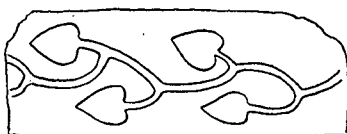


VI.—ANGLIAN PATTERNS. SOME SOURCES AND DEVELOPMENTS.

BY MRS. D. R. FYSON.



*On a Roman altar
at Newcastle upon Tyne.*

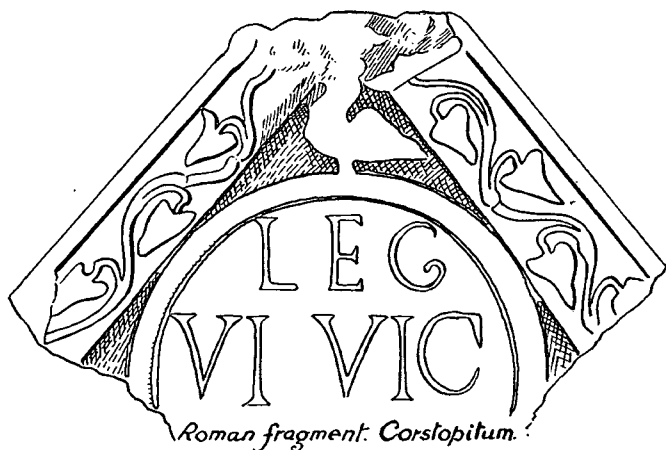
FIG. 1.

An authority on early Christian Art wrote these words:

"I am of opinion that if we are ever to arrive at any definite conclusions with regard to the evolution of Christian Art in Great

Britain, it must be by a careful examination and comparison of the minute details of ornament."¹

This has tempted me to add a contribution to the subject by tracing the history of certain patterns which occur in Northumbria.



Roman fragment: Corstopitum.

FIG. 2.

¹ J. Romilly Allen, *Celtic Art in Christian and Pagan Times*.

The vine has been an artistic motif through many centuries and in the form of a scroll was much used by early Christians. Some variants which occur in Roman times have more resemblance to ivy and may have been suggested by that plant to artists who had, perhaps, never seen a growing vine. Sir Flinders Petrie² calls it ivy and shows examples from as far back as 2,500 B.C. and some very like figs. 1, 2 and 3 from about 600 B.C. (*Cervetri Sedia Corsine*). It is also possible that in the course of much copying the design could become debased and simplified till the vine character was lost.

A Roman altar now in Sydenham Terrace Museum, Newcastle, has a fragment of this pattern in its most simplified form (fig. 1). A legionary stone at *Corstopitum* shows it with the scroll more developed but the leaf still simple (fig. 2). The main stem of the scroll is swollen at the node of the leaf-stem in the manner so noticeable in Anglian cross-shafts.

A Roman altar to Minerva in the Museum at Dumfries is still more suggestive of ivy and has a delightful freedom of design in the placing of curved stems and leaves of varied size (fig. 3). These were Pagan Art and were carved presumably during the Roman occupation of Britain.

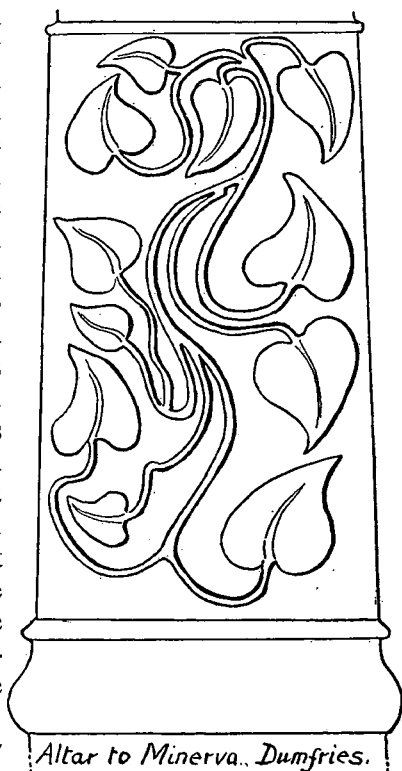
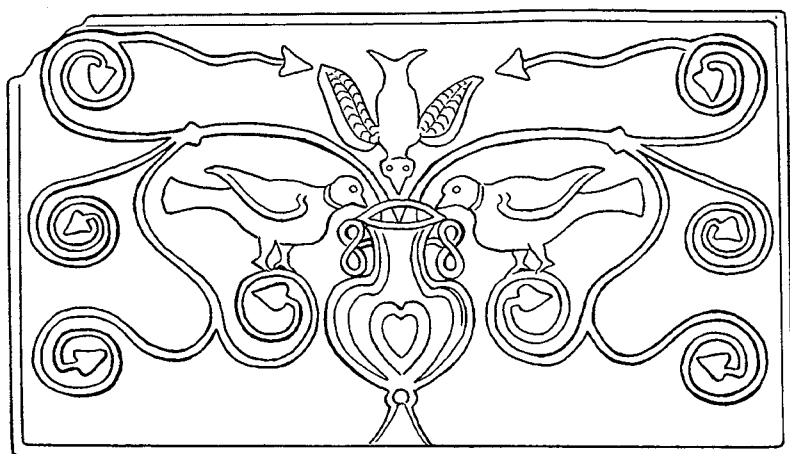


FIG. 3.

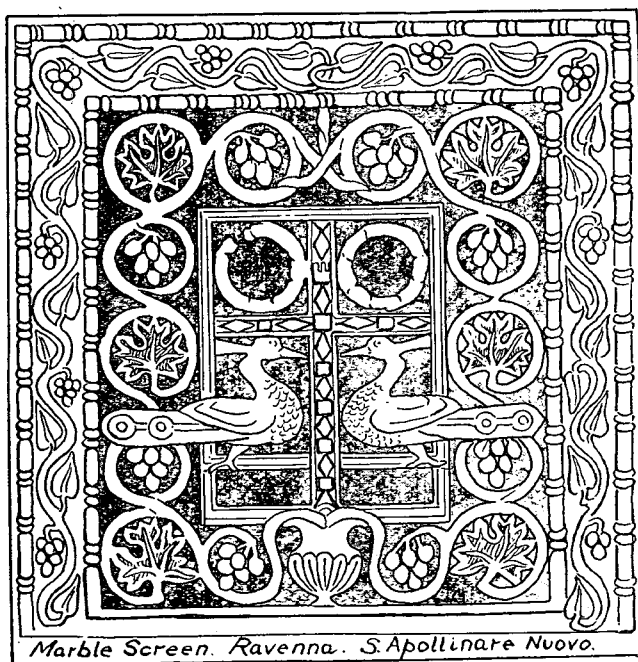
² Sir Flinders Petrie, *Decorative Patterns of the Ancient World*.



Marble Relief.

Cathedral Museum, Ravenna.

FIG. 4.



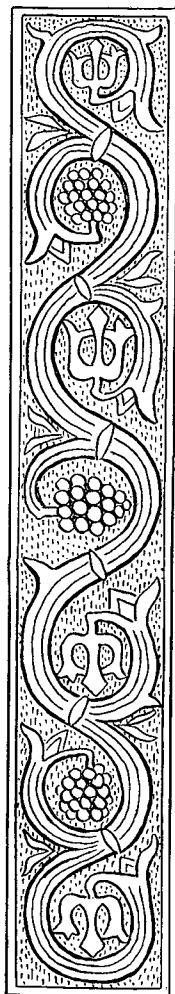
Marble Screen. Ravenna. S. Apollinare Nuovo.



*Maximian's Throne
Bird detail.*

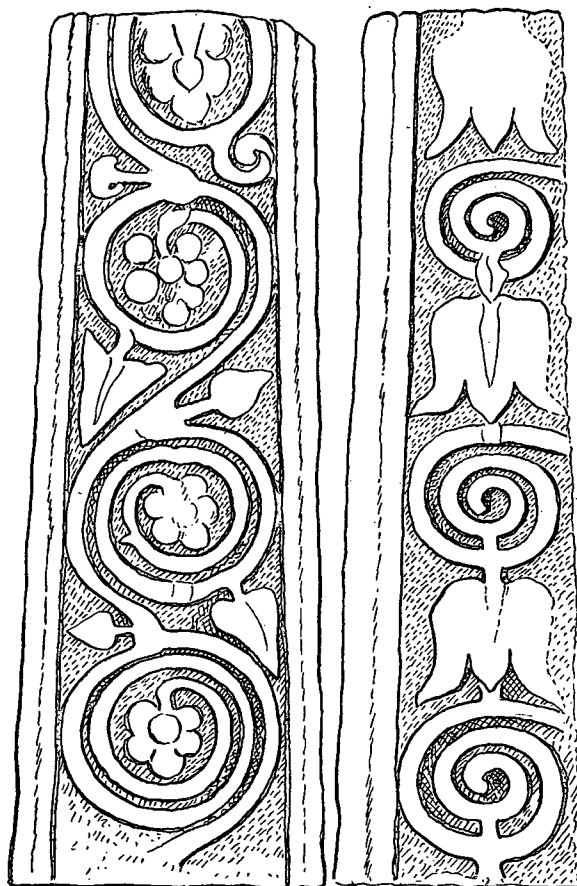
FIG. 9.

FIG. 5.



Ravenna

FIG. 6.



front face

Simonburn

FIG. 7.

FIG. 8.

The next example is Christian, from a marble relief at Ravenna. The curves have the same freedom as on the Dumfries altar, but two motifs are added, a vase and doves, both frequent in Christian symbolism (fig. 4).

On a lovely marble screen at Ravenna one can see a transition from the ivy shape to that of a true vine. The ivy-like leaf is combined with a bunch of grapes to form a border-scroll (fig. 5). Within the border is a fully developed vine pattern. The large leaves and bunches of grapes are carved in naturalistic style and their background cut away as in fretwork. The central motif is a cross and the imperial peacocks.

Coming now to the more developed scrolls there is a stone slab at Ravenna which resembles closely the Anglian cross-shaft at Simonburn. Note the thick stem with a band across the node, the formal grapes, simplified leaves and a flower where one would expect a large vine-leaf (fig. 6). This slab has a distinctive feature; the direction of the scroll is cunningly changed at the centre, so that the design may be looked at equally well from either end.

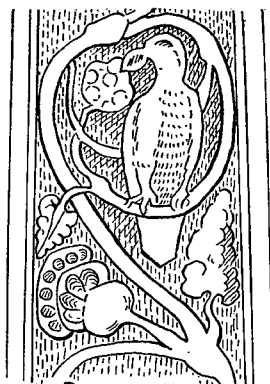
The Simonburn cross-shaft, attributed to the Hexham school of sculptors, and placed by W. G. Collingwood rather late in the series, is built into the wall of the church porch so that three faces can be seen. On the front there is the thick stem with a band at the node, formal grapes and simplified leaves (fig. 7). The left side introduces animals but is too worn away to give a clear impression. The right side has a flower-form as the chief motif, remarkably like the flower at Ravenna. The Anglian work is coarser and more weathered and unfortunately only half this pattern shows as the stone is broken. It was probably the wider and more important face and the scroll was in tree-form, branching out on either side of a central stem (fig. 8). W. G. Collingwood drew an elegant reconstruction of the whole plan.

Most of the Anglian crosses have animals and birds in their vine-scrolls. Their prototypes can be seen in exquisite ivory carvings of the Byzantine period. Ivories could easily have been carried from Italy by travelling bishops and pilgrims. They were used on reliquaries and other portable objects. Maximian's Throne at Ravenna is the most wonderful example of this art. The whole chair is covered with



Auckland St Andrew's

FIG. 10.



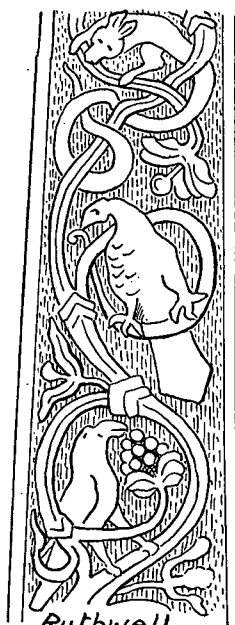
Bewcastle

FIG. 11.



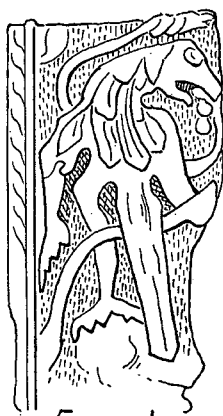
Easby

FIG. 12.



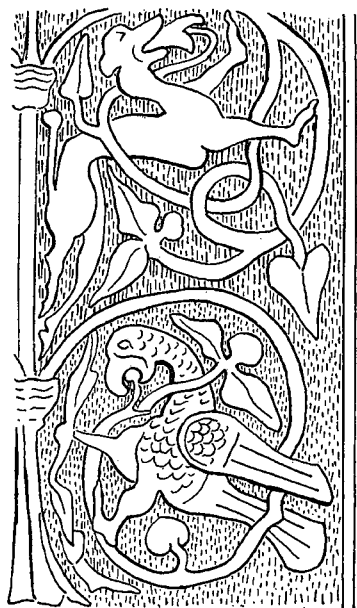
Ruthwell.

FIG. 13.



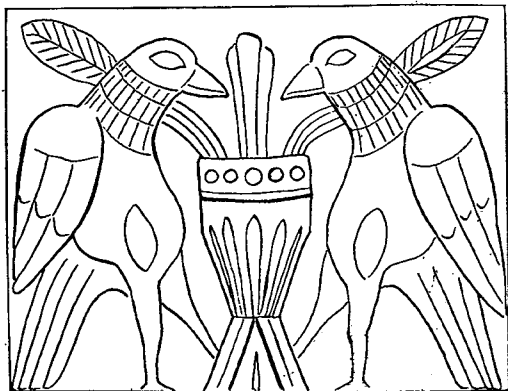
Escomb.

FIG. 14.



Croft.

FIG. 15.



Stone Relief. National Museum, Ravenna.

FIG. 16.

plates of ivory, the intricate patterns delicately carved. The figure-groups of Biblical subjects are more elaborate and more naturalistic than Anglian sculptors could achieve in stone. Scrolls with birds and beasts were readily adopted in England and developed a distinctive Anglian character in northern hands. The great Anglian crosses have been well illustrated in many books, and in *Archæologia Aeliana*, but I have drawn a series of details for close comparison,

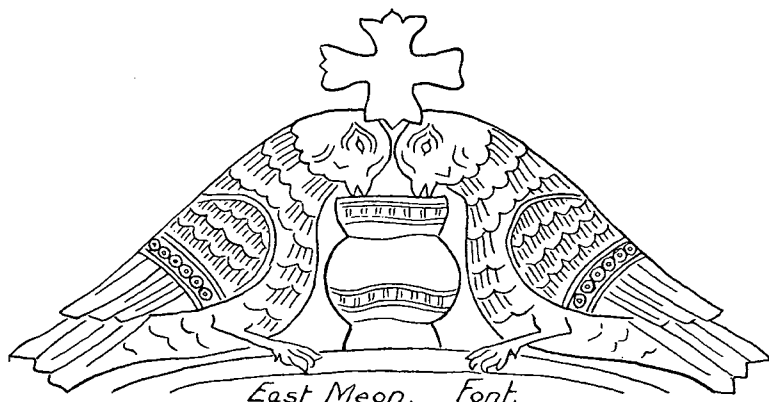


FIG. 17.

showing a bird in each case as a typical motif. Compare the bird on Maximian's throne, with head turned, pecking fruit (fig. 9) with the birds and scrolls on the cross-shafts at

Auckland St. Andrews	fig. 10
Bewcastle	fig. 11
Easby	fig. 12
Ruthwell	fig. 13
Escomb	fig. 14
Croft	fig. 15

All these have the thickened stem and the band at the node, and cannot surely be far apart in date. They also have a free adaptation of the scroll; there is no slavish imitation of a pattern; and they introduce interlacing of the foliage and stem in distinctively Anglian manner. The bird that appears most often on the cross-shafts is an eagle. There is a parrot, very like the ivory, at Auckland and at Croft. In other designs probably the dove is the most popular. I referred before to an early example at Ravenna (fig. 4), and there is another stone relief there, on a tomb, that has rather an Egyptian style, with doves and a vase (fig. 16). Compare finally a much later development of the dove and vase motif on a font at East Meon, Sussex (fig. 17). This is one of the seven black marble fonts imported from Tournai in the thirteenth century. Similar designs were carved in both wood and stone throughout the English Gothic period and we can thus trace their incidence through some fourteen centuries of our era.

Other motifs in carving, such as interlacing, griffins and dragons, can be followed throughout the same period, from probable Asian origins in dim antiquity.