

was unknown, and, for all people knew to the contrary, the sun moved round the earth.

These Accounts are also of great interest to us at the present day, as, being contemporary documents, they take us back face to face, as it were, with the daily life of the people of Buckinghamshire, at a time when the white-robed Templars were the occupiers of the undulating glades and forests, and the Banner Beauseant of the Order floated over the manorial demesnes of the Bolestrode of some six centuries ago.

“Norman Tympana and Lintels in the Churches of Great Britain.”

By Charles E. Keyser, M.A., F.S.A.

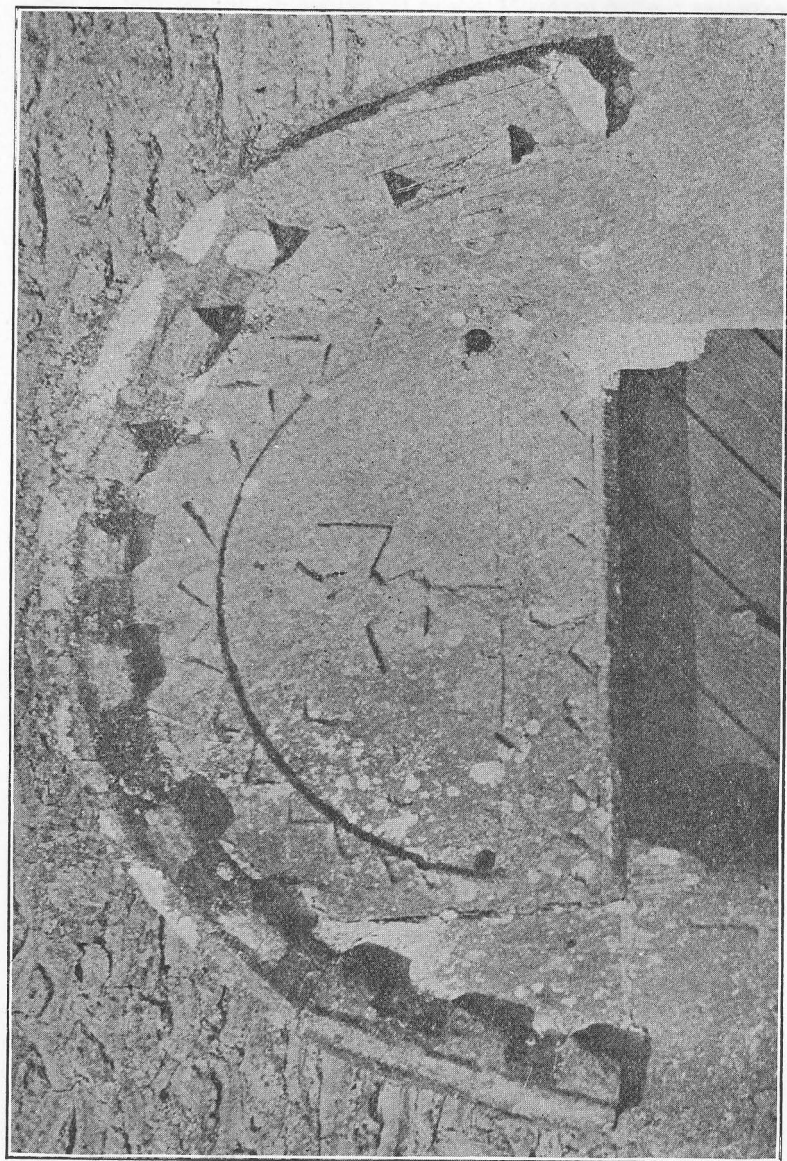
LOYAL Members of the Berks Archæological Society will welcome with much satisfaction the appearance of a learned work written by their President. Those who have listened to Mr. Keyser's lectures on Architectural subjects, or visited old Churches in his company, know well his enthusiastic love of Norman Architecture and the careful study which he has made during many years of the details and the sculpture and symbolical interpretations of Norman doorways. By careful personal observation of these relics of ancient art in all parts of England, Mr. Keyser has acquired a very special knowledge of his subject, and we have in this volume, enriched with very numerous illustrations of curious carvings, the results of his research, which will be especially valuable to those who admire the skill and fertility of design of the ancient Masons of England. Very strange and remarkable are many of these figures so clearly shown in this volume by the aid of the camera, and moreover, as Mr. Keyser says “they serve to illustrate the methods of religious teaching which were carried on in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in no slight measure through the medium of these practical appeals to the observation and sentiments of those on whom the Church wished to exercise and maintain its influence.”

The author has a thorough and complete knowledge of the subject concerning which he writes, and his volume abounds with

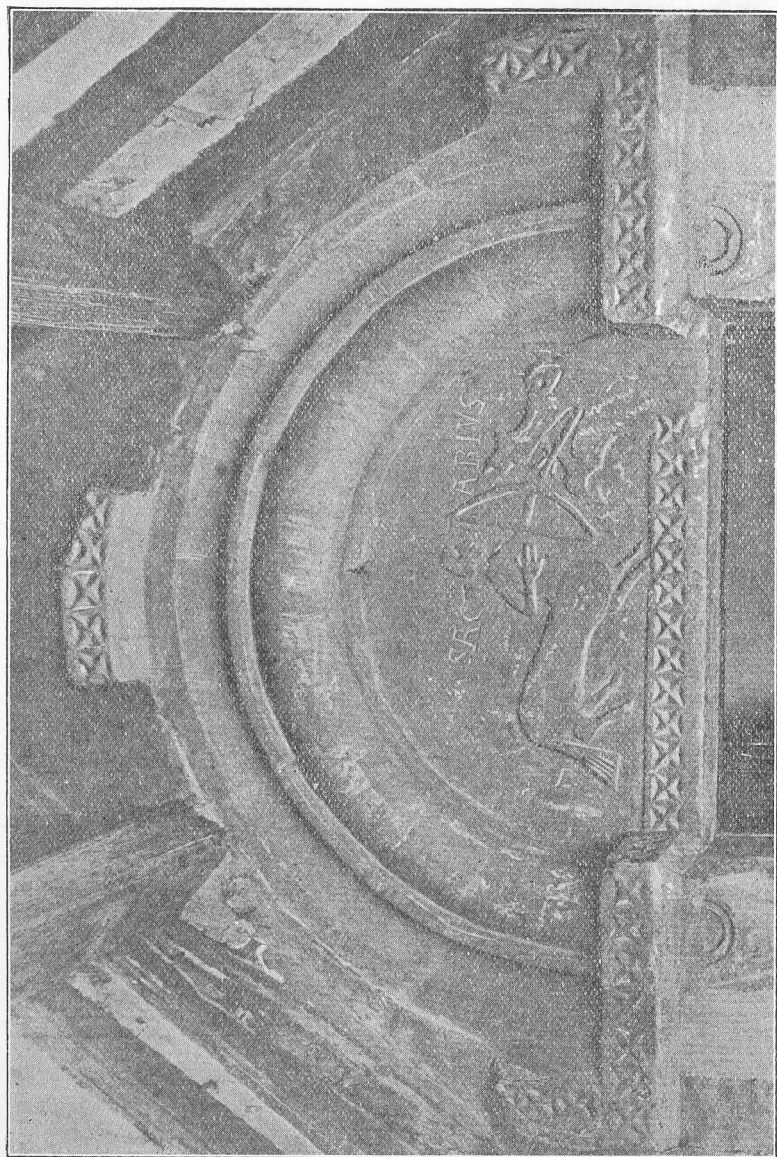
curious information which only an expert could convey so clearly and so well. Thus we notice the figure of a tree which often appears on Norman tympana. There are no less than twenty-seven Churches which bear this symbol, which, except in a few instances, represents the Tree of Spiritual Life and Knowledge, sometimes Christ as the True Vine. Very often animals are seen feeding on the fruit of the tree, a symbol which is duly explained by our Buckinghamshire example at Dinton, where we find an inscription, which Mr. Keyser translates:—"If any one should despair of obtaining reward for his deserts, let him attend to the doctrines here preached, and take care to keep them in mind." The contest between good and evil is shown by Sagittarius shooting an arrow into the open jaws of a dragon, and Psalm xlv. v. 18—20 is frequently depicted in these curious sculptures. Some of these quaint designs almost defy the efforts of the antiquary to interpret their meaning; but there are few that are not elucidated by the careful knowledge of the author of this work. The Norman masons seem seldom to have portrayed Old Testament subjects on the tympana of doorways; but Mr. Keyser has discovered several of the Fall, the sacrifice of Isaac, David slaying the lion, and Daniel in the lion's den. The Agnus Dei, our Lord in Majesty, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the descent into Hell, appear frequently. The interlacing circles are emblems of eternity. The evangelistic emblems, angels, ecclesiastics, birds, beasts, hunting scenes, griffins, roses, and many other objects appear, and of them very numerous and interesting representations are given in this valuable work. By the courtesy of the Publisher we are enabled to give three examples of the plates, which represent the tympana of Churches in Oxfordshire, and are therefore especially interesting to our readers. This book will appeal to various classes of readers. The ecclesiastical historian will find in these pictorial representations the church teaching general in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Amongst other facts we notice that the paucity of the figures of the Virgin shows that the worship of the Blessed Virgin had not then attained the extraordinary development which was evident in later times. The student of Christian symbolism will find in this volume a vast amount of food for thought. The architect and antiquary will discover a perfect collection of the triumphs of Norman art, and Berkshire archæologists will be especially gratified to read this splendid result of the labours of their distinguished President.



TYMPANUM AT FRITWELL, OXFORDSHIRE.



TYMPANUM AT BLACK BOURTON, OXFORDSHIRE.



TYMPANUM AT KENCOTT, OXFORDSHIRE.