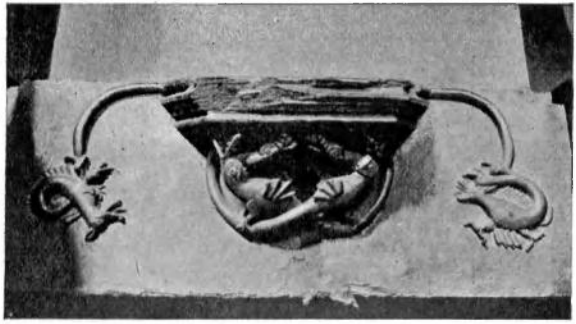
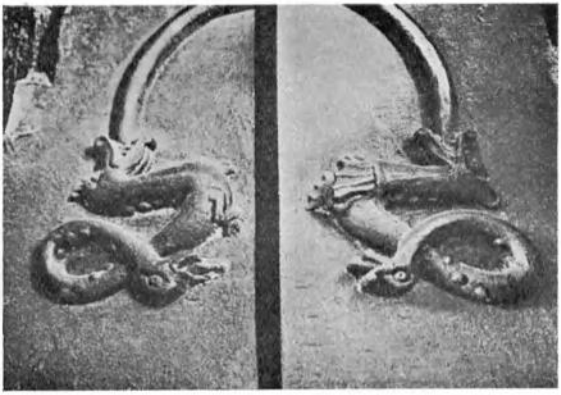


[*G. G. Buckley, phot.*

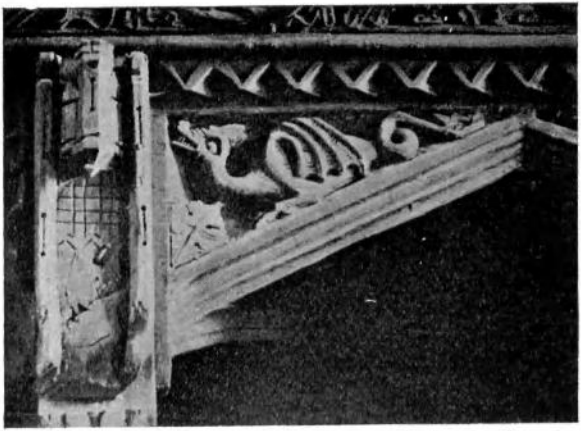
NO. I. HALSALL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENAS.



[*G. G. Buckley, phot.*

NO. 2. HALSALL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENAS.

PLATE I.



[*F. H. Crossley, phot.*

NO. 3. CONWAY CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.

[*F. T. S. Houghton, phot.*

NO. 4. BURTON DASSET CHURCH. AMPHISBAENAS.

To face page 285.

THE AMPHISBAENA AND ITS CONNEXIONS IN ECCLESIASTICAL ART AND ARCHITECTURE.[1]

By GEORGE C. DRUCE.

In December, 1909, I had the privilege of reading a paper before the Institute upon the symbolism of the crocodile, in which I made considerable use of the mediaeval bestiaries as a source of information.[2] I endeavoured to show the correspondence between the illustrations in them and the details of ecclesiastical figure sculpture, with a view to identifying various animal forms in the latter, and to explain their meaning.

I shall proceed on somewhat similar lines in the present paper with regard to the amphisbaena, which appears in the form of a dragon in the church sculptures, possessing the peculiar feature of a second head upon the end of its tail. There is a very large number of sculptured dragons in church architecture, and I am under the impression that they are generally regarded as representing *the* dragon, that is the devil or Satan in symbolic form. The artists of the bestiaries however used the dragon form as a stock pattern for illustrating a variety of serpents. As a result of an examination of several illustrated bestiaries I find at least a dozen different kinds of serpents or snakes, besides lizards, put into dragon form, and there is therefore every reason why they should so appear in architecture. There is a serpent called Draco, also mentioned by Pliny, which is described as the largest of all, killing by suffocation and crushing; it appears in the manuscripts as a two- or four-legged dragon, either alone, or enfolding an elephant. This serpent symbolises the devil. There are also the basilisk, the viper, the asp, and others with such names as *boas*, *seps*, *serpens*, *jaculus*, *amphivena*, *haemorrois*, *hydrus*, etc. and lizards under such names as *salamandra*, *saura*, *lacerta*, which symbolise different things. Some of them appear in scenes which, when repeated in architecture, would quickly lead to their identification, such

[1] Read before the Institute, 2nd November, 1910.

[2] The paper appeared in the *Archaeological Journal*, lxvi, 311.

as the asp stopping its ears, or the hydrus being swallowed by the crocodile; others appear alone, but with some anatomical peculiarity, such as the basilisk with a cock's head and spurs, or the amphisbaena with a head upon its tail, which should similarly lead to identification; others again are simple dragons which it is almost impossible to identify.[1]

There is a very interesting example of a dragon which may be identified by the circumstances in which it appears, though being of normal shape it gives no clue of itself. It occurs in a medallion on the Norman doorway at St. Margaret's, Walmgate, York, where it is perched on the back of a four-footed animal, biting it. This is unquestionably a serpent called the jaculus, so named from *jaculum*, a dart or javelin, because it was supposed to dart with exceeding swiftness from a tree on to its prey. The illustrations in the manuscripts mostly show it alone as an ordinary dragon, but in MS. Harl. 4751 of the thirteenth century there is a picture of two of them, one being perched up in a tree, while the other has darted down on to the back of a four-footed animal and is biting its shoulder, thus exactly corresponding with the sculpture at St. Margaret's, Walmgate. In MS. Slo. 3544 it appears on the ground with expanded wings facing two sheep which are crouching down.

The jaculus is mentioned by many ancient writers, including Pliny. He tells us[2] that it flies from the trees, as if hurled from an engine. But perhaps the best description is to be found in Lucan's *Pharsalia:*

[1] In a paper by Mr. G. Le Blanc Smith on Dragonesque forms in Architecture in *The Reliquary* (N. S. xii, 217, Oct. 1907) he endeavours to identify the sculptured dragons on the fonts at Youlgrave (Derby) and elsewhere as salamanders. He takes for granted that the salamander as a denizen of fire symbolised the devil driven out at baptism by the virtue of water, and he tries to support this by stating that the salamander is always represented as a lizard with bifurcated tail with one twist, and usually with three-clawed toes; but he produces no evidence at all from mediaeval sources as to the salamander symbolising baptism. It was anciently held to be a deadly serpent, to poison the fruit of trees, the water of wells, and wine (see Pliny's *Nat. Hist.* x, 86 (66); xi, 116 (53); xxix, 23 (4), (Bohn), and then through its supposed power of extinguishing fire it came to symbolise the faith and constancy of the three Jews in the fiery furnace, and consequently the successful resistance of the good man to the flames of hell. All this is explained in the mediaeval bestiaries. It is quite possible that the supposed power of the salamander to extinguish fire may have led to its use to symbolise original sin extinguished by the waters of baptism, but I cannot put my finger on any reference of the kind. The whole of Mr. Smith's argument is nullified by the omission of this important detail. I may add that most of the serpents appearing as dragons in the bestiaries that I have inspected have three-clawed toes.

[2] *Nat. Hist.* viii, 35 (23).

On an old stumpe a dart-like snake did ly,
Which, as from thence her selfe she nimbly threw,
Through Paulus head, and wounded temples flew.
Twas not the poison wrought his fate, the blow
It selfe brought death. To her compared slow
Fly stones from slings, and not so swift as she
From Parthian bowes doe winged arrowes flee.[1]

The amphisbaena, to which I now turn, is one of that class which possesses a special anatomical feature. As its name implies, it is a serpent that can move both ways, i.e. forwards or backwards. Both manuscripts and sculptures alike show it as a dragon with a head upon its tail, and were it not for this we could not distinguish it from other dragons. I shall deal with it first in its individual capacity, next with regard to its influence on other architectural forms, and lastly I shall deal with some interesting variants.

In sculpture the amphisbaena ranges from at least as early as the twelfth century down to the fifteenth or sixteenth. The first example that I have to show is on the Norman font at Hook Norton, Oxon (plate v, no. 1). This font has a variety of symbolic devices including a centaur with incised title *Sagittarius;* Adam and Eve, both with titles, and the former with spade and rake; a beast; a curious naked figure on a pedestal holding an axe in one hand and some other objects over the shoulder, the nature of which I cannot determine; a conventional tree; and lastly the dragon-like serpent that I am dealing with.[2]

It has a head with ears and a beaked nose, two poorly-developed legs, and a serpentine body terminating in another head, which approaches the main head, and is biting its nose. Round the neck and along the body is a row of little spots or pellets. It has no wings proper, but three little fin-like projections at intervals.

At Halsall, Lancs. upon two misericords of the fifteenth century there are some interesting examples, possessing features in common with that at Hook Norton. The carver of these misericords must have been especially attracted by this serpent, for on one of them

[1] ix, 822: Thomas May's translation (1631).

[2] All these details are illustrated in Romilly Allen's *Early Christian Symbolism*, 365.

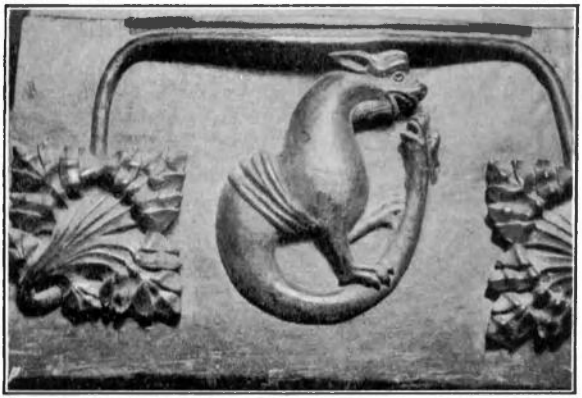
(plate I, no. 1), he has represented no less than four, possessing ten heads between them. In the middle are two with their bodies crossed. They each have a pair of legs, and long tails coming up at the sides with heads on them, which approach each other in a menacing way. They have small wings, in which respect they differ from that at Hook Norton. On the right and left there are others, which correspond better, having the fins still more pronounced. They have well-defined heads on their tails and moreover the tails are bifurcated, having two heads each. These are the only examples I know of with bifurcated tails.

On the other misericord (plate I, no. 2), the middle subject is a demi-figure of an angel holding two scourges. The two side subjects are amphisbaenas, which on the whole agree well with the Hook Norton example. The left one has rudimentary legs and no wings; that on the right has small wings and but doubtful indications of legs. Both have the row of spots. These variations are perhaps partly due to the carver, but the manuscript illustrations also vary as we shall see.

There is a fine example on the twelfth-century font in Lincoln cathedral church. On the side illustrated (plate III, no. 1) there are three beasts, two of which are alike and face each other. The other one on the right is of the dragon type and has two legs, and wings; it has a kind of beaked nose rather like the example at Hook Norton, and a curled tail, which terminates in another head turned towards the wing. The difference in style will be noticed here; it is on one of the so-called Tournai fonts.

There is a beautiful example in Southwark cathedral church (plate II, no. 4) upon one of the bosses of the old nave roof, which are now stored in the north transept. They were originally set up by Henry de Burton, prior in 1469, and his rebus, a cask or tun through which a stem is growing with three burrs emerging at the top, occurs on certain of them. This example shows the pure dragon type. It has large wings, and the tail head is practically a replica of the other.

Another fine example of the same type is on a misericord at Hemington, Northants (plate II, no. 3). The



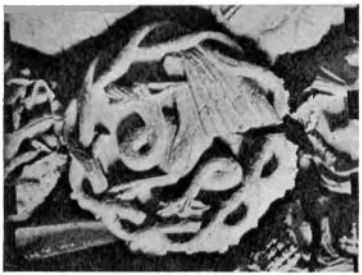
[*P. M. Johnston, phot.*

NO. I. LIMERICK CATHEDRAL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.

NO. 2. CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENAS.

[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 3. HEMINGTON CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.



[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 4. SOUTHWARK CATHEDRAL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.

NO. I. LINCOLN CATHEDRAL CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.

NO. 2. LUPPITT CHURCH. TWO-HEADED BEAST.

stalls, ten in number, came from Fotheringhay church. The tail-head here resembles the main head, but is much smaller.

Another occurs in a spandrel of the screen at Conway (plate I, no. 3). This is also of the normal dragon type, the heads being alike. The position of the tail here is due to considerations of space, the head not being returned. In one of the bestiaries (MS. Slo. 3544) the illustration of the amphisbaena shows the tail, though undulating, extending outwards.

At Burton Dassett, Warwickshire, there is one, if not two, good examples in the moulding of the cap of the eastern pillar of the nave arcade (plate I, no. 4). These are of the ordinary dragon type. The composition is no doubt governed by the space, but the tail-heads are returned.

On a misericord in Limerick cathedral church there is a remarkable example (plate II, no. 1), which is interesting on account of its similarity to one of the manuscript illustrations. It agrees with the amphisbaenas at Halsall, in that it has rudimentary wings. The tail-head is noticeably turned up towards the main head, which it faces in an antagonistic way, as at Hook Norton.

The bestiaries are of the utmost importance in providing the necessary links between the early history of the amphisbaena and its appearance in church architecture. I have had reproductions made from two manuscripts in the British Museum both of the thirteenth century. The first is in Harl. 4751, an English-Latin bestiary, and in many respects the most convenient for general reference. The picture (plate IV, no. 1) shows the amphisbaena in a circular panel, with a head upon its tail: this is bent round towards the main head, which it resembles with the exception that its ears are rather shorter. The artist here has made the main head biting the other. The latinised title ANPHIVENA appears just above. The following is a rendering of the text at the side:

> The amphisbaena is so called, because it has two heads, one in its proper place, the other on its tail; running with either head first, and its trailing body bent round. This is the only one of the serpents which exposes itself to the cold, showing itself first of all. About which the same (author) Lucan says: "The dangerous amphisbaena also which turns according to its double head." The eyes of which shine like lamps.[1]

[1] Lucan has been quoted in the account of the preceding serpent.

The illustration in the other manuscript (Harl. 3244) is different, and very quaintly drawn (plate IV, no. 2). The tail is bent up, and the head on it turns towards the main head in the same antagonistic way. The latter breathes fire. The amphisbaena here is coloured bright green. The title appears at length above: "De serpente habente duo capita ab amphi quod est dubium dicto." (About the serpent which has two heads, so called from "amphi" which is "double"). The text in this manuscript is the same as Harl. 4751. In MS. Add. 11283 the text is also the same, and the illustration shows the amphisbaena as a dragon with head and long ears sticking up, two legs with three-clawed toes, wings, and a tail curled twice and ending in another head, which is turned back towards the main head. In MS. Slo. 3544 the text is also the same. The illustration shows the amphisbaena as a double-headed dragon, but the tail is not curled, nor do the heads approach. In MS. 12 F. XIII the text differs slightly, but the sense is the same. In MS. 12 C. XIX, a Flemish manuscript, the leaf containing the illustration and part of the text is missing. All the above-named manuscripts are in the British Museum. In MS. Ashmole, 1511 (Bodl.) the illustration shows a winged dragon with a tail-head which it is biting. In the bestiary of Guillaume, clerc de Normandie, according to the text published by M. Charles Hippeau in his *Le Bestiaire Divin*, I cannot find any account of the amphisbaena. The illustrated manuscript of this version, 16 E. VIII (B.M.), which is referred to by Hippeau, has, I am informed, been lost. Similarly in Philip de Thaun's version, written in Norman-French about 1121, as published by Wright, I can find no mention of it. In Hugo de Saint Victor's account of the amphisbaena in his *De bestiis et aliis rebus*[1] the text, as printed in Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, 177, is word for word the same as MS. Harl. 4751, except that "circumlato" is printed "circulato," a difference probably due to mis-copying. It is likely that Hugo's work was the foundation for many of the Latin bestiaries of the thirteenth century.

So far I have not found any symbolism attached to the amphisbaena in any bestiary, but it seems impossible

[1] iii, 44.

to believe that so picturesque a "serpent" was not employed in that way in the middle ages. I am confirmed in this view by the fact that a fully developed moral interpretation appears in a work of Aldrovandus, a prominent writer of the sixteenth century on natural history, to which I shall refer shortly. It should however be noted that the absence of symbolism in the bestiary was not a bar to any particular subject coming into architecture, because its inclusion in a religious manuscript would be sufficient justification; and also that when it is missing in one group of manuscripts, it does not follow that it is absent in all. In the account of the tiger in MS. Add. 11283, an English-Latin bestiary of the thirteenth century in the British Museum, there is no symbolism, but in MS. 3516, an early thirteenth-century manuscript in the Picardy dialect in the Arsenal Library, Paris, it is fully developed.[1] Similarly in the case of the mouse, MS. Harl. 3244 stops short at the end of the account of its generation from the moisture of the earth and the vagaries of its liver during the different phases of the moon, while MS. Harl. 4751 goes on to refer to the shrew-mouse, and winds up with the symbolism thus: "Mystically mice signify men gaping with greed for earthly desires and secretly pilfering what they can from other people's stores."

The quotation from Lucan in the bestiary fitly introduces us to the earlier history of the amphisbaena. It is to classical writers that we must turn, if we are to ascertain what were the popular ideas of the ancients about it, and what led to its inclusion in the bestiary. It is also very necessary to establish its character, in view of certain relations in which it appears later on in ecclesiastical art.

The earliest reference that I can find is in the fifth century B.C. in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, in the scene where Cassandra is speaking of Clytemnestra who killed her husband Agamemnon on his return from Troy:

> Such deeds she dares! the woman is murderer of her own lord! what hateful biting creature shall I rightly call her? An amphisbaena, or some Scylla dwelling among the rocks, a curse to sailors?

I am unable to find any reference to it in Herodotus or in Aristotle's *History of Animals*, but Nicander in the

[1] See my paper in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xxviii, 363.

second century B.C. gives information which is very important, because it forms the basis of practically all that was contributed by later writers. In the *Theriaca* (371–382) he says :

> And after this (one) put the amphisbaena, a creature somewhat small and slow of pace, with two heads, always seeing dimly with its eyeballs, for its blunt jaws project on both sides far from one another. And its colour is like that of the earth, and it has a rough hard skin[1] that changes hue. This creature, when it has come to maturity, woodcutters strip of its skin, cutting for a staff a branch of wild olive with many a wreath (and attaching it thereto)[2]; this, when first the creature has appeared, before the cry of the cuckoo in the early spring.[3] And it benefits those who are suffering in the skin, and those whom numbness overtakes, when their hands are useless, overpowered by frost; and whenever men's nerves and sinews grow slack through weariness.[4]

Passing on to a later date, we come to Lucan and Pliny. The quotation from Lucan in the bestiary comes from the *Pharsalia*, ix, 719, where he mentions various kinds of venemous serpents in his account of the dangers that Cato and his soldiers were subject to in their march across the Lybian desert; the reference is very brief and the bestiary quotes the whole of it, namely : " Et gravis ingeminum vergens caput amphisbaena."

Pliny, as we may expect, has much more to say, and his information is valuable. He says :[5]

> The amphisbaena has two heads, that is to say, it has a second one at the tail, as though one mouth were too little for the discharge of all its venom. Some serpents have scales, some a mottled skin, and they are all possessed of a deadly poison.

He also gives the following among the wonderful cures which are such a feature in his natural history.[6]

> A remedy for cold shiverings, according to Nicander, is a dead amphisbaena, or its skin only, attached to the body; in addition to which, he informs us that if one of these reptiles is attached to a tree that is being felled, the persons hewing it will never feel cold, and will fell it all the more easily. For so it is, that this is the only one among all the serpents that faces the cold, making its appearance the first of all, and even before the cuckoo's note is heard. There is another marvellous fact also mentioned with reference to the

[1] An alternative reading, " variegated " or " dappled," is preferable.

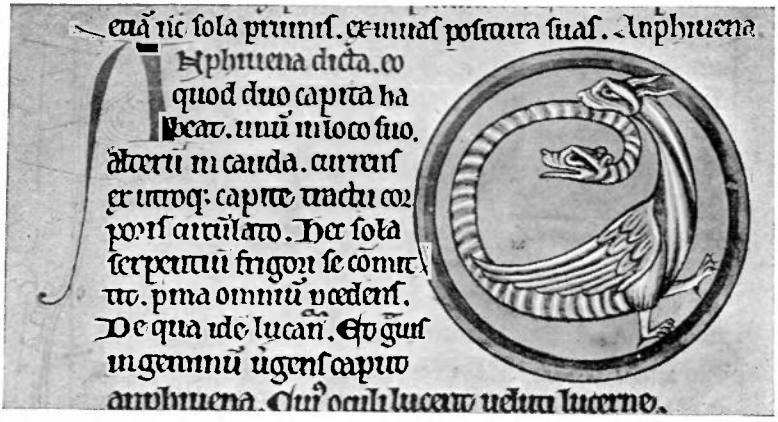
[2] The scholiasts interpret this as meaning that the skin is wound round the stick.

[3] An alternative reading is " tree-cricket " or " grasshopper."

[4] Translated from the text in Otto Schneider's ed. 1856.

[5] viii, 35 (23), Bohn's translation.

[6] *Nat. Hist.* xxx, 25 (10).



NO. I. MS. HARL. 4751. AMPHISBAENA.

NO. 2. MS. HARL. 3244. AMPHISBAENA.

> cuckoo; if, upon the spot where the person hears this bird for the first time, he traces round the space occupied by his right foot and then digs up the earth, wherever it is thrown, it will effectually prevent fleas from breeding.

This appears to be rather an "improvement" on Nicander. And further on, we find:

> For nodosities in the sinews, the ashes of a viper's head are applied, with oil of cyprus; or else earthworms, with honey. Pains in the sinews should be treated with an application of grease; the body of a dead amphisbaena worn as an amulet; vulture's grease, dried with the crop of the bird and beaten up with stale hog's-lard; or else ashes of the head of a horned owl, taken in honied wine with a lily root—that is, if we believe what the magicians tell us.[1]

The use of the amphisbaena as an amulet is mentioned again as follows:

> If a pregnant woman steps over a viper, she will be certain to miscarry; the same, too, in the case of the amphisbaena, but only when it is dead. If, however, a woman carries about her a live amphisbaena in a box, she may step over one with impunity, even though it be dead.[2]

In Aelian's work on *The Nature of Animals*, written in the third century, there are two references to the amphisbaena:

> Now the amphisbaena is a serpent which has two heads, one on the fore-part, the other at the back; for when it is obliged to move in any direction, it puts one head in the place of the tail, and uses the other for a head; and then again, if it wants to go back, it uses the heads in the opposite way to what it did before.[3]
>
> Nicander says that the skin of the amphisbaena put round a stick drives away all serpents, and even all other living things which kill not with a bite, but with a poisonous thrust.[4]

Passing to mediaeval times, we have the following description given by Albertus Magnus in the thirteenth century, that is, about the period of the bestiaries from which I have quoted:[5]

> The amphisilea is a serpent which the Arabs and Avicenna call "auksimem;" and as Solinus lies in many things, so in this matter he speaks falsely and alleges that this serpent has two heads.[6] For no animal naturally has two heads; and it is only a deception, owing to this serpent springing both ways, that is, forwards and backwards,

[1] Loc. cit. xxx, 36 (12).
[2] Loc. cit. xxx, 43 (14).
[3] ix, 23.
[4] viii, 8.
[5] It comes under the heading of *De Amphisilea*, in book xxv of his work *De Animalibus*, ed. Augustus Borgnet, Paris 1891, xii, 547.
[6] Solinus, a historian of the third century A.D. who wrote the *Polyhistor*, a great deal of which was taken from Pliny's *Natural History*.

and this happens on account of the suppleness of its ribs at each end. Its two extremities are in size equal to that of the very middle of its body.

There is also a small serpent which the Greeks call "amphini," because of the slenderness of its two ends, and when it bites, a terrible pain quickly ensues, and the (poison of its) bite in a subtle way soon embraces the whole body. And furthermore this (serpent) is of the first kind, just as the preceding one.

We can also gather much useful information from sixteenth century writers. It was the fashion among scholars of that time to write paraphrases of the classics in prose and verse with commentaries or notes. Although these are later in date than our manuscripts and carvings, they reflect the notions that were current in the middle ages, besides giving additional items culled from classical authors whose works are lost or not easily available.

In 1552 there was published a translation of Nicander's *Theriaca* into Latin verse by one Peter Jacob Steve, *Medicus*, with notes, and on page 37 he gives us the following about the amphisbaena :

This is an abnormal serpent, provided with two heads, of which it can use one in place of a tail when it requires to go in any direction ; and again, if it is necessary to go back, it uses for a head that which it was carrying in the tail's place. Whence among the Greeks it has obtained the name amphisbaena. When this animal bites, the wound appears scarcely noticeable, but just like the bites of flies ; and the place inflames and burns just as in the case of wasp stings ; and they apply remedies similar to those which are applied to the stings of wasps, but in a stronger form. For the bite of this (serpent) does not kill outright, although it may cause a good deal of trouble. For it is Dioscorides who records that those who are bitten by the amphisbaena suffer the same pains as are put down to the Viper, but they are not nearly so severe. The amphisbaena however is slender and small, the size of an earthworm, such as fishermen use for catching fish. In its heads, at both ends, it has but dimly sighted eyes, dulled doubtless by its eyelids or because the thickness of its cheek prevents it from seeing far. It is protected by a strong skin for the size of its body, is of a tawny colour, and variegated with many spots.

A somewhat similar translation into Latin verse, with notes, was made by John Gorraeus and published in Paris in 1557. In his notes on the amphisbaena (page 86) he adds but little to the information given by Steve. He mentions that on account of its being "smooth and round and of equal thickness at each end" Galen judged it to be two-headed ; and that some people interpret

the word used by Nicander for cramps, for which it was a cure, as chilblains; also that it is said to be good for paralysis.

The amount of interest taken in this mysterious "serpent" all through the middle ages is surprising, and among the various writers on natural history in the sixteenth century it is not likely that so prominent a man as Ullysses Aldrovandus (1522–1605) would have passed it over. In his great work in Latin on the history of serpents and dragons he devotes several folio pages to the amphisbaena, and gives an illustration of it. His views are all the more valuable, because he provides what I have so far not found elsewhere, a fully developed symbolic interpretation. His account is too long to print in full. I therefore quote the more interesting details.

After referring to a fish of the same name, he says:[1]

> And indeed, there are some inanimate objects, of which the head resembles the tail, or rather the beginning the end, which have received the name of amphisbaena. It is thus that we are able to indicate by this name the military boot-lace, tipped with brass, about which Scaliger produced this four-line verse in his work on riddles:
>
> "Ambigua cervice biceps velut amphisbaena,
> Rostrum utrumque aeneum, more triremis habens,
> Arcta cavum subeo, mox ut trajecta redivi
> Involvens spiris dissita necto meis."[2]

He then goes into the derivation of its name, mentioning various alternatives that it had at the hands of different writers and in different languages, and concludes by quoting Grevinus that it was called by the French "Double-marcheur."

Under the head of "Descriptio" he says:

> The amphisbaena and the scytala are very much alike, of equal thickness, so that it is difficult to tell which is head and which is tail, but they differ in that the amphisbaena can go according to each end, since it is well provided by nature with two heads; as if it is not enough, as explained by Pliny, to eject its poison by only one mouth. Lucan also says: "Et gravis in geminum surgens[3]

[1] x, 236 under the heading "De Amphisbaena."

[2] Like the Amphisbaena with double head and neck,
I, having a brass beak at each end like a trireme,
Being squeezed small, enter my hole,
And so soon as I have passed through and come back,
I bind the separate sides, embracing them in my coils.

[3] The bestiary reads *vergens*.

caput amphisbaena." Baptista, of Mantua, also seems to confirm this: "Amphisbaena biceps, et formidabilis ictu aspis." Now Albertus denies that this animal is distinguished by two heads, saying that the report originated in this way, since this serpent moves either backwards or forwards with equal facility. Matthiolus, also in his commentaries on Dioscorides pronounces the report to be fabulous, just as the story of the seven-headed hydra. He does not indeed deny that monsters (i.e. freaks) can be born of oviparous serpents and birds; for it has been often ascertained that out of one egg with two yolks a fowl has been born, having four wings and as many legs and feet. He even asserts that lizards are sometimes seen with two heads, but that they are "monstrosas" (freaks). He then falls back on Aristotle on the generation of animals to show how freaks come about, various animals, etc. being mentioned, especially those which produce more than one at a time. Equally from the same cause serpents are seen with two heads, since these produce many eggs. These words of Aristotle so persuaded Matthiolus that he believed it to be false that the amphisbaena was naturally born with two heads. And although Galen gave out in his book on *Theriaca* that the amphisbaena was two-headed, Matthiolus did not favour that view, because he asserts that "that book" was not written by, but only ascribed to Galen. Matthiolus concludes that the amphisbaena's head is similar to that of worms, and only "candae emulum," but is difficult to distinguish.

Various other opinions are then quoted by Aldrovandus: that of Grevinus, who follows Matthiolus, and of Hesichius, who says that the amphisbaena is a kind of serpent with extended head, having a tail a cubit long and "decurtatam," and often moving by it, so that some people are in doubt whether it has two heads. Aldrovandus admits that there is much force in all these opinions, but none the less does not consider the case impossible. He proceeds to give the evidence of "Joseph the Jesuit, who in the year 1560 wrote from Brazil that there was a kind of serpent moving like a crab, which had two heads, of which one was so big that it was equal to its whole body, while the other was in proportion to its body." He also says that according to Ramusius there was a kind of serpent in the island of Taprobana (Ceylon) almost quadrangular in shape, having four heads so arranged that they always looked to the north, south, east and west, and in whichever direction one of these heads directed itself, the rest of the body followed without turning round. It is also multipede and has an eye in each head, and curiously enough is not poisonous, but even beneficial to

the rest of animals and men, for if anybody's limbs get cut, they become joined up again by its blood.

He then describes the amphisbaena as small and weak and somewhat blind, since it has cheeks so broad as to obscure the eyes. Also its skin is full " quibusdam punctis," but not such as would make so much impression on observers as the brightness of its skin. He makes a reference to Salmasius as to this, and to the different readings of the word used by Nicander; he also remarks on its method of progression, which he makes out to be " circulatis tractibus " (in a sinuous course). Grevinus is also referred to concerning the earthy colour of its skin, which is hard and has dark spots. He then gives Nicander's description paraphrased in seven lines of Latin verse and ends with some information from John Vitus, a Hungarian, about certain short serpents in Hungary, without tails, and of two palms' length and equal thickness from end to end; these, he says, were called " truncatos "; and on account of their shape he was in doubt whether they were amphisbaenas.

At this stage his illustration appears and shows a curly worm about nine inches long covered with spots and with head and tail the same shape. Its title is given as " Amphisbaena Grevini," so that he evidently adopted an existing illustration.[1]

In the chapter on " Locus et Mores " Aldrovandus discusses the distribution and habits of the amphisbaena; and cites many authorities: Bellonius as saying that it was found in the island of Lemnos, and Agricola that it was unknown to Germany; also Lucian's diologue " de Dipsadibus " that it was found most of all in Lybia. As to its habits, he says that various authors speak of it as coming out of its hole " frigore etiam ingruente," and subjecting itself to the " aeri adhuc frigidiori " before the cuckoo's song is heard; and that Grevinus therefore

[1] The late Professor Hulme in his *Natural History Lore and Legend* has fallen into a curious error in respect of the amphisbaena. On page 304 he refers to Aldrovandus' illustrations of serpent-freaks, and gives an account of the amphisbaena with an illustration of a lizard, which he says " is the nearest approach we can give our readers to the amphisbaena." This cut is taken from Aldrovandus and really represents an imaginary two-bodied lizard which he terms " lacerta bicorpor," and is not the amphisbaena at all. It is strange that he should have adopted this cut, when there was another of the real animal ready to hand. The latter must have escaped his notice.

thinks it must have more natural warmth than other serpents. He next quotes Aelian's observations on its double movements, and remarks on its poor sight. We then get a rather curious item, as follows :

> The author however of a book on natural history ascribes to it watchfulness in hatching its eggs. For, when one head is overpowered by sleep, it sets the other one to watch.[1]

Arguments about its birth follow, the two heads being a difficulty. He says that Pliny and Solinus do not say anything definite, but Claudius Minos " opines that it is necessary that it should give birth by one of them."

He then treats of the deadly nature of the amphisbaena, but adds little of an original character. Among other observations we find :

> Finally the author of the work on natural history has given out that he has proved to his own satisfaction that it kills not only by its bite, but also by its hiss and by its look. Hence we conjecture that the amphisbaena is confused with the basilisk. Nevertheless Georgius Pictorius, perhaps clinging to the words of the aforesaid author, in his *Lerna Malorum* sings thus :
>
> " Est gravis in geminum surgens caput amphisbaena
> Serpens, qui visu pernecat, et sibilo " ;
>
> and Reusnerus in his *Paradiso poetico* seems to sing out the same sentiment, when he says :
>
> " Quae gravis in geminum surgit caput amphisbaena,
> Laethifero, quoties sibilat ore necat."

Under the heading of " Signs and remedies of the poison," he thinks Nicander scarcely mentions the bites and their consequences, because he held them to be the same as those of vipers, in the opinion of Dioscorides, but adds that Aetius considers them to be like wasps' and bees' stings, producing simply inflammation, thus differing from Dioscorides. The author of the work on natural history however wrote that an animal bitten by the amphisbaena died, and that there was no remedy at

[1] A friend has brought to my notice a curious Indian custom mentioned in a recent book : *Reptiles of the World*, by R. L. Ditmars, p. 234 : " The Indian Sand-Boa or ' Two-headed ' snake (Eryx johnii) may be told by the almost uniform brown hue and the curious tail, that member looking as if it had been mostly amputated and healed in a rounded stump. A big specimen is two and a half feet long. Owing to the blunt character of the tail, the name, ' two-headed ' snake, has arisen. A novice might for a moment mistake the two extremities unless closely inspected and the tiny eyes discovered. The Hindoos practice a deception with this species by painting a mouth and eyes on the blunt tail and exploiting it as a serpent with two independent heads, explaining that while one sleeps the other watches in an endeavour to protect the animal from harm."

hand for it; but if anything was a protection, it might be "semen papaveris" or "castoreum"; Pliny also mentions coriander. And then follow further observations about the amphisbaena's bite, and remedies for it.[1]

The concluding portion of Aldrovandus' treatise is occupied with "Moralia"; it is lengthy and, as we might expect from such a scholar, it is fortified with opinions and extracts from other sources, the Bible included. It runs thus:

> Double minded men, according to moral teaching, are compared by every right to the amphisbaena, for as this abnormal snake, having a head at each end, uses either end of its body for a tail, so the aforesaid men will follow the course most convenient to themselves, sometimes for this reason, sometimes for that. Of like kind are men who waver between two courses, who at one time live according to the catholic rite, at another to that of heretics. For men of this kind, like the amphisbaena, poison not only by a blow, that is by bodily action, but by their very look. No other kind of wicked person can be especially likened to the amphisbaena better than deceivers, since deceivers exhibit the double mouth (and also the double tongue) like the amphisbaena. For they extol anyone up to the stars with their lips outwardly, whom they immediately pursue with the "unsheathed sword" of a bitter heart. As to that the Psalmist says (xii, 2) "They speak vanity everyone with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak." For this reason did Paradinus in heroic verses, when referring to deceivers, render a likeness of the amphisbaena with the title "Prohibere nefas." For as the amphisbaena, since it is two-headed, just as it pleases either makes an attack upon the enemy or flies, so it symbolizes the double-faced deceivers and secret enemies, than which kind of men according to Cicero's opinion no more inveterate pest is to be found. About these then a certain poet sings:
>
> > "False persons and even false friends are now to be found steeped in deceits, who speak all words fair, but far removed from a true and sincere heart. Feigned and specious words deceive many. Brother deceives brother and the child the parent, or desires to cheat; nowhere now is there any pledge of love. And more

[1] Aldrovandus also gives particulars of other varieties of the amphisbaena. Under "Descriptio amphisbaenae marinae" he says: "Worms striped with various colours have reminded me of the marine amphisbaena, a picture of which has never been published; and therefore it must not be passed over. This amphisbaena however was caught in the English Channel, where many others of this kind were swimming about. An animal of this sort has two heads, each supplied with a pair of eyes. The heads cannot be distinguished apart, except that one is seen to be larger than the other. Four lines of the colour of an amethyst adorn the whole body, and these lines indeed seem to be marked here and there with little flowerets the size of the blooms of the pseudo-sycamore tree. This however appears in the following picture." The illustration shows a curled animal, resembling a woolly-bear caterpillar, with a head at each end.

wolves now wear the fleeces of sheep. Outwardly they shine with innocence, but under their breast is the fox."[1]

Moreover pleasant bodily gratification, the mother of all evils, by which men as fish are allured to the hook, is to be likened to the amphisbaena, since this also, being furnished with two heads filled with poison, to wit, two deadly sins, takes pride in unbridled excess; of these one head is gluttony, that is greed, and the desire of too much delicate feeding; and this head of this mystical amphisbaena, as the poisonous mouth of a serpent, the faithful of Christ ought to avoid; since it poisons not only the body but even the mind. Let us hear therefore the verses, which on this head are by no means to be scorned:

"The man who gulps down wine day and night and gorges his stomach with meats and with dainty food, he does nothing else but provoke drunken brawls and empties cups[2] and mighty flagons. This brings about sudden deaths and sad endings. It slackens the bodily sinews, it weakens the muscles; it ruins also the senses, the brain, and all virtuous feeling. It contaminates, etc. . . . ."

But not only does it exercise the above-mentioned evil influences, but the other head of this sensual amphisbaena assuredly excites lust to the destruction of men. As to that:

"Drunkenness excites wantonness, and prompts men's itching loins to bodily indulgence. Drunkenness also produces the wanton mind, and being bereft of reason, flies round about the world and brings death with no respect of persons. Drunkenness destroys manners and makes chattering tongues."

Hence it is quite plain that the other head of the sensual amphisbaena is shameful and pernicious lust, which puts mortals on a par not only with sheep, but also with swine, he-goats, dogs and the most brutal of beasts; moreover what is worse, it leads the soul at length to the infernal regions, as it were into perpetual exile.

"For Sardanapalus, despising the honour won by virtue, celebrated the sacred rites of self-indulgence alone, and at his own hearth poured libations to bodily enticements and filthy love. He determined that his mind should be filled with the delights of this present world, since after death there would be no pleasures. For this is the decision of the Stygian Dis. But God Almighty removed this man by an evil doom and condemned his soul at last to be engulfed in Tartarean waves. The delights of the world, which evil pleasure seeking brings, must be driven far from us. Deadly poisons flow from them, and a great store of bitterness. These things therefore let the wise man flee, and let him follow that which is good."

Out of all this medley of evidence, much of it mere tedious repetition, certain elements stand out clearly. In the first place there was a pitched battle always going on

[1] These and the following verses are hexameters.

[2] The word printed in Aldrovandus is *salices*, which may be a misprint for *calices*.

To face page 300.

[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 1. HOOK NORTON CHURCH. AMPHISBAENA.

[*H. C. Beckett, phot.*

NO. 2. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL CHURCH. TWO-HEADED DRAGON AND DEMON.

[*G. G. Buckley, phot.*

NO. 3. SWAVESEY CHURCH. POPPY-HEAD.

among scholars and savants on the main question as to whether the amphisbaena had two heads. One party maintained that it had; the other that it was only a deception due to the two ends being alike. It seems that the first was the more influential, judging by its definite appearance in the bestiaries and architecture, and by the nature of its symbolism. We also gather that it was a small creature resembling an earth-worm (though Hesichius describes it as having a tail a cubit long), that it had a hard skin and was spotted, was of feeble sight, and could move forwards or backwards. It is useful as a cure for neuritis by application, or worn as an amulet; and despite some contrary opinion, it is reckoned to be venomous in the extreme.

The deadly biting nature of the amphisbaena seems to have been assumed at an early date, judging by the reference in Aeschylus, and it is noteworthy that the author of the bestiary includes the quotation from Lucan, which expressly mentions it as "gravis." We might perhaps have expected the still stronger definition in Pliny, viii, 35 (23), to have been preferred, but there is an additional reason why Lucan is quoted. A reference to that part of the bestiary in which the amphisbaena occurs shows that the series of serpents there described almost certainly came from the *Pharsalia* more or less en bloc. The other details no doubt came from Nicander or one of the writers following him.[1]

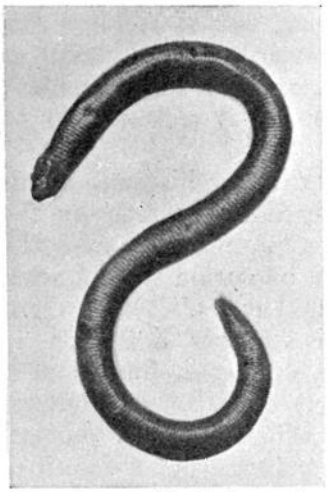
The symbolic interpretation given by Aldrovandus seems singularly complete, but from certain details I doubt very much if he was responsible for the main part of it. Up to the present I have not found any symbolism expressed in the bestiaries that I have inspected, but I think that such must certainly have existed in one or more versions, to which he may have had access. The form which it takes in his work is quite in accordance

[1] Milton also seems to have borrowed from the *Pharsalia* in his description of the amphisbaena and other serpents in *Paradise Lost*, x. When Satan returns to hell after his successful expedition to corrupt mankind, he meets his companions and expects to be congratulated by them, but instead finds himself and them being turned into serpents.

". . . dreadful was the din
Of hissing through the hall, thick swarming now
With complicated monsters head and tail,
Scorpion and asp, and amphisbaena dire,
Cerastes horned, hydrus, and ellop drear,
And dipsas."

with the practice of continental manuscripts, and moreover a text from the Psalms is introduced, which is significant. Some of the verses at least are by a christian writer, and I suspect that Aldrovandus, borrowing the main ideas from the bestiary or from earlier works on symbolism recomposed them to suit his classical tastes.

Professor Hulme[1] says that the amphisbaena of the ancients is now entirely lost to science. I venture to think that this is at least doubtful, because if we go to the South Kensington Museum we may see specimens which from their appearance correspond in a good many respects with the descriptions of the classical and mediaeval writers. It is in reality a legless lizard. There are two kinds shown at South Kensington, the *Amphisbaena Alba* or white amphisbaena and the *Amphisbaena Fuliginosa* or sooty amphisbaena, which has markings. Fig. 1. shows the *Amphisbaena Alba* from South America; it is a worm-like creature about twenty inches long. The British Museum official guide gives the following description:

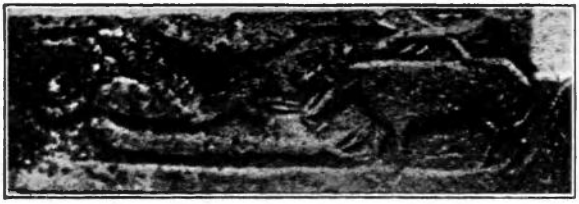


[*G. C. Druce, photo.*

FIG. 1. THE WHITE AMPHISBAENA (*Amphisbaena Alba*). (SPECIMEN IN THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, S. KENSINGTON.)

> The amphisbaenas (family *amphisbaenidae*) are worm-like and for the most part limbless tropical Lizards which take their name from their power of progressing either forwards or backwards. They are degraded, or perhaps specialized types; and are characterized by having the body covered with soft skin, which forms numerous rings and shows only vestiges of scales. The genus *Chirotes* alone retains short and four-clawed front-limbs. About a dozen generic types are recognized, of which the typical *amphisbaena* contains the greatest number of species. Amphisbaenas lead an underground burrowing existence, like worms; and are often found in ants' nests and refuse heaps. Their movements are worm-like, the soft-ringed skin enabling them to move with equal facility in either direction. Unlike other limbless lizards and snakes, which move in lateral undulations, amphisbaenas crawl in a straight line with slight vertical folds of the body.

[1] *Natural History Lore and Legend*, 304.



NO. I. NEWTON CHURCH, YORKS. PANTHER AND DRAGON.

NO. 2. MS. HARL. 4751. PANTHER AND DRAGON.

NO. 3. MS. NERO, C. IV. DEMON WITH TAIL-HEAD.

Their eyes also appear to be functionless, being concealed beneath the skin, and they have no ears. Mr. Ditmars, in his book on reptiles, states (p. 176) that when a specimen was annoyed it would elevate its stubby tail in a fashion that caused the organ to look like a head reared in threat. It is widely distributed, being found in America, the West Indies, Africa and also European countries that border the Mediterranean.

It will be seen from this that the descriptions given by Nicander and others fairly correspond with the modern scientific description, though we cannot define any particular species. Where, however, the author of the bestiary got his notion that its eyes shone like lamps, which is altogether opposed to both ancient and modern authorities, I cannot say, but it is to be noted that Georgius Pictorius described it as "serpens, qui visu pernecat," like the basilisk. If this idea was prevalent, it might account for the inclusion of the passage.

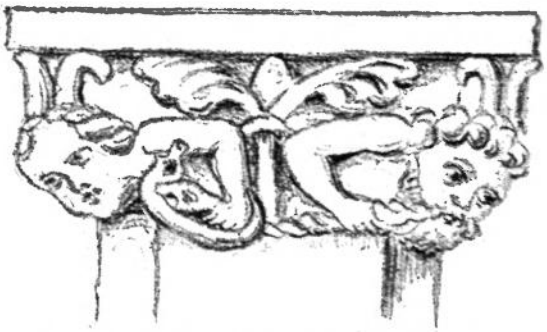


FIG. 2. DRAWING OF A CAPITAL IN FREISING CATHEDRAL CHURCH, BAVARIA.
(From *Melanges d'Archéologie*, Cahier et Martin.)

It is possible that the character of the amphisbaena as a worm-like burrowing creature may provide a clue to one of the misericord carvings in Chichester cathedral church where we find a pair of them, symmetrically arranged, very busy sucking the brains of what I take to be a corpse (plate II, no. 2). They are in dragon form, winged and clawed, and have well defined serpent heads on their tails. I do not know what other explanation to give of this subject, unless it illustrates some definite recorded event such as Herod being eaten by worms. The head sometimes appears alone as representing the whole figure, a good example being on one of the mermaid misericords at Exeter cathedral church, and another on the font at Lenton in Nottinghamshire.

The amphisbaena occurs in worm or snake form upon

a capital in the cathedral church of Freising, Bavaria of which an illustrated account is given in Cahier et Martin's *Melanges d'Archéologie*, iii, 113.

It shows the busts of a man and woman (fig. 2); the man is holding a curl of his beard, the woman is grasping the neck of the snake which is biting her arm with its other mouth. This capital is near a sculptured pillar, which forms the subject of the paper, and after giving an explanation of the latter, M. Arthur Martin says:

> "Qu'on veuille bien se rappeler le chapiteau où l'on voit deux bustes comme écrasés sous le tailloir, celui d'un homme passant la main dans sa barbe et celui d'une femme dévorée par des serpents à deux têtes. Voila, si je ne m'abuse, l'objet du contraste sur lequel est appelée l'horreur du spectateur, tandis que la scène du pilier s'adresse a son émulation. En un mot, la signification du chapiteau donne par antithèse celle du pilier, qui exprime l'idée de la vertu, si le chapiteau rend celle du vice. Or le moyen de douter que ce soit là le sens du chapiteau. Si le serpent à deux têtes dévore l'epaule de la femme au lieu de son sein, comme dans un grand nombre d'autres monuments, cette variante est suffisament motivée par le defaut d'espace; mais le serpent à deux têtes n'en est pas moins de la famille de tous ces serpents qui se tordent en tant de manieres autour des membres nus de femmes avilies, à Montmorillion, à la Charite-sur-Loire, à Vezelai, à Chartres, etc. Et quels sont tous ces serpents si ce n'est l'image de celui qui a seduit la premiére femme et qui continue de seduire tant de filles d'Eve? qui les desole par ses tortures apres les avoir trompées par ses seductions? Ver rongeur qui ne meurt pas pour que le châtiment dure autant que la flétrissure."

M. Martin does not here give any special signification to the two-headed serpent, merely regarding it as one of Satan's family, and as such, when biting the woman, symbolising first the seduction of Eve and womankind generally, and afterwards the tortures they were to undergo for their sins. Aldrovandus on the other hand supplies a definite moral interpretation for the amphisbaena's two heads, as I believe, at second hand; in the first place as symbolising double-minded men and deceivers, and secondly, drunkenness, gluttony and vice. This special character for falseness and deception, coupled with its deadly biting nature, seems to have led at a very early date to an important development, which I intend now to deal with, for it will be seen that it coincides with the symbolic character attached to the devil as dragon in Rev. xii, 9; where he is described as "the great

dragon, the old serpent, he that is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." What we might expect then seems to have happened. A partnership, as it were, was formed between the two, which became fully expressed in ecclesiastical art. The venomous biting nature of the two-headed "serpent" became blended with the personality of the dragon, and its tail-head became part of his stock-in-trade. Whether this mutual symbolic character for deceiving was alone a sufficiently powerful motive for bringing about the combination, I am not quite sure; I am disposed to attach much importance as well to the tail-head as a *physical* factor in the dragon's get-up, in the sense that it represented generally his power to injure, and so became attractive to the artists. However this may be, there is no doubt that there are examples of dragons with tail-heads, occurring in such circumstances that they cannot be intended for amphisbaenas, but are certainly intended for the devil. These may be seen both in manuscripts, sculpture, and painting.

At Alne church, Yorks. there is in one of the medallions over the Norman doorway a representation of the panther and dragon legend with the title PANTHERA on a label above. The panther is shown in full with its mouth open facing the forepart of a winged dragon. This sculpture having a title is useful as fixing the subject and showing what we may expect in the way of composition.

There is, however, a much better example, which I illustrate (plate VI, no. 1) at Newton church, Yorks. in which the composition is practically the same, but the dragon has a tail-head. It is upon a small slab of twelfth-century date, found in the tower at a recent restoration and now set in the wall outside. It shows the panther with open mouth, facing a winged dragon which has its mouth open with sting showing, and a long tail with another head on it, also with open mouth and sting, which is returned and faces the panther. The whole scene clearly indicates enmity between the two.

To understand these carvings we must turn to the bestiary, where the full details appear, (plate VI, no. 2) and the beautiful religious allegory founded on the panther is explained. The account is long, so I shall only give extracts :

> There is an animal which is called panther having a variegated colour and it is especially handsome and tame. Physiologus says about it that it has the dragon alone as an enemy. When it has fed and is satisfied, it hides itself in its den and sleeps; but after a space of three days it wakes from sleep and gives vent to a great roaring, and from its mouth there comes a most pleasant smell as of all spices. But when the other animals hear its voice (they assemble and) on account of the sweetness of its smell they follow it wherever it goes. But the dragon alone, hearing its voice, being exceedingly frightened, flies into holes in the ground. There not being able to endure the smell he lies still coiled up and remains motionless as if dead. And thus our Lord Jesus Christ, the true panther, descending from heaven rescued us from the power of the devil. And by his incarnation he associated us with himself as his sons, " took all things (unto himself) and leading captivity captive gave gifts unto men."

The different colours and gentle nature of the panther are then fully detailed in a symbolic sense, with quotations from the Bible, involving Christ's persecution by the Jews, his crucifixion, and descent into hell, " there binding the great dragon "; the panther coming out of its den, its roaring, and sweet attracting breath in turn symbolise the Resurrection, the divine voice " heard in the whole earth," and the drawing together of the gentile nations from both far and near. The symbolism varies in the different manuscripts, and in Philip de Thaun's version (c. 1121) there is a description of the dragon with an allusion to its tail:

> And know, that the dragon has the form of the serpent: it is crested and winged, it has two feet, and is toothed: by its tail it defends itself, and does harm to people. Tail means end, as the theologians say; this is the meaning, that in the end truly the devil will destroy those who shall end in evil.[1]

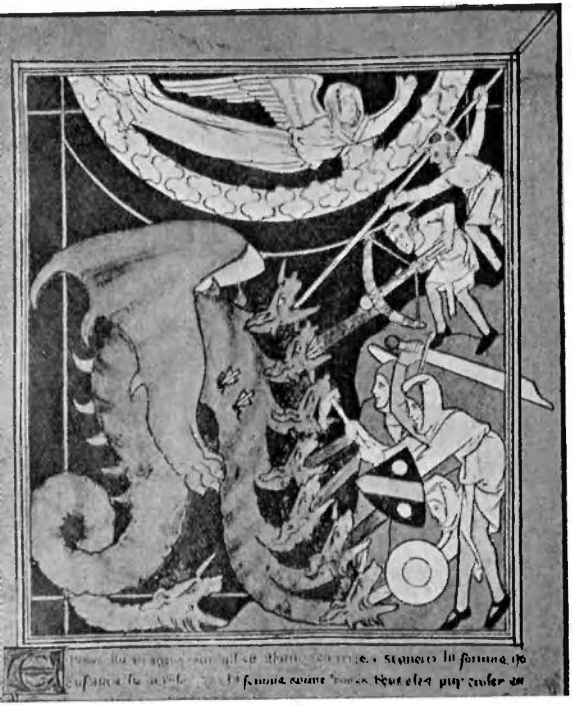
In a bestiary in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from which Cahier and Martin publish drawings, there is an illustration of a winged dragon with twisted tail, having another head on it; both heads have open mouths. It has the title " Dragon." I have not noticed DRACO with a tail-head in any other bestiary.

Another excellent example occurs in a thirteenth-century painting in the National Gallery by Margaritone (1216–1293), part of which is illustrated in plate VII, no. 1. It forms one of a series of scenes from the lives of the

[1] Wright's ed. 1841.

NO. I. ST. MARGARET AND THE DRAGON.

PART OF A PAINTING BY MARGARITONE. NATIONAL GALLERY.



NO. 2. ROYAL MS. 19 B. XV.
APOCALYPTIC DRAGON WITH TAIL-HEAD.

To face page 307.

saints which surround an oval panel containing the Virgin and Child, and shows the legend of St. Margaret and the dragon. The dragon is of the usual type. It is swallowing St. Margaret, who is clothed in white and has a jewelled crown. It is represented as swallowing her feet first, because the artist wished to show her in an attitude of supplication, her arms being stretched out and her hands clasped in prayer. Below she is bursting out from its body in the same attitude, the two events being thus combined. The dragon has a well-defined head upon its tail with open mouth and teeth displayed; it faces towards the front as at Newton, as if taking part in the proceedings.

These two examples show clearly that the dragon as the devil acquired the tail-head at an early date, and it is corroborated by the manuscripts, for the illustrations of the great red dragon of the Apocalypse frequently show it with the tail-head, usually of the same pattern as its other heads. There are some good pictures in Royal MS. 19 B. xv, an English Apocalypse of the early fourteenth century, written in French; the tail-head occurs five times (plate VII, no. 2). This miniature which Dr. Kenyon has kindly allowed me to reproduce from one of the British Museum publications, shows the great fight recorded in Rev. xii, 7. "And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven." The events described in the Apocalypse were as a rule literally rendered by the mediaeval illuminators, and we have the dragon depicted as recorded, "with seven heads, and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads." There is also the tail-head similar to the others. The little warriors are attacking him vigorously with sword, spear, battle-axe and cross-bow. Two arrows have been planted in his body and the spear is thrust down one of his throats.

Up to the present I have not found any example in architecture of the tail-head on the dragon when fighting with Michael, but I have no doubt there are some. To represent the seven main heads was rather a difficulty. At Thorpe Arnold, Leicestershire, on the Norman font,

the carver endeavoured to meet it by putting Michael between two dragons, one of which has three heads, and the other two; one of the mouths breathes fire. The duplicate dragons in this case may, however, be meant for the dragon and his angels. At Crowcombe, Somersetshire, on a bench-end the dragon has two heads, and is being attacked by two men with spears.

I have examined several other manuscripts of the Apocalypse in the British Museum, and find the dragon provided with the tail-head in several. The usual scenes are where it menaces the woman, fights with Michael, and appears with the two beasts. In a Spanish commentary of the twelfth century (MS. Add. 11695) the illustrations are most curious; the dragon has the tail-head several times, and the two beasts also have it. In an English Apocalypse in French of the fourteenth century (MS. Add. 18633) the dragon appears three times with a tail-head; in a French Apocalypse of the fifteenth century (MS. Add. 17399) it appears twice. In a German manuscript of the early fifteenth century (MS. Add. 19896) in the scene where it persecutes the woman, the dragon has six main heads and one on its tail, and close to the tail-head is the symbolic legend: "Cauda draconis antichristum signat."

In MS. 15 D. II, fo. 174, an English exposition of the Apocalypse in French, of the fourteenth century, there is a good miniature of the dragon with tail-head, together with the first beast and the false prophet (plate VIII, no. 1). It illustrates Rev. xvi, 13: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: for they are spirits of devils, working signs." The frogs in their mouths are like beetles, while the false prophet holds another one in his left hand. St. John appears on the left; he is introduced into many of the scenes as a surprised spectator. In this illustration neither the dragon or first beast are seven-headed, but the former has a well-defined tail-head. In another manuscript of the fifteenth century (MS. Add. 35166) there is a very curious picture; both the dragon and the first beast are seven-headed and the former has a tail-head; the second beast (that is, the

To face page 309.

NO. I. MS. 15 D. II. DRAGON, BEAST, AND FALSE PROPHET.

NO. 2. MS. ADD. 19896. THE ANGELS OF THE EUPHRATES.

false prophet) is represented as a hairy demon, partly clothed, hoofed, and with two small curled horns on his head; a frog issues from the mouth of each.

I mentioned that in the Spanish manuscript the two beasts had tail-heads. There is no justification for this in the text of the Apocalypse any more than in the case of the dragon, but by implication there was every reason why it should be extended to them. If the dragon had obtained the tail-head as a special symbol of its power to deceive and injure mankind, its associates the beasts were surely entitled to it, for the first beast had "his power, and his throne, and his great authority" from the dragon, and the second beast similarly "exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight," Rev. xiii, 2, 12. The ills that mankind was to suffer at the hands of the two beasts are fully detailed in Rev. xiii.

The extension of the tail-head to the dragon's associates in the Apocalypse suggests the probability that it might similarly be applied to the devil's satellites in hell, and in fact this is what we do find. In both manuscripts and sculpture it is attached to the tails of demons. In MS. Nero C. IV, a twelfth-century manuscript in the British Museum, there is a miniature of hell torments (plate VI, no. 3). On the right hand side is a cauldron with flames underneath, in which lost souls are being cooked. Horrible demons are attending to them with fork and rake; one wretched being who has apparently fallen out is being dragged back again. On the left two enormous demons are tormenting a wretched man by cutting off his hands on an ornamental post or anvil, to which he is chained; one hand lies on the ground. It will be seen that the big demon on the left has a serpent's head upon his tail, and wings on his feet. Another good example of a serpent-head upon the tail of a demon occurs in the hell-cauldron scene on the tympanum of Bourges cathedral church. These heads must not be confused with the faces which are applied to demons' bodies.

It will be apparent that the application of the tail-head to the apocalyptic dragon creates the great difficulty that where the normal dragon type occurs by itself in the carvings, as on the boss in Southwark cathedral church, at Hemington and Conway (plate II, nos. 4 and 3 and plate I,

no. 3 respectively) we cannot tell whether the amphisbaena is intended or the dragon. In the bestiary the text informs us that they are amphisbaenas, but I think it is quite possible that a large number of the carvings may be really intended for the apocalyptic dragon, on account of its much greater notoriety.

This treatment of the apocalyptic dragon fitly leads us to a curious and interesting phase of the subject, namely, the composition of the horses of the four angels of the Euphrates, mentioned in Rev. ix. These angels were to be loosed to slay the third part of men, and their horses are described as having serpents' heads upon their tails. Verse 19 more particularly gives the details: "For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they do hurt." My illustration (plate VIII, no. 2) is from the German manuscript mentioned above, and shows the four angels on horseback as knights in armour with shields and bannered lances; one of the horses has a crown and wings, and all have faces resembling lions. The record does not mention these horses as having crowns and wings, but the artist has no doubt added them in consequence of the description of the locusts which were like horses in verses 7 and 9: "and the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. And the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war." On the right is a crowd of figures either sitting or lying about, and loose heads appear on the ground; these represent the great slaughter. It will be noticed that the artist has given the four horses five tails. The serpent-heads on them are very plain.

Other manuscripts in the British Museum show similar details. In MS. Add. 18633, of the fourteenth century, there are seven horses with knights in silver helmets and mail, spotted red, with three figures lying dead below; in MS. 15 D. II, also of the fourteenth century, the horses have mailed riders; in MS. Add. 17333, of the same date, the four horses are breathing fire upon a mass of human beings falling down or praying; in MS. Add. 17399, a fifteenth-century manuscript, they are trampling on about a dozen men; in MS. Add. 35166, of the fifteenth

century, four mailed and armed knights on horses trample on many figures. The horses' heads are drawn to represent lions and breathe fire. In the twelfth-century Spanish Apocalypse the horses' heads are touching men who are sprawling about, and the scorpion tails of the other horses are performing the same office, being covered with prickly hairs.

The presence of these serpent tail-heads on the horses is directly due to the text of the Apocalypse, and they are therefore upon a different footing to the tail-head of the great red dragon. What then induced the writer of that work to use such imagery? Were they borrowed from the heads of biting serpents in general, or were they borrowed from the amphisbaena's tail-head in particular? The actual words used in the Vulgate, "Similes serpentibus," do not justify the latter as an assumption, but nevertheless I think there is much to be said for it, and for this reason: in the earlier part of the chapter the writer describes the locusts, which were like unto horses prepared for war, as having "tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months." He employs for his motive here the sting of the scorpion, which is in the tail. Is it not then more than probable that he would make use of, in the very same chapter, a serpent with the special qualification of the amphisbaena for illustrating exactly the same function on the part of the horses of the angels of the Euphrates; for likewise "with their tails they do hurt"?

In the miniature in the German manuscript, illustrated here, the commentator's signification of the tail-heads of the horses is set forth in the upper left hand corner: "Caudae equorum similes serpentibus habentes capita philosophorum doctrinam designant." (The tails of the horses like serpents, having heads, signify the doctrine of the philosophers). This is an interesting piece of symbolism, and one highly derogatory to the philosophers. I think we can make use of it to explain a very unusual subject which occurs upon a thirteenth-century misericord in Exeter cathedral church (plate IX, no. 1). The carving shows a composite animal, the forepart representing the head and arms of an elderly man, with a head-covering resembling a crown. His arms do duty for fore-legs. The back part is that of a horse. Its body is covered

with a saddle cloth, saddle and stirrups, which conveniently conceal the join. The horse's tail ends in a serpent's head. It might appear to be only a sporting addition on the part of the artist, especially as the tails of dragons, mermaids, and the like on misericords at Exeter are transformed into conventional foliage. But I do not think this explanation will suffice. In my opinion the subject illustrates the mediaeval legend termed the "Lai d'Aristote," or Lay of Aristotle. The story runs that when Alexander the Great was a young man, and went on his military expeditions Aristotle went with him as his tutor. One day Alexander fell in love with a young eastern lady and paid her so much attention that his generals, becoming alarmed, and thinking that the campaign would suffer, asked Aristotle to persuade Alexander to break off the connexion. Aristotle did so, and Alexander ceased his attentions. The young lady was angry and resolved to avenge herself on the philosopher, and accordingly she went and walked about in front of his window. The philosopher took no notice for some time, but at last succumbed and went out to make love to her. But she was determined to humiliate him, and demanded that he should go down on all fours and be bridled like a horse, and that she should ride upon his back. He consented, but in the middle of the performance Alexander arrived with his suite, and laughed heartily at the philosopher's degrading situation. He, however, retorted that if he, an old man, had fallen a victim to female charms, how much more dangerous it must be for Alexander, who was so young and inexperienced.[1]

In Dordrecht cathedral church, on the renaissance stalls, there is an extremely fine carving with full details dating from about 1538 (plate IX, no. 2). It shows Aristotle as a soldier on all fours and bridled, and the girl riding on his back, whipping him up with a cat-o'-nine-tails. Other examples occur at St. Pierre, Caen, on a fourteenth-century cap in the nave, which forms the subject of M. Gasté's paper, and in other places on the continent mentioned in Mr. F. Bond's *Misericords*, p. 82.

In Chichester cathedral church there is another carving

[1] For a discussion of the legend, see a paper by M. Armand Gasté on *Un chapiteau de l'eglise St. Pierre de Caen.* Caen, 1887.

[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

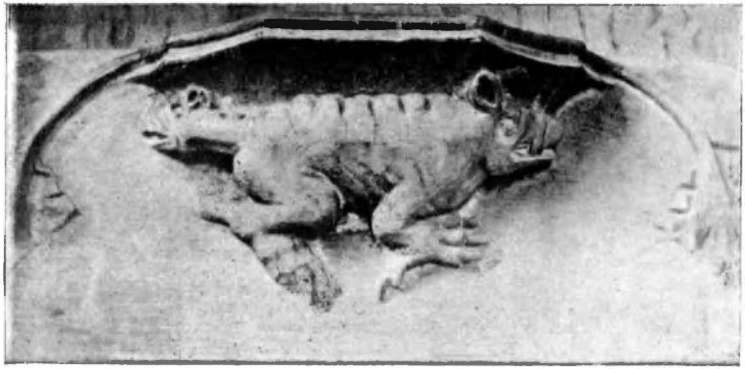
NO. I. EXETER CATHEDRAL CHURCH. ARISTOTLE.

[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 2. DORDRECHT CATHEDRAL CHURCH. LE LAI D'ARISTOTE.

[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 3. LAVENHAM CHURCH. GROTESQUE MUSICIANS.



[*G. C. Druce, phot.*

NO. 4. EDLESBOROUGH CHURCH. TWO-HEADED BEAST.

somewhat similar to that at Exeter, but rather later in date. Both alike show the subject in very curtailed form. At Chichester the philosopher has an eastern cap and a voluminous cloak, which, being drawn up, reveals the hind quarters of the horse. Its tail ends in foliage and there is no saddle.

The symbolism involved in the Lai d'Aristote, as understood in the ecclesiastical sense, was probably two-fold; first, to uphold the ascetic life as a counterblast to the enticements of the world, and secondly as a satire on the philosophic teaching of the age. I do not think the two carvings at Exeter and Chichester are primarily intended to illustrate the legend *per se*, as the girl is omitted, but of necessity the artist was obliged to use some of the details. The popularity of Aristotle's teaching in the thirteenth century in European schools of learning was very distasteful to the church, which regarded it as a menace to its authority, and I think the carvings were intended, by putting him in a degrading situation, to express that his doctrine, or such doctrines in general, were held to be "devilish" in theological circles. The inset inscription about the tails in the miniature in the German manuscript bears this out very strongly. It is later in date than the carving, but I have no doubt that a detailed examination of the earlier commentaries would confirm it. As far as I know this tail-head on Aristotle at Exeter is unique, and I think the artist must have been influenced by the commentaries and adopted it from the apocalyptic horses. This view receives additional support from the fact that his philosopher's cap resembles a crown, as the first group of horses are described as having "crowns like unto gold, and their faces were like unto men's faces." Thus the crown and the tail-head were conveniently used together.[1]

[1] The Lai d'Aristote also occurs on French ivory caskets of the fourteenth century, as may be seen in the Maskell Collection at the British Museum. In these cases the symbolism is chivalrous rather than religious, and teaches the irresistible power of human love. I should point out that Miss Kate Clarke, in her paper on the Exeter misericords, printed in the *Trans. of the Devonshire Association* xxxix, 231–241, takes a different view of this carving. She does not think it represents Aristotle. She sees in the head a portrait of Henry III, and suggests that the carving is intended to satirise him as reigning monarch on account of the irritation which he caused to the clergy by his monetary transactions, and to the laity by the favouritism shown by him to foreigners. I do not think this argument is valid as against Aristotle; the artist would have to make a portrait of him of some kind, and might possibly have chosen the king for a model.

The employment of the tail symbolically is of great antiquity, and there are references to it in the Bible both as a symbol of humiliation and of evil counsel. In Deut. xxviii, Moses addresses Israel, charging them that they should obey the voice of the Lord, and after telling them of the blessings that should accrue, says in v. 13 : " And the Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail ; and thou shalt be above only and thou shalt not be beneath ; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God," and contrariwise if they disobey, in v. 43 : " The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high ; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him ; he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail." And Isaiah, (ix. 13) referring to the disobedience of Israel, says : " Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head ; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail." It was such passages as these that led the mediaeval commentators to regard the dragon's tail as symbolical of Antichrist, as expressed in the German manuscript.

In connexion with this last reference, there is a remarkable miniature on fo. 157 of the Spanish Apocalypse before mentioned, of a fox running off with a cock. It corresponds with and apparently illustrates Rev. xiii, 14, which describes the deceitful character of the second beast, otherwise the false prophet : " And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast." The tail of the fox is stretched straight out, and on the ground of the miniature are written the following alliterative lines :

> Dum gallus canit viribus vulpis capit fraudibus.
> Fraudis causa tendit cauda,

which, if the last word is regarded as clipped, may be rendered : " While the cock is crowing with all his might, the fox catches him by his tricks. For the sake of tricking him, he stretches out his tail." The inclusion of such a miniature in a religious manuscript like the Apocalypse is highly characteristic of the mediaeval artists, when they wanted to illustrate a passage symbolically.

The only section remaining to be dealt with concerns certain variants, which are interesting, but present some difficulties. The first one illustrated occurs on the Norman font at Luppitt, Devon (plate III, no. 2). It is an extraordinary beast, with four legs and a tail which curls up between the hind legs and expands into a broad neck and head, turned towards the main head in the true amphisbaena fashion. Both the heads are much exaggerated, with large mouths and prominent teeth. I am inclined to think it must be meant for a kind of amphisbaena, because of the way the heads approach each other.

The next is on a misericord at Edlesborough, Bucks. (plate IX, no. 4), and is even more curious. It has a serrated back, a main head with a mouth provided with fangs, four legs with exceedingly well developed claws, and a short thick tail on which is another but smaller head. I consulted the authorities at South Kensington to see if they could identify it by the claws, or other features, but without success; the artist has carved an owl on another misericord with similar claws, so that he evidently had a stock pattern. I cannot make any suggestion as to this beast, and can only regard it with the previous one as evidence of the wide application of the tail-head, where it might be deemed appropriate.

The other variants are dragon forms. One of them occurs on a misericord at Lavenham, Suffolk (plate IX, no. 3). The two figures are composites, the left being half man, half beast, the right half woman, half dragon. It will be seen from the way in which the feet turn that it is the tail-half of a dragon, and that it is bent up and has a head upon it. This compound therefore is half an amphisbaena. They are grotesque figures evidently copied from contemporary manuscripts; the man is playing on bellows with crutches, while the woman is playing the cithern. Her right arm is broken.

There is a very curious carving at Canterbury upon one of the crypt caps, which shows a dragon of unusual shape ridden by an extraordinary two-headed female demon (plate V, no. 2). She is seated on a saddle facing the tail and grasps the dragon with both hands, her foot being in a stirrup. It has a scaly neck, a well defined tail-head with ears, and a kind of conventional fringe

under its body, which the tail-head is biting. The sculpture seems to show strong Scandinavian influence and may represent a legend unknown to me in which a two-headed female demon figures.

There are some examples of tail-heads on dragons which assume a different character. They are not serpents' heads. One of them is to be seen upon a poppy-head at Swavesey, Cambs. (plate v, no. 3). The north aisle of this church has an unusual collection of poppy-heads of birds and animals, and the rest of the benches have been carved in imitation of them. The whole forms almost a bestiary in itself. The poppy-head here shows a winged dragon lying on its back, with a twisted tail ending in a grotesque head with grinning mouth. Another of the same kind may be seen on a pillar cap at Bretforton, Worcestershire, in the scene of St. Margaret and the dragon[1] The only suggestion I can make as to these two carvings is that they are demons' heads.

In *The Reliquary*, ii, 109 (1888), there is an illustration of a sculptured dragon at Riccall, Yorks. with a serpent tail-head, but the main head in this case is a human head. The dragon in the scene of the Fall is sometimes represented with a woman's head, and it is possible that the sculpture belongs to that class. Mr. Romilly Allen, however, considers that this feature was not current before the thirteenth century.

In the course of my paper I have endeavoured to trace the history of the amphisbaena and its influence on ecclesiastical art and architecture. The story is, I think, a somewhat romantic one. First we have the material creature with its imaginary twin heads, the subject of a great controversy; then the moral interpretation attached to it; the merging of its identity with that of the dragon as the devil, and the adoption of its special feature as part of the latter's stock-in-trade. With regard to its supplying the motive for the apocalyptic horses and Aristotle's tail, we are not on quite such sure ground; but even if this should be regarded as a mere speculation, which I do not myself admit, the kindred nature of the subject is, I think, sufficient justification for including it in my paper.

[1] Illustrated in Allen's *Early Christian Symbolism*, 316.

It only remains for me to express my indebtedness to various kind friends who have helped me; to Mr. Charles D. Olive especially, who has again rendered me great service in connexion with the numerous Greek and Latin translations involved; to Dr. G. Granville Buckley for the loan of negatives of Halsall and Swavesey; to Mr. T. F. S. Houghton, M.A. for the Burton Dassett cap; to Mr. F. H. Crossley for the Conway screen; to Mr. H. Creighton Beckett for the Canterbury cap; and to Mr. P. M. Johnston, F.S.A. for the misericords in Limerick and Chichester cathedral churches.

The Institute is indebted to the Surrey Archaeological Society for the loan of a block illustrated in plate VI, no. 3.