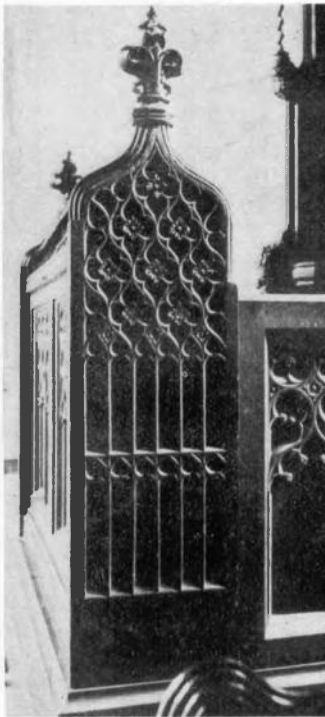




I

1. Berkeley Arms.



2

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
DESK STANDARDS.  
2. Reticulated pattern.



3

3. Berkeley Arms with Mitre and  
Supporters.

*To face page 233.*

## THE STALL WORK OF BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

By MARY PHILLIPS PERRY.

A first glance at the stalls of the cathedral-church of Bristol leaves an impression of modern woodwork, but a more careful examination reveals that amongst much that is new a considerable portion of old work remains, which both in quality and quantity is worthy of notice. It is generally known, among those interested, that there is a good series of misericords; but, in addition to this, there are nine desk-standards and a considerable amount of pierced spandrel work of a simple decorative character, which have not heretofore received much attention. Most of the desk-standards, by the modern additions of an arm-rest and of a lengthening piece at the foot, have been converted into bench-ends and now serve the dual purpose of bench-ends and desk-standards. They are of unframed oak cut in the solid, and are from 2 to 2 $\frac{1}{4}$  in. in thickness. In addition to the standards still in the cathedral there are two in the church at Olveston, a village in Gloucestershire, to which they were presented some years since by those in authority at the cathedral, together with a considerable amount of other ornamental woodwork with which the chancel of that church is now fitted. Five, out of the nine standards still in the cathedral, bear the initials R.E. for Robert Elyot, who was abbot of the monastery from 1515 to 1526. The date usually assigned to the misericords is 1520, and there is little in the remainder of the work which is incompatible with this date.

The distinctive feature of the standards is the very flamboyant character of the majority of the designs. Apart from its heraldry, the least interesting as also the most coarsely cut of the series is one in which the design is subordinate to a shield bearing the arms of the Berkeleys, gules a chevron between nine crosses pattée 3, 2, 1, 2, 1,

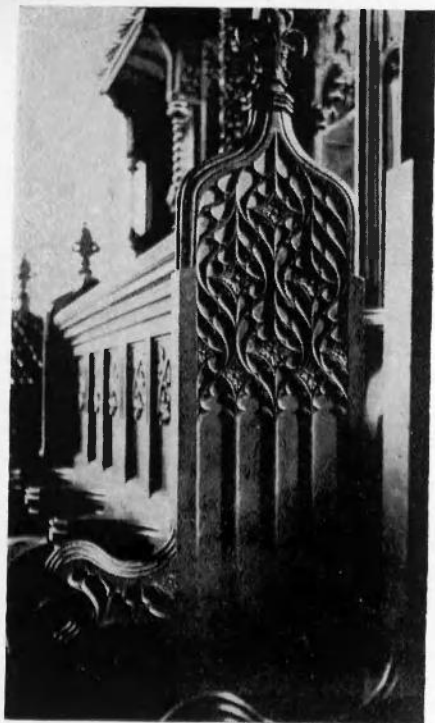
argent<sup>1</sup> (plate I, I), but even in this there is the presence of the ogee curve, and there is a flamboyant tendency in the way in which the lines of the design flow round the shield. On account of its coarseness the method of cutting can be better seen in this case than in any of the other examples. The tracery consists of a hollow chamfer from which the background is cut back. A second standard, which has the main lines of the design similar, but with richer detail of foliated ornament, bears the shield of Abbot Elyot, argent on a chief gules two mullets of the first, the mullets pierced, and the shield being charged with a crosier erect in pale enfiling a mitre with labels, the lower shaft looped with a cord, between the letters R.E.

On a third example of a standard with heraldic device the shield of the Berkeleys is again represented: gules a chevron between nine crosses pattée 4, 2, 1, 2 argent, with two mermaids as supporters, ensigned by a mitre without labels (plate I, 3). Mermaids were the supporters of the Berkeley shield from the time of Edward II. The design below this shield is of a definitely flamboyant character dominated by the use of the ogee curve, and with cusped mouchettes.

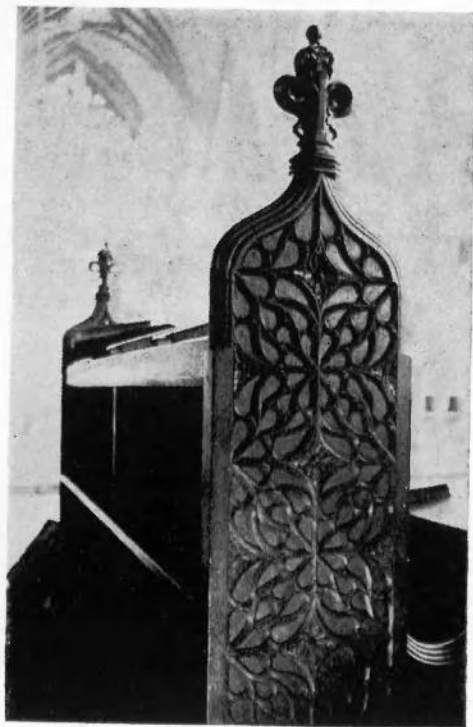
The remaining standards are less coarsely cut than the three preceding ones, and are decoratively more satisfactory. The designs of five in particular, judged as simple decorative ornament, fulfil their purpose admirably. Reticulated window tracery of 200 years earlier, such as is found in the east window of the north aisle of the cathedral, might well have suggested the motif of one of the standards; it is a pattern that is so common in west of England woodwork that it has been called 'the normal West Somerset type.'<sup>2</sup> (plate I, 2). Another design appears to be an evolution from the reticulated, and is more satisfying in general effect. In it, the excellent spacing and proportion of the ornament, which is a feature of this woodwork, can be noted. The design is entirely flamboyant, and might be paralleled in much continental work (plate II, 4). It occurs again on the

<sup>1</sup> The writer is indebted to the late Mr. Francis Were for information as to the heraldry. He has dealt with *Bristol Cathedral Heraldry* in *Trans. Bristol and Glos. Arch. Soc.* vol. xxv.

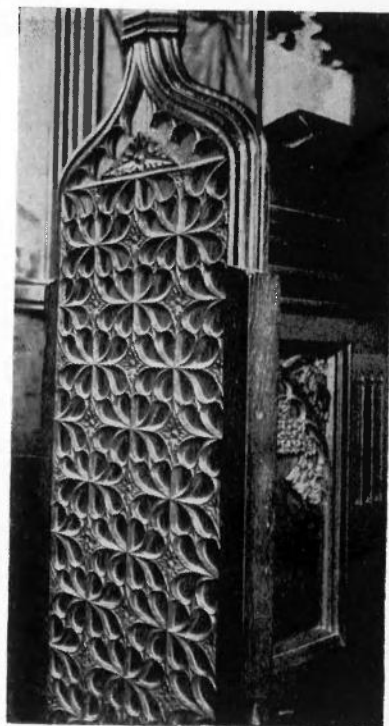
<sup>2</sup> See Howard and Crossley, *English Church Woodwork*, p. 318, where similar tracery on the bench-backs at Crowcombe, Somerset, dated 1534, is described in this way.



4



5



6

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

DESK STANDARDS.

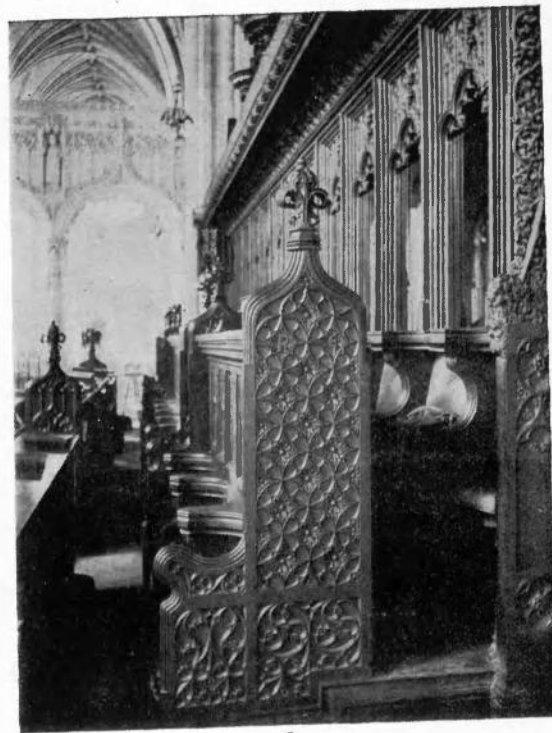
4, 5, and 6. Flamboyant patterns.

To face page 234

PLATE II.



7



8

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

DESK STANDARDS.

7. Geometrical pattern with Shield of Abbot Elyot.

8. Geometrical pattern.

two desk-ends which have been removed from the cathedral and are at Olveston. A very uncommon design (plate II, 6) has as its unit the intersection of four pairs of cusped mouchettes, the characteristic ogee curve being common to each pair, and forming the diagonals of the unit. The cusping is on a lower plane than the containing fillets, and in this and in other of the designs the cusps meet and are continuous; but on this and on others, a slight nick at the point of junction can be detected, as though the original intention had been to cut them through. In this case a division between the cusps would have greatly emphasised the scheme of the design. The R. and E., the abbot's initials, occupy the two lower square-leaved flowers to the left. Another end, the most un-English and flamboyant in general effect (plate II, 5), is steadied by a geometric lay-out, and has nothing of the wild disorder in design which is found in some parallel examples in this country.<sup>1</sup>

In the remaining two standards of the series the geometric principle tends to outweigh the flamboyant. In the first of these (plate III, 7) the shield of Abbot Elyot again occurs<sup>2</sup>; and, but for its intervention, the general effect of the design would be more geometric than it now is, though the portions at the sides of the shield clearly show that this is based upon flowing mouchettes, the intersecting circles merely resulting from these. The last standard (plate III, 8) is only a development of the same theme, but in it the mouchettes have been simplified and straightened, thus emphasising the circle, and by the addition of a marked centre in the form of a four-leaved flower which fills the entire space between the mouchettes, the circle now becomes the paramount idea. The initials R.E. are seen on two of the flowers at the top.

On the reverse of five of the standards above the desk the initials R.E. occur, either combined with conventional foliage, or in two cases entwined with cord and tassels, a motif very general in the early sixteenth century (plate IV, I); in each of these two instances the cord is arranged quite differently. One of the flowers combined

<sup>1</sup> As on the pulpit of Kenton Church, Devon, figured by Howard and Crossley. *op. cit.* p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> The heraldry is similar to that on the second standard mentioned above.

with the initials is the conventional pine-apple of contemporary ecclesiastical embroidery. A creature occupies the space in two examples, one being the legendary gryphon (plate iv, 2) half lion, half eagle, which in classic tradition guarded the gold of Scythia, and in later legend bore Alexander on his journey to the sun. As in most medieval representations, it is furnished with strong powerful claws. The other is a bird designed with outstretched wing to fill the required space.

The reverse faces of two standards in the cathedral have a conventional flower alone, whilst the standards at Olveston bear on this side a modification of the flamboyant tracery which decorates the other. The poppy-heads, several of which are original, are severe and restrained in design, and are by no means typical of most English work, more closely resembling some continental examples.

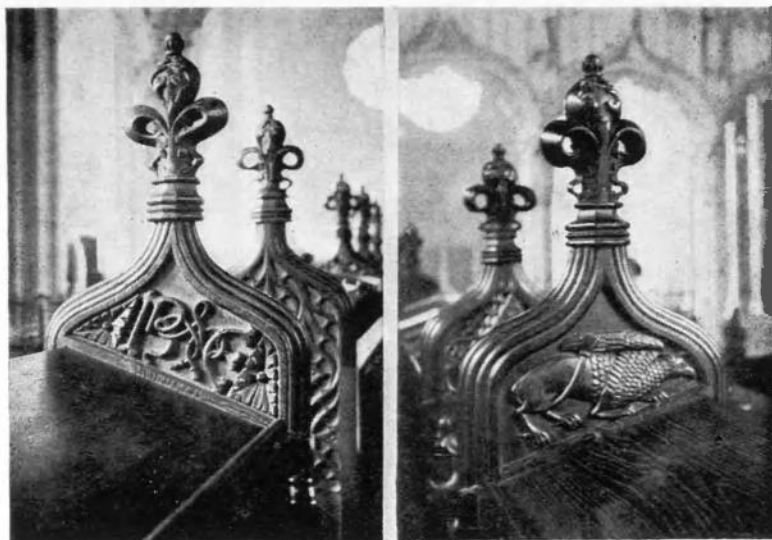
Other instances of extreme flamboyancy of design occur in eleven pierced panels, which now, framed into modern woodwork, form a pulpit, but which, from the similarity of the cutting and the tendency of the designs were probably contemporary with the stall work, and possibly formed part of the original scheme (plate v).

As previously mentioned, the technique of the carving of this tracery is English, but compared with sixteenth-century window tracery, the designs are far more continental than English. At about this date in England flamboyant tracery in wood-carving occurred in many examples, particularly in the west. In the early years of the century there began to be a demand, more especially for private houses, for the new style of building and sculpture. The Italian Renaissance had extended to France in the middle of the fifteenth century, so that by 1520 it was well established there. As foreign workmen were introduced into England to carry out work in the new style,<sup>1</sup> and as early Renaissance work in England shows a distinct tendency towards the French version of the style, it is quite likely that French carvers, familiar throughout their life with flamboyant tracery, may have directly

<sup>1</sup> Among the Italians there are records of Torrigiano, Benedetto da Rovezzano, Giovanni da Majano, Toto del Nunziata,

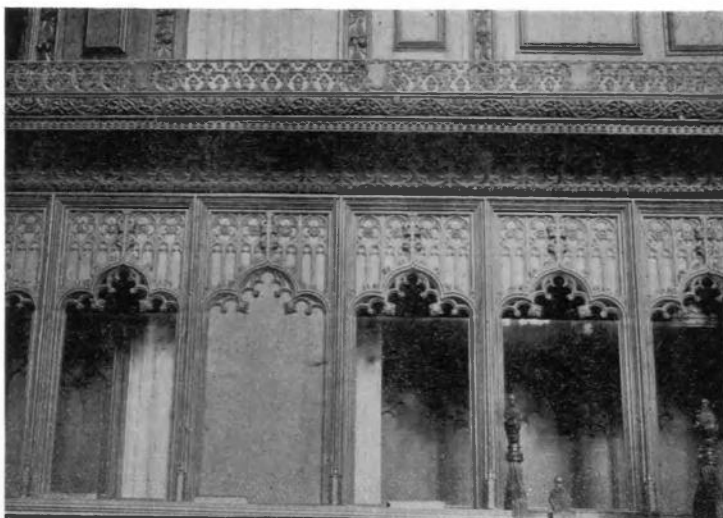
and Nicholas of Modena having worked in England. See J. A. Gotch, *Early Renaissance Architecture in England*, p. 254.





1

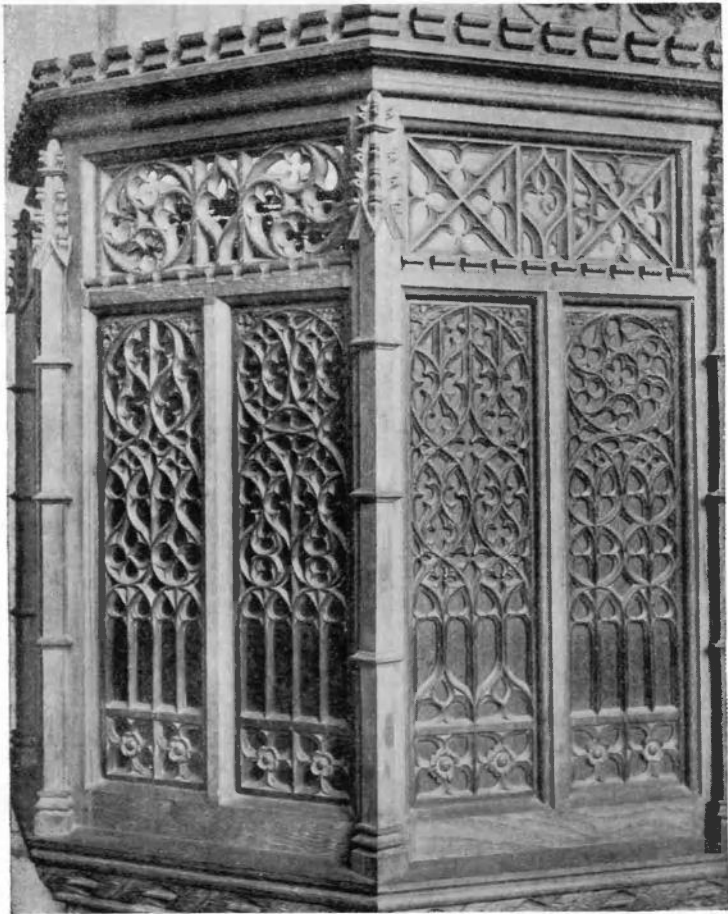
2



3

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

1. Reverse of Desk Standard : Initials of Abbot Elyot.
2. Reverse of Desk Standard : Gryphon.
3. Cresting of Stallwork.



BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

PIERCED PANELS FRAMED INTO MODERN PULPIT.

influenced the designs of their English fellow-workmen. The fact that in some places Gothic and Renaissance details figure side by side in the same building in contemporary woodwork of this period rather lends colour to this view.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it must be remembered that the great east window of Bristol Cathedral contains curvilinear tracery of the fourteenth century, from which the intersecting groups of mouchettes which form the bases of several of the designs of the standards could quite well be derived, their details being developed by the individual taste of the designer. Another alternative is the copying of the designs from some imported continental example of woodwork, such as a foreign chest, many of which had been imported into England in the fourteenth century, but without immediate influence on contemporary design of that date.<sup>2</sup>

Much of the cresting which still crowns the stalls is of original work (plate iv, 3). It consists of an undercut frieze of a good conventional design, based upon the vine, having above and below it two delicately fretted members. A fretted string at the base of the modern coving is also to a large extent old work. The shields inserted in the upper member in some instances cut carelessly into the design, and appear from their ornament to be of later date.

Many original fretted spandrels have been preserved, some of these being of considerable interest because they seem to have taken for direct inspiration a medieval Bestiary. In the fronts of the desks there are forty-six modern panels into which this original work is framed.<sup>3</sup> In it the initials R.E. are repeated twelve times. The majority of the spandrels consist of foliated ornament; in which a variety of leaves is employed, there being fourteen or fifteen distinct types. A small number of compartments contain shields, similar to those in the cresting, which, from the character of their detail, appear to be of somewhat later date than the other spandrels. It is rather likely

<sup>1</sup> In the stalls at Westminster, and Christchurch, Hants. On bench-ends at Lapford, Devon, and in the rood screen at Sutcombe, Devon, illustrated in *Sutcombe Church and its Builders*, by Edith K. Prideaux.

<sup>2</sup> Howard and Crossley, *op. cit.* p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> The original work in each panel measures 11 in. wide by 9 in. deep.

that there were alterations to the stalls at the time when the church was made a cathedral in 1542, and, if so, these together with the later shields in the cresting may be additions of that date.

In fourteen of the compartments animal life is represented, making a collection of twelve beasts and eight birds, the beasts including some purely fabulous creatures. A close acquaintance with the misericords leads to the conviction that the craftsman of this stall work was above everything a graphic story-teller whose every hint should be considered, and this characteristic should be borne in mind in examining this series of animals.

In medieval ecclesiastical art certain Bestiary animals, such as the unicorn, the lion, or the eagle, are constantly represented, but this is the result of the use made of these by the theologian. On account of the moralisation connected with them in the Bestiary they have been used by the preacher to illustrate the sermon for some particular festival<sup>1</sup> until they were so familiar that their significance was at once recognised, and they practically became a secondary Christian symbol.

In this series there is a unicorn (plate vi, 1). This animal was connected by the theologian with the discourse for the feast of the Nativity,<sup>2</sup> since the Bestiary account of it told that, though savage, and difficult of capture, it would voluntarily come and lay its head in the lap of a virgin, and thus could be taken and slain: the moralisation attached said that the unicorn symbolised Christ; the horn on its forehead, the invincible power of the Son of God. As the unicorn came to the Virgin, so Christ voluntarily became incarnate and thus fell into the hands of his enemies.

But the Bristol carver does not confine himself to the species so popularised. His selection appears rather to have been inspired direct from the miniatures of a Bestiary manuscript than from the theologian, and the result is an assemblage which would be uncommon in sculpture at any period in medieval art, and which is quite remarkable as late as the sixteenth century.

<sup>1</sup> In *L'Art religieux en France*, tome i (siècle xiii) livre, i, chap. ii. M. Emile Male shows the great influence of the

*Speculum Ecclesiae* of Honorius of Autun in this connexion.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



1



2



3

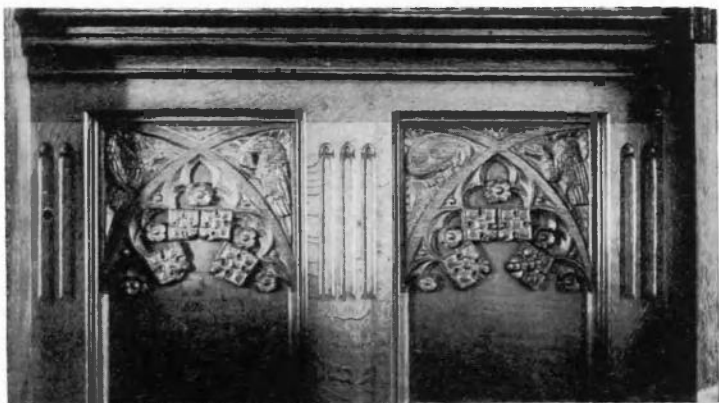
BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

SPANDRELS FRAMED INTO MODERN FRONTS OF STALLS.

1. Unicorn.    2. Wolf and Siren.    3. Amphisbaena, Crocodile, etc.



4



5



6

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

SPANDRELS FRAMED INTO MODERN FRONTS OF STALLS.

4. Dog, Dragon, etc.

5. Asp (?), etc.

6. Birds.

Among the most clearly recognised of the number is a mermaid or siren in fish-form, holding a comb and a mirror (plate vi, 2). This came from a classical source, being based on the female triton<sup>1</sup>; but in medieval tradition she was credited with much the same qualities as the siren which lured men to destruction with her song.

A particularly distinctive creature is the amphisbaena which had also passed into the Bestiary from classic sources (plate vi, 3). It is placed by Pliny among the serpents,<sup>2</sup> but is here, as elsewhere in medieval art, represented as a sort of biped dragon with a head at either extremity, as though, according to Pliny, one mouth were too little for the discharge of all its venom. In the Bestiary it was described as able to proceed equally well in either direction, for which reason it was provided with two heads.<sup>3</sup>

A dog (plate vii, 4) which is clearly differentiated by a collar, that badge of domesticity which is rarely absent in its medieval representations, and a rabbit or hare present little difficulty, and either occur in the Bestiary. There is another dog-like creature in the series plate vi, 2), but without a collar; and this is engaged in the significant action of biting its hind foot, which leads to the conclusion that it is intended for a wolf, since the Bestiary says that the wolf, whilst cautiously approaching the sheep-folds by night, should it happen to make a noise, punishes the offending foot by biting it, and it is represented in the miniatures in the act of doing this.<sup>4</sup> It may be objected that the Bestiary wolf is generally heavily maned, but, although this is not very apparent in the photograph, this animal, along its back, gradually slopes off into the background in quite a different way from the clean-cut rounded relief of the dog, and the majority of the other beasts, seeming to indicate an outline modified by a hairy mane.

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the siren and mermaid see G. C. Druce, *Some Abnormal and Composite Human Forms in English Church Architecture* (Arch. Journ. vol. lxxii). Mr. Druce points out that the mirror so often held by the mermaid is probably a recollection of the mirror of Venus.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* viii, 35.

<sup>3</sup> For a full account of the amphisbaena see G. C. Druce, *The Amphisbaena and its*

*Connexions in Ecclesiastical Art and Architecture* (Arch. Journ. vol. lxxvii).

<sup>4</sup> See G. C. Druce, *The Medieval Bestiaries and their influence on Ecclesiastical Decorative Art*, ii. (Journ. of Brit. Arch. Assoc. 1920). This contains a reproduction of a miniature from Brit. Museum MS. Sloane 3544, in which the wolf is biting its foot. This article fully deals with the Bestiary histories of the unicorn, the panther, the wolf and the peacock.



There are two practically identical quadrupeds about which it is impossible to speak with certainty. They are represented with powerful claws, and widely-open mouths (plate VII, 4). Behind one of them is a dragon, not arranged as the rest of these animals are, to form a nicely-balanced pair, both facing inwards or both facing outwards, but watching or following the quadruped. It is possible that this exceptional arrangement may imply a connexion between the two, and, taking the juxtaposition of the dragon with the obviously opened mouth of the beast, it seems not improbable that the latter is intended for a female panther, which, when it roars, attracts other animals by the sweetness of its breath, its one enemy being the dragon, which is frightened and retires to its hole. If the animal followed by a dragon be a female panther (*panthera*), it is possible that its duplicate in the adjoining panel may be intended for the male panther (*pardus*) the Bestiary history of which is much less striking.<sup>1</sup>

There is a representation of a crocodile (plate VI, 3) which at first sight seems to be furnished with a disproportionately large tongue; but, when it is seen how unnaturally the mouth is forced open to its widest extent, it is realised that the tongue-like object is intended for something extraneous to the creature itself, and in all probability represents the hydrus of the Bestiary; the successor of the ichneumon of Pliny, which, after having rolled itself in mud, enters the mouth of the basking crocodile, and finally eats a way out through its side.

A biped reptile which is curled round, and grasping its tail in its claws (plate VII, 5) bears a strong resemblance in form to the 'deaf asp which stoppeth its ears' on the west front of Amiens Cathedral,<sup>2</sup> and the position of its tail is suggestive, though by no means conclusive, of this identity. There is another biped reptile with nothing to indicate the particular creature for which it was intended (plate VII, 4).

Eight of the spandrels contain birds. Bestiary birds are difficult to identify, and it is possible only to make very tentative suggestions as to the identity of a few of these. Of one there is no question, a peacock with

<sup>1</sup> G. C. Druce, *op. cit.* (*Journ. of Brit. Arch. Assoc.*, 1920).

<sup>2</sup> Figured by Emile Male *op. cit.* fig. 18



crest, and tail displayed (plate vi, 3). The peacock was a popular bird in the Bestiary, its reputed vanity, a characteristic already ascribed to it by Pliny,<sup>1</sup> being much dwelt upon. Facing it is a bird of powerful beak (plate vi, 3) unique in the series in that it is represented without feet, the legs passing direct into the moulding. It is evidently intended for a bird standing in water. As in another example an aquatic bird is indicated by webbed feet, it is just possible that this is meant for a particular case of a bird visiting water. If so, possibly the eagle dipping into the fountain of life is intended. The eagle was popularised by the use in medieval theology of its Bestiary story as an illustration to the sermon for the festival of the Ascension,<sup>2</sup> so that it was likely to be chosen in such a series of examples as this. There is a bird in the attitude of the 'pelican in her piety' (plate vii, 5) but no young are represented; there is no space in which to include them. On the other hand, this is also the attitude of preening the breast feathers, and the bird in the opposite spandrel appears to be preening its wing (plate vii, 5).

In one example there are two birds in the same spandrel (plate vii, 6), one, much the smaller of the two, flying away from the other. The larger might perhaps be the partridge which in the Bestiary is said to steal the eggs of other birds and hatch them, but, when the young are fledged, they fly back to their original parents.<sup>3</sup>

The series of misericords is not complete. Twenty-eight still remain in the cathedral: two were not replaced at the time of the last restoration and are presumably lost, and three were considered so unsuitable in subject that some years since they were removed from the building.

It is in the misericords<sup>4</sup> that the artist as story-teller finds full scope for his powers, and though imperfect in technique, the spacing and balance of the designs are excellent. There is still a very marked interest in animal life, but the subjects selected for illustration are drawn from a wide field, Scripture history, illustrations of current

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Nat.* x, 22.

<sup>2</sup> Emile Male, *op. cit.*, livre i, ch. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Bond, *Wood Carvings in English Churches*, i, *Misericords*, ch. iii.

<sup>4</sup> Though not agreeing with all the

conclusions therein, the writer is indebted to a paper by the late Mr. Robert Hall Warren on *The Misereres of Bristol Cathedral* (*Proceedings of the Clifton Antiquarian Club*, vol. i).

literature, the customs of daily life, and caricatures all being represented.

Adam and Eve with the human headed serpent (plate VIII, 1), and Samson dealing with the lion in the attitude traditional in art, the jaw-bone of an ass in his girdle, are the only Scriptural subjects. In the Samson carving (plate VIII, 2) a rabbit peeping from its hole is included in the composition, and the roots of the tree protrude in hollows in the ground. Both these features are frequently repeated in this series of carvings, and each follows a common artistic device for diversifying an uninteresting space in the design, which can be found in widely distributed works of art.<sup>1</sup>

Four misericords faithfully illustrate the history of Reynard the Fox, as it was printed in English by Caxton in 1481. The first (plate VIII, 3) deals with the incident in Lanfert the carpenter's yard in which Bruin the bear, enticed by Reynard with a promise of honey in the cleft oak, is caught by the removal of the wedge, and is being attacked by Lanfert and his friends<sup>2</sup>: 'Eueryche wyth his wepen some wyth a staf some wyth a rake, some with a brome some with a stake of the hegghe and some wyth a flayel.' Later, after Bruin has freed his head from the tree, the text describes how 'Syr bertolt with the longe fyngers, lanfert and Ottram the longe dyde to the bere more harme than al the other' and how one of these 'had a croked staf wel leded on the ende for to play at the balle.' The bear's three worst enemies seem to be depicted, the crooked staff being especially prominent, but the bear is represented at the most graphic point of the story whilst he is still a prisoner.

The next incident selected concerns Tybert the cat (plate VIII, 4); the cat had been persuaded by Reynard to enter the priest's barn in search of mice, and had there, as Reynard intended, been caught in a gin, and consequently 'mawede and galped' so loud that he disturbed the

<sup>1</sup> The present writer has noted some twenty examples of the rabbit detail in very varied and widely scattered works of art, such as the stalls of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, and miniatures of both French and English MSS. which leads to the conclusion that this was a widespread expedient

for adding interest to an uninteresting portion of a design. In Italian art the lizard is more frequently used than the rabbit.

<sup>2</sup> *Reynard the Fox* (English Scholars' Library of Old and Modern Works, ed. Arber), ch. viii, 'How Bruyn ete the honey.'



1



2



3



4

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

1. Adam, Eve and the Serpent.
3. Bruin in the Carpenter's Yard.

2. Samson.
4. Tybert in the Priest's Barn.



5



6



7



8

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

5. Tybert, the Priest, and Dame Julok.  
7. Fox preaching to Geese.

6. Reynard led to the Gallows.  
8. Fox hanged by Geese.

household.<sup>1</sup> The misericord shows the priest, Martynet, and Dame Julok, who had come out to secure the cat. A second misericord (plate ix, 5) which has been otherwise identified,<sup>2</sup> and is now consequently placed away from the Reynard carvings in the opposite range of stalls, also represents Tybert, Dame Julok, and the priest. These are the only two misericords on which both clothed and nude figures appear in the same composition, and in this they agree with the text, whilst the head-dress of Dame Julok in both cases is identical. In each of these scenes and in the Bruin subject Reynard is represented watching the result of his tricks.

Reynard being led to the gallows is depicted in exact accord with the text<sup>3</sup> (plate ix, 6). The scene takes place before Noble the lion and his queen. Tybert, being the lightest, climbs up hastily on the gallows with the rope on which he makes a riding knot. Bruin 'sees wel to that he escape not,' and stands behind the fox as he ascends the ladder. Isegrym the wolf helps in the scene with plentiful advice, whilst 'alle that were in the court' are represented beneath the gallows by a bird, a rabbit looking from a hole, and another animal. Reynard escapes from this precarious position by flattery of Noble the lion, and a promise that he will reveal to him hidden treasure,<sup>4</sup> and in the Caxton version of 1481 he is never hanged; on the contrary, in a concluding chapter of the text it is distinctly stated that 'the foxe lyved forthon wyth his wyf and his chyliden in greate joye and gladnes.'<sup>5</sup> Neither is he hanged in the English version published and imprinted in London in St. Martin's by Thomas Gaultier in 1550, thirty years after the date of these carvings. It is fair to assume therefore that according to the popular contemporary English versions Reynard should not be hanged. The Reynard story is descended from the animal stories of primitive man, and in these the animal which is the hero of the story was the symbol or totem of the tribe, and was invariably victorious. On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* ch. x, 'How the kynge sente another tyme tybert the catte for the foxe, and how tybert spedde with reynart the foxe.'

<sup>2</sup> As a man and woman with a tame squirrel.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xv, 'How the foxe was ledde to the galewis.'

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* ch. cliii.

in certain branches of the Reynard story the hanging does take place, but at what date it is first introduced is not easily traced. The Bristol carver has represented the fox being hanged by geese (plate ix, 8) but this appears to be a corollary to another subject—the fox preaching to geese (plate ix, 7), as in this last the gallows is included, as though to indicate that the hanging was the direct outcome of the preaching. These two themes occur constantly in places where there is no other reference to the Reynard story<sup>1</sup>; and there is a good case for an independent origin, since the Bestiary account of the fox<sup>2</sup> is sufficient to establish him conclusively as the type of the fraudulent and deceitful. The Bestiary describes how the fox lies as if he were dead, until the birds, thinking him carrion, pounce on him; whereupon he leaps up and tears them to pieces. The moralisation compares the devil and the wicked man to the fox, and also those who with fair words mean evil; and of such Herod is naturally taken as an example, since he was referred to as ‘that fox’ in the Bible.

That the fox was accepted as a type of the fraudulent priest is shown, since it is recorded that about 1300 Philip the Fair caused a fox vested as pope to be led through the streets of Paris in a procession, as a caricature of Pope Boniface VIII.<sup>3</sup> The history of Reynard the fox, particularly in certain localities, attracted to itself other incidents until it reached a bulk of some 41,000 verses<sup>4</sup>; and it is quite obvious that such compatible themes as the preaching and hanging fox, if they occurred independently in art, would be likely at some time to be absorbed into the story. At the end of the seventeenth century both incidents are included in an English version; in *The Most Pleasant and Delightful History of Reynard the Fox*, published in 1681, Reynard is hanged, whilst in *The Shifts of Reynardine the*

<sup>1</sup> On misericords at Beverley Minster, and on bench-ends at South Brent, Somerset. The preaching fox occurs on stalls of Christchurch Priory, Hants, on a moulding on the east side of the screen at Kenton, Devon, and on the stalls of Lausanne Cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> G. C. Druce, *op. cit.* (*Journ. of Brit. Arch. Assoc.*).

<sup>3</sup> See Ernest Martin, *Le Roman de Renart*, and the work with the same title by Ch. Potvin. The fox of the stalls of Amiens Cathedral is known as ‘Pierre Genest,’ a Canon of contemporary date with the stalls who aroused indignation by his exactions (Potvin, *op. cit.*).

<sup>4</sup> See Arber, *Reynard the Fox*, ut sup. Other authorities give a much higher number.



9



10



11



12

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

9. Pedlar and Monkeys.  
11. Combat of Man and Beast.

10. Beasts dancing.  
12. The Hart and the Hunter.





13



14



15



16

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

13. Leading Apes into Hell.  
15. Woman bringing Corn to Mill.

14. Slug with Pack.  
16. Domestic Quarrel.



*Son of Reynard*,<sup>1</sup> Reynardine reads a lecture to a congregation of geese, and is also hanged, though not as a result of preaching. The fox was hanged in certain of the French branches of the story,<sup>2</sup> but there seems no particular reason to claim an inspiration for the Bristol carvings from an alien branch of *Reynard the Fox*, since the probability is stronger that the artist would be inspired from some of the fairly numerous examples in which the preaching and the hanging fox occur in wood-carving, quite apart from any other item of the Reynard history. The popularity of the subject was due to the fact that it was intended as a satire on the preaching order.

Another episode which is absent from the Caxton Reynard, but which occurs in *The Shifts of Reynardine*, consists of a pedlar lying on the ground whilst monkeys rifle his pack (plate x, 9). This again is an incident which occurs elsewhere quite isolated from the Reynard story,<sup>3</sup> and is an example of the somewhat childish standing joke of the middle ages in which animals are represented acting as men. The series contains two other carvings of the same class. In one, a bear and another quadruped are dancing to the music of a drum played by a monkey (plate x, 10), and in the other a combat with swords is taking place between a long-tailed quadruped and a man, whilst a similar animal holding a shield is looking on (plate x, 11).

A hunting scene differing from the majority of medieval representations of the subject, which show the hunt at the climax of the excitement in full cry, is likely to be an illustration of *The Hart and the Hunter*, which occurs in a collection of fables of the period.<sup>4</sup> In the carving the stag is standing shot in its flank by an arrow, looking helplessly round, whilst a hunter, his dog still in leash, approaches without any sign of hurry (plate x, 12). The fable relates how a hart, drinking at a well, saw in

<sup>1</sup> The nature of the preface to each of these works makes it doubtful whether they can be claimed as a faithful transcript of any early Reynard story; the compiler takes too great credit to himself.

<sup>2</sup> E. Martin, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Brit. Museum MSS. 10 Ed.IV. f. 149. Several of the very varied miniatures of this MS. have the fox as chief actor, but

the pedlar is inserted entirely separated from these by other intervening subjects. This incident is represented in a picture at the Royal Gallery at Dresden, attributed to Hendrik Met de Bles. On misericords it occurs at Beverley and Manchester.

<sup>4</sup> Reprint of the *Fables of Aesop as printed by Caxton with those of Avian, Alfonso, and Poggio*, R. Bentley.

it the reflection of his horns, which he praised for their beauty, and his legs, which he blamed because they were lean and small; but when hunted, his legs would have carried him to safety, but his horns kept him to be an easy prey to the hunter by entangling themselves in a bush; the moral being that 'men ought to dispraise that which is unprofitable, and ought to praise and love the Church and the commandments of the same.'

Another misericord (plate XI, 13) illustrates a saying which is constantly referred to in the literature of the period,<sup>1</sup> that the occupation of the spinster in the future state will be the leading of apes into hell. A devil standing in a jaw of hell is receiving a naked woman with four tethered apes.

A curious subject (plate XI, 14) shows a large slug beneath a tree with a carefully corded pack on its back, being led in a leash by a man who precedes it whilst another man follows threatening it with a double-thonged whip. It is probable that this refers to the slowness of transport by pack-horse, since in West Somerset dialect the word slug<sup>2</sup> is applied to a slow-going horse. On the other hand

<sup>1</sup> The popularity of the saying is shown by the following list of passages in which it is used: *Taming of the Shrew*, act ii, sc. 1; *Much Ado about Nothing*, act ii, sc. 1; Lyly, *Euphues*:

Rather thou shouldst leade a lyfe to thine owne lyking on earthe than leade apes in Hell';

Peele, *Arraignement of Paris*, act iv, sc. 1; H. Porter, *Two Angry Women of Abingdon*, act ii, sc. 1; *London Prodigal*, act i, sc. 2; Campion, *A Book of Airs*:

'Hark all you ladies that do sleep';

William Corkine, *Second Book of Airs*:  
'O if you knew what chance to them befell  
That dance about with bob-tail apes in Hell

Yourself your virgin girdle would divide . . . rather than undergo such shame';

Dekker, Chettle and Haughton, *The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grissel*, act ii, sc. 1, and act v, sc. 2; Massinger, *The City Madam*, act ii, sc. 2;

*A Scourge of Venus*:

'We have which who so doth omit leads apes in Hell';

*Claribel* and *The Frolick*, MS. plays quoted by Halliwell, who also quotes *Cburbyard's Chippes* (see Henry Irving, *Shakespeare*, vol. ii, p. 305);

Otway, *The Soldier's Fortune*, act i, sc. 2; Mrs. Centlivre, *Bold Stroke*, act ii, sc. 1; H. Carey, *Chrononbotanthologos*:

'Pity that you who've served so long and well,  
Should die a Virgin and lead apes in Hell';

Shenstone, *To a Lady buried in Marriage*; Davies quoted by Hazlitt in *English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*:

'There's an old grave proverb tells us that such as dye mayds do all leade apes in Hell';

*The Maid and the Palmer* in Child's *English and Scottish Ballads*, vol. i; *A Book of Fortune*, quoted by Mrs. C. Carmichael Stopes in *Shakespeare's Industry*:

'Thou a stale bachelor shall dye  
And not a virgin for thee cry,  
For apes that maids in Hell do lead  
Are men that dye and never wed';

In a note in the *Variorum Shakespeare*, Halliwell is stated to have given twenty-three quotations referring to this saying, but the present writer has been [unable to trace these.

<sup>2</sup> *English Dialect Dictionary*, ed. Wright, vol. v.



17



18



19



20

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

17. Nun at Lectern.  
19. Men wrestling.

18. Pig-killing.  
20. Nude Figures on Bench.



21



23

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

21. Bear-baiting.  
23. Man and woman jousting.



22



24

22. Tilting at Quintain.  
23. Mermaid between Monsters.

a nickname for a snail is a packman,<sup>1</sup> and in William Howitt's *Boy's Country Book* there is a story of *Paul Elks and the Packman* of so medieval a flavour that the suspicion arises whether it may not embody some earlier story of which this misericord might possibly be an illustration. Paul Elks, a woodman, considering his wife a gossip, decides to test her. Killing a snail, and burying it beneath a tree in the forest, he returns home and tells his wife that he has murdered a packman. When he goes back to his work his wife gossips, and he is pursued by emissaries of the law to whom he shows the buried snail.<sup>2</sup>

The portrayal of everyday affairs occupies some misericords. There is a woman bringing a sack of corn to a windmill (plate xi, 15); a domestic quarrel in which the woman is evidently resenting the interference of the man with her cooking-pot (plate xi, 16); a nun seated at a lectern outside a building (plate xii, 17); and a pig-killing scene in which a sow is being arranged on a bench preparatory to sticking it (plate xii, 18). This last has been regarded as a Reynard incident as recorded in the seventeenth-century English version of the story, the cutting up of Grunt, the pig. Grunt does not figure in the Caxton version, and the pig in the carving has not arrived at the cutting-up stage. The sense of resistance in the neck and fore-feet, the action of the hind feet and the fact that the animal is tethered, show that it is a living pig which is being dealt with. The object, which looks like a cloth with which the creature is being rubbed down, is really the termination of the tail, very roughly executed, and in the carving itself the tail can be seen leading up to this. Pig-killing was often represented as the work of the month of December, but as the works of the other months are absent, there is no reason to think that this subject has any seasonal significance here. Beneath the bench upon which the pig is being arranged to be killed are two rabbits, one

<sup>1</sup> *English Dialect Dictionary*, vol. iv, s.v.; Packman used for a snail, particularly for *belix aspera*.

<sup>2</sup> A parallel story with a calf in place of the snail, and with different and fuller detail occurs in *Le Violier des Histoires*

*Romaines, Ancienne traduction françoise des Gesta Romanorum*, ed. M. G. Brunet, ch. cxlviii, 'Comment on ne doit aux femmes croire, ne leur declarer son secret, car elles ne celent rien quant elles sont marries.'

looking from, and the other entering its hole, this being the only example in which the rabbit is shown going into its hole instead of looking out of it.

There is a spirited carving (plate XII, 19) in which two men are wrestling, using collars for the purpose, whilst a third who seems to be acting as referee is intervening and apparently objecting to the position of a foot.

Another subject (plate XII, 20) is suggestive of some sort of athletic contest. In it two nude figures are seated tailor-fashion, facing each other on a bench; the hands and arms of one are entirely destroyed, so that it is impossible to identify his occupation. Beneath the bench is a small bush, having the same type of foliage as the highly-conventionalised trees which are characteristic throughout these misericords.

A muzzled and tethered bear, approached by men with wheelbarrows and dogs, forms the subject of another carving (plate XIII, 21) and no doubt has reference to the bears kept for the sport of bear-baiting.

Two misericords are occupied by caricatures, the one of tilting at the quintain (plate XIII, 22), the other of a joust (plate XIII, 23). In the first a man mounted on a bear is thrusting at a full sack which is being held stationary by a large dog-like quadruped. In the joust a man riding on a sow meets a woman riding on a bird from the poultry yard. The woman's weapon is a broom, and behind her is a broom in reserve. Behind the man is an implement of two prongs, perhaps intended for a farming fork, but as his weapon is broken it is impossible to tell whether it was similar.

The subject of one carving (plate XIII, 24) is a mermaid between two monsters, one of which is a dragon, the other a human-headed creature with claw-feet and wings, which may be intended for the devil.

In another carving (plate XIV, 25) a double-headed dragon figures in hot pursuit of three naked souls. There is a grotesque forcefulness about this composition which suggests an inspiration from some stage 'business.'

A man riding face to tail, being encouraged to proceed by another on foot whose pike is now broken (plate XIV, 26), is likely to represent a person in disgrace. In the earlier misericords of Wells Cathedral there is a much more



25



27

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.  
MISERICORDS.

- 25 Dragon pursuing Naked Souls.  
27. Monkey (or boy) riding.





26

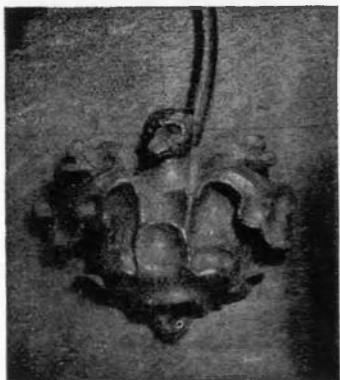


28

26. Man riding face to tail.  
28. Foliage.

*To face page 248.*

PLATE XIV.



1



2



3



4



5



6

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

FINIALS OF MISERICORDS.

- |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Fox looking from flower.   | 2. Animal creeping into flower. |
| 3. Bear playing bagpipes (?). | 4. Monkey playing citole.       |
| 5. Fool with cap and bells.   | 6. Woman drinking from bottle.  |

drastic representation of the same subject, in which the rider is naked and bound.

There is an unfinished carving (plate xiv, 27) in which a monkey, or boy, is riding on a quadruped with a half-filled sack as saddle, followed by a man holding the animal's tail in one hand, and brandishing a stick in the other. The animal ridden has a short tail, cloven hoofs and a thick mane which encircles the neck; it is apparently not intended for a horse or donkey, though it is difficult to suggest a satisfactory identity for it. The scene was evidently to have been completed by rabbits which are roughly cut, but not shaped.

One bracket is filled by conventional foliage of a distinctly Tudor type (plate xiv, 28).

The interest of the misericords does not end with the central subjects. Though some of the supporters consist of a conventional flower alone, there are many that include an animal or person, each contained in a flower, and executed with considerable character.<sup>1</sup> Among the animals there is a monkey playing a citole (plate xv, 4), a pig with a broken object, possibly bagpipes (plate xv, 3), an alert fox looking from a flower (plate xv, 1), another small quadruped peeping over the edge of a flower, a lion mask with protruding tongue in an open rose, and the hind legs and tail of an animal creeping into a flower (plate xv, 2). Among the human beings is a fool with cap and bells (plate xv, 5), a sleeping man crouching within a flower, a woman drinking from a gourd-like bottle (plate xv, 6). There are three faces under one hat (plate xvi, 7), a subject fairly common in medieval art, which possibly refers to the saying 'To have two faces under one hat'<sup>2</sup>—to be deceitful, two-faced, the three faces making a more pleasing design than the two, and enforcing rather than interfering with the meaning of the saying. On the other hand the widespread belief in the existence of monstrous races of men might account for such a design. Although the Trinity is sometimes represented as a single figure with three faces,<sup>3</sup> when this is the case, it forms part of a

<sup>1</sup> Of the fifty-six supporters in the series thirty-five have some representation of human or animal life in the design.

<sup>2</sup> *English Dialect Dictionary*, s.v. Hat.

<sup>3</sup> In miniatures of MSS. B.M. 20729 f. 50, f. 70; B.M. 29433, f. 178; B.M. 29902, f. 7; B.M. 2B xv, f. 10.

religious composition. In a trivial ornament of this kind it is most improbable that this would be thought of, and the fact that there is a French example with three faces in one fool's cap<sup>1</sup> makes it obvious that the design originated in something different.

Two heads, one blowing a horn (plate xvi, 9), and one with a foliated spray issuing from the mouth, are evidently from their physiognomy intended for Jews.

There are some realistic faces which may have been portraits. Two (plate xvi, 8, 11) of these, each in the centre of a double rose, wear a hood which merges very successfully in the flower. A cheery personage, the most realistic of any (plate xvi, 12), with a turned-up cap, may quite feasibly be a portrait of the master-craftsman who was responsible for this work.

<sup>1</sup> At Champeaux, figured in Vitry & Briere's portfolio of French Medieval Sculpture, plate cxxxiii.



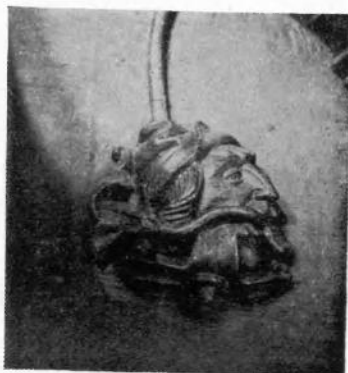
7



8



9



10



11



12

BRISTOL CATHEDRAL.

FINIALS OF MISERICORDS.

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 7. Three faces under one hat. | 8. Head in flower.             |
| 9. Jew blowing horn.          | 10. Jew with foliated spray.   |
| 11. Head in flower.           | 12. Head (? Master Craftsman). |