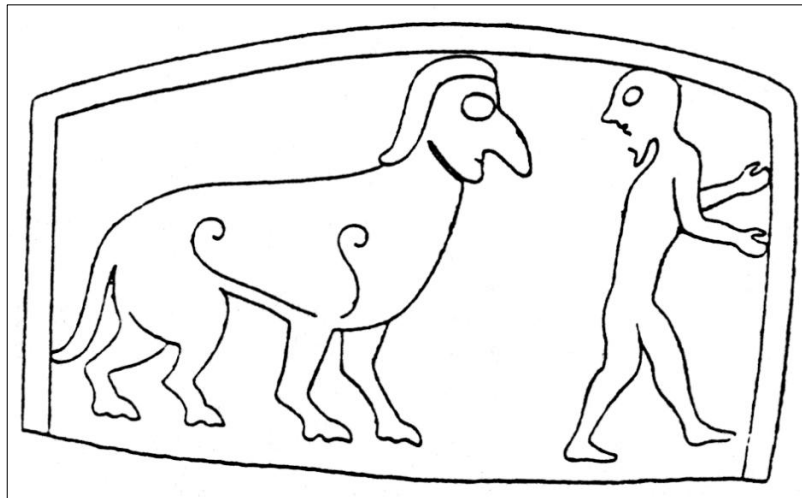


Fig. 153.—Beast with human face, called the mantichora, pursuing a man, on end of sepulchral stone at Meigle, Perthshire.



*The Basilisk*<sup>113</sup> (Fr. *basile coc*).—The basilisk is hatched from the egg of a cock. When the cock has lived seven years an egg grows in its inside, and it suffers the greatest agony. It then scratches a hole with its feet in which to lay the egg. The toad is of such a nature that it can tell by the scent the poison which the cock carries in its inside. The toad watches the cock, so that it cannot enter its nest without the toad seeing it, and when the cock goes to lay its egg the toad follows to find [390] out whether the laying has taken place, because it is of such a nature that it takes the egg and hatches it. The animal which comes out of the egg has the head, neck, and breast of a cock, and the remainder of its body behind is like a serpent. As soon as this beast can it seeks out some secluded spot in an old cistern and hides itself so that no one can see it, for it is of such a nature that if a man sees it before it sees the man, then it will die, but if it sees the man first, then the man will die. Its poison proceeds from its eyes, and its gaze is so venomous that it kills birds who fly past it. This animal is king over all the other serpents, in the same way that the lion is king over all the other beasts. If it touches a tree it will lose its virtue and never bear fruit. If anyone wishes to kill the basilisk he must take a transparent crystal vase, and when the animal lifts its head its gaze is arrested by the crystal, and the venom thrown back, which causes its death.

The basilisk signifies the Devil, that same Satan who deceived Adam and Eve in Paradise, and being expelled, was cast down into hell. Thus, for 4,000 years all who came from Adam were poisoned by him, and would fall into the pit with the basilisk, that is, into hell with the Devil. The son of a king then was grieved that the beast was so venomous, and that it would kill everybody, so he determined that it should live no longer or do harm. Therefore the king placed his son in a vessel of the purest crystal, that is to say, that the Son of God entered the body of Our Lady, the Virgin Mary. When the basilisk looked on the vessel which contained the Son of God, his poison was arrested, and he became powerless to harm. When the son of the king, Jesus Christ, was laid in the sepulchre, he entered into the pit and took hence His friends whom the basilisk had fascinated and killed with his poison, that is to say, that God despoiled hell of those who love Him.

## II.—FABULOUS CREATURES.

The association of fabulous creatures with marine monsters has been explained by the text in Isaiah (xiii, 21), descriptive of the desolation of Babylon, which is quoted in the bestiary. The fabulous creatures found in early Christian art were copied [391] from classical originals, and are composite beings, formed partly out of men and partly out of animals. Thus, the centaur is half a horse and half a man, the syren half a fish and half a man, or sometimes half a bird and half a woman. The chimera, a fire-breathing monster compounded from a lion, a goat, and a dragon, has also been utilised for purposes of Christian symbolism on the mosaic pavement at Aosta,<sup>114</sup> and on the twelfth century sculptures at Geneva Cathedral,<sup>115</sup> in both cases with an explanatory inscription.

Another class of impossible beings which may be called monstrous are made by the reduplication of limbs or bodies. Thus, on the font at Rownton, Yorkshire, and on the capitals of the columns of the chancel-arch at Steetly, Derbyshire, we see a beast with one head and two bodies.<sup>116</sup> Sometimes, as on the fonts at Lincoln Cathedral and Hook Norton, Oxon, the tail of a beast is made to terminate in a serpent's head (see figs 136 and 139). In a bestiary MS. of the thirteenth century in the British Museum (Add., No. 11,283, fol. 8), a fabulous creature called the "Manticora" is illustrated, having the body of a beast and the head of

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113 *Mélanges*, vol. ii, p. 213.

114 Didron, *Annales Archéologiques*, vol. xvii, p. 389.

115 J. D. Blavignac's *Hist. of Sacred Architecture*, in the Bishopricks of Lausanne and Sion.

116 On the base of the Moone Abbey cross, co. Kildare, described in a previous lecture, there is a beast with one body and several heads.

a man. The mantichora is first mentioned by the Greek writer, Ctesias<sup>117</sup> (B.C. 416); and Pliny<sup>118</sup> gives the following description of it, taken from the earlier source. "Ctesias informs us that amongst the Æthiopians there is an animal found which he calls the mantichora; it has a triple row of teeth which fit into each other like those of a comb, and the face and ears of a man, and azure eyes; is the colour of blood, has the body of a lion, and a tail ending in a sting like that of a scorpion, . . . and is particularly fond of human flesh." According to Ctesias, *μαρίχορα* is equivalent to *ἀνθρωποφάγος*, or man-eater, and Prof. Tychsen derives it from the Persian *mardikhora*, meaning the same thing.<sup>119</sup> An inscribed [392] example of the mantichora occurs on the remarkable sculptured twelfth century bestiary at Souvigny in France, illustrated by De Caumont in his *Abécédaire d'Archéologie*, p. 273. Here the mantichora wears a Phrygian cap, like the Magi and Three Children in the Fiery Furnace, in all cases to show their Eastern origin. The mantichora is also to be seen on the Map of the World in Hereford Cathedral.<sup>120</sup> Beasts with human heads are to be found on pre-Norman crosses in Scotland, at Gask, Dunfallandy, and Rossie Priory in Perthshire,<sup>121</sup> showing the full face; and the most curious of all on the end of a sepulchral stone at Meigle<sup>122</sup> in Perthshire, where the face is seen in profile with a long nose, and the beast is pursuing a naked man, thus corresponding exactly with the man-eating propensities of the mantichora. The tail ending in a serpent's head will be noticed on the beast swallowing a man, on the cross from Woodwray<sup>123</sup> in Forfarshire, now at Abbotsford (see fig. 141). Other instances of this peculiarity have been already referred to on the font at Hook Norton and elsewhere. [393]

### III.—MYSTICAL CREATURES.

The following mystical creatures are mentioned in the Bible, and representations of most of them occur in Christian art.

The four living creatures in the Vision of Ezekiel—the lion, bull, man, eagle.

The four beasts in the First Vision of Daniel—the lion with eagle's wings; the bear with three ribs in his mouth; the leopard with four wings of a fowl, and four heads; the beast with iron teeth and ten horns.

The two beasts in the Second Vision of Daniel—the ram with two horns, one higher than the other; the goat with a notable horn between the eyes (see fig. 90).

The four beasts of the Apocalypse—the lion, the calf, the man, and the eagle.

The lamb with seven horns and seven eyes, that with the lion of the tribe of Judah opened the book with the seven seals in the Apocalypse.

The beast of the Apocalypse, with seven heads and ten horns bearing crowns, like a leopard, with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion.

On the fonts at Lincoln Cathedral, St. Michael's, Southampton, and St. Peter's, Ipswich, are friezes of animals, some of which appear to be intended for mystical creatures. At Southampton they are associated with the symbols of the Four Evangelists, and at Lincoln two of the beasts are resting on books.

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117 See Ed. Charton, *Voyageurs Anciens et Modernes*, vol. i, p. 157.

118 *Nat. Hist.*, book viii, chap. xxx; Bohn's Classical Series, vol. ii, p. 280.

119 A. H. L. Heeren's *Historical Researches into the Intercourse and Trade of the Principal Nations of Antiquity*, vol. ii, p. 377.

120 Reproduction in British Museum.

121 Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, vol. i, pls. 47 and 103; vol. ii, pl. 99.

122 *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, vol. xii, pl. 26.

123 Stuart, vol. i, pl. 99; also see cross at Forteviot, Perthshire, vol. i, pl. 119.