

# The Bestiary of Philippe de Thaon

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## POPULAR TREATISES ON SCIENCE

WRITTEN DURING THE

## MIDDLE AGES,

IN

ANGLO-SAXON, ANGLO-NORMAN, AND ENGLISH.

EDITED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPTS BY

**THOMAS WRIGHT, ESQ., M.A., F.S.A.,**

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF NORTHERN ANTIQUARIES OF COPENHAGEN, HONORARY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES OF SCOTLAND, CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE HISTORICAL COMMITTEES APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE, &C.

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## PREFACE

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THE object of the present volume is to bring together a set of treatises on science written in a popular form, and in the vernacular tongue of the time, for the instruction of those who were unacquainted with the Latin language, at an early period of the history of learning in England. They are important documents of the history of popular science. We are wrong in supposing that our forefathers endeavoured to conceal science from the unlearned; at all times they published treatises for the uninitiated, which are curious not only as showing us the mode in which they made instruction popular, but as exhibiting the quantity which they thought necessary. The present volume forms an index to the state of general knowledge in England through upwards of five centuries. In this point of view the Anglo-Saxon treatise on Astronomy is the most curious, because it is of so remote an age as the tenth century. One of the Manuscripts appears to have belonged to a nunnery, and to have formed a part of the studies of the ladies. The Bestiary of Philippe de Thaun was intended primarily for the instruction of a queen.

It was my intention to include in this volume the curious work of Gautier de Metz, in French verse of the thirteenth century, entitled the *Image du Monde*; but various reasons have decided me to omit it. The *Image du Monde* is reserved to form a separate work, with copious notes instead of a translation, and will be an interesting illustration of the history of science in the Middle Ages: it was the popular text-book of general science in the age of Roger Bacon and Robert Grosseteste. In the present collection I have given nothing which was not written in England.

1. The first tract in the present volume<sup>1</sup> was compiled in the tenth century, but we have no means of ascertaining its author. It has, I believe, been attributed to Alfric; and an entry in a modern hand in one of the MSS. in the British Museum states, that it is the work of Athelard of Bath, but this is an evident mistake, since Athelard lived in the twelfth century. It is, as the prologue states, a mere abridgement of Bede's treatise *De Natura Rerum*, printed in the second volume of his works (ed. Cologne, p. 3). We are justified in believing that it was once extremely popular, by the number of copies which, after so long a period, still remain. It is sometimes found complete, with the title *De Compoto*, and sometimes without the introductory part, commencing on the fourth page of the present edition, with the title *De Primo Die Sæculi*.<sup>2</sup> There are four copies of this tract among the Cottonian Manuscripts:— MSS. Cotton. Tiberius, B. V., fol. 23, r°.; Tiberius, A. III., fol. 63, v; Caligula, A. XV., fol. 140, r°. (imperfect); Titus, D. XXVII., fol. 30, r°.; besides a few which are found in other collections, as one in the Public Library of the University of Cambridge. I have printed the text from MS. Cotton. Tiberius, B. V., written somewhere near the year 990, and have inserted between brackets from another MS. one or two omissions of the MS. adopted for the text.<sup>3</sup>

2. Philippe de Thaun is known as an Anglo-Norman poet through the *Essais historiques* of the Abbe de la Rue (vol. ii. p. 41), who tells us that the family took its name from the manor of Than, about three leagues from Caen in Normandy<sup>4</sup>. M. de la Rue was unable to collect any satisfactory information relating to the person of the poet. We learn from the prologue to his *Livre des Creatures*,<sup>5</sup> that he had an uncle named Humfrey de Thaun, who was chaplain to Yhun, Yun, or Ydun (as different MSS. read the name), “and” seneschal to the king. M. de la Rue supposes this ‘Yhun’ was Hugh Bigot, seneschal of Henry I. of

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<sup>1</sup> Not included in the digital edition.

<sup>2</sup> In MS. Cotton. Titus, D. XXVII., the introductory part is given at the end.

<sup>3</sup> Some observations on this tract will be found in the Editor's Essay on the State of Literature and Learning among the Anglo-Saxons, pp. 86-89.

<sup>4</sup> The writer of his life in the *Histoire Litteraire de France*, vol. ix., conjecturing that Philippus Taonensis in the description of the MS. in the Catalogue of the Cottonian MSS., was an error for Philippus Taorcensis, has hazarded the very unauthorized supposition that his name was Philippe de Thouars.

<sup>5</sup> Not included in the digital edition.

England, and afterwards Earl of Norfolk. It is more certain that Philippe was patronized by Adelaide of Louvaine, queen of Henry I., to whom he dedicates his Bestiary, which was probably written within the few years which followed her marriage to the English monarch in 1121. His poems are thus extremely valuable to the philologist, as being the earliest specimens of the Anglo-Norman language remaining; and I am satisfied that the manuscript from which I have printed the text was written in the first half of the twelfth century.

The Latin treatises on astronomical subjects most popular in the time of Philippe de Thaun, appear to have been the works of Bede, and the tracts on the *Compotus* by Helericus, a monk of St. Gallen, who wrote about the year 980, and Gerlandus, a writer of the eleventh century, who has been by several bibliographers confounded with John de Garlandia, an Englishman who flourished in the thirteenth century. The works of these two writers are common in Manuscripts; *Helpericus de Compoto* is printed in Pez, tom. ii., part 2, p. 182. They form the groundwork of the *Liber de Creaturis* of Philippe de Thaun, in conjunction with the books on the same subject by two writers now unknown, Nebroz or Nebrot, whom he quotes very frequently, and Turkil (pp. 49, 51, 54) or Turchil (p. 67). The Anglo-Norman forms Nebroz and Nebrot would seem to point out a Latin name Nebrotus; the only name I know bearing any resemblance to it is Nebritius, a Spanish writer of the sixth century, but I am aware of no reason for attributing to him a work of this kind. Another unknown writer quoted by Philippe de Thaun, is Cingius, the 'philosopher' (p. 32). He quotes among the ancient writers Pliny (pp. 59, 60), Macrobius (pp. 40, 59, De Somn. Scip. p. 35), Ovid (p. 61), and Pythagoras (p. 59).

Seven copies of the *Livre des Creatures*, or *Liber de Creatures*, are known. The most ancient is that from which I have printed the text of both poems (MS. Cotton. Nero, A. V.), and which formerly belonged to the Library of the Cistercian Abbey of Holmcoltran, or Hulm Cultram, in Cumberland. Another copy, now incomplete, is found in MS. Arundel., No. 230, which contains a copy of the Anglo-Norman gloss of the Psalter, written about the middle of the twelfth century; the *Livre des Creatures* is written as prose on the spare leaves at the beginning and end in a somewhat later hand, but older than the end of the twelfth century. Another more complete copy occurs in MS. Sloane, No. 1580, fol. 162, v<sup>o</sup>, written in the thirteenth century. In this MS. the poem is arranged partly in long lines, and partly in short ones; the long ones having a space in the middle after the rhyming words, thus:

Philippe de Taun	.	.	ad fait une raisun,
Pur pruveires garner	.	.	de la lei meintener;
A sun uncle le enveit,	.	.	ke amendier le deit,
Si it de rien ad mesdit	.	.	u en fait u en escrit,
A Hunfrei de Taun	.	.	le chapelein Yun,
Le chapelein le rei,	.	.	iceo ws dit par mei.

The corrections given between brackets in our text are taken from this manuscript. The fourth copy of the *Livre des Creatures* is contained in a MS. of the twelfth century, in the Library of Lincoln Cathedral, D. 4. 8, and begins thus:

*Hic incipit compotes secundum Philippum. Prologus.*

Philippe de Thaun	ad fait une raison,
Pur proveires	guarnir de la lei maintenir;
A son uncle	l'enveiet, que amender le deiet,
Si rien i	ad mesdit en fait u en escrit,
A Unfrei de Thaun,	le chapelein Ydun
E seneschal	lu rei, ico vos dit par mei.

The Abbe de la Rue indicates three manuscripts of the *Livre des Creatures* in the Library of the Vatican, two among the MSS. of Petau, Nos. 512 and 695, and one among those of Christina queen of Sweden, No. 738.

The only copy that appears to be known of the Bestiary is the one in the Cottonian MS., from which the two poems are here printed, Nero, A. V.. The few corrections between brackets in this poem are conjectural. It is a singular example of the mode in which the subject was treated at that period, and is founded chiefly on the Latin *Bestiaria* which were then common, and occur frequently in manuscripts of

the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries. One of these is the authority so frequently quoted by Philippe de Thaum under the title of *Li Bestiaire*. The other authority he quotes is the *Physiologus*, a book of similar description, but apparently not the *Physiologus* of Thetbaldus in Latin verse, printed among the works of Hildebert (fol. Paris, 1708, p. 1174), and translated at an early period into English verse (printed in the *Reliquiae Antiquae*, vol. i. p. 208), which is the only work under that title that appears now to be known. I have in some instances compared the text of the poem with the Latin Bestiary of the twelfth century in MS. Burney, No. 327, in which the *Physiologus* is also frequently quoted, and of which some parts are almost literally the same as the corresponding chapters of Philip de Thaum. These works were founded on the Natural History of Pliny, and on the derivations of the names of animals by Isidore (who also is quoted by Philippe de Thaum), with a mixture of medieval fables, many of which had been borrowed directly or indirectly from the Orientals. We find but few traces of the singular moralizations, which accompany these descriptions of the animals, in England before the Norman conquest. In the Exeter Book there are two very curious descriptions in Anglo-Saxon verse (of the Panther, and of the Whale) which bear a close resemblance to the corresponding articles in Philippe de Thaum, and which have similar moralizations; I am inclined to think that they have formed part of a poetical Anglo-Saxon Bestiary. The same story of the Whale is found in the early legend of St. Brandan.

3. The English fragment at the end of the volume<sup>6</sup> is taken from a manuscript of the well-known early metrical collection of lives of saints (MS. Harl., No. 2277, fol. 127, r<sup>o</sup>, written in the reign of Edward I.). It is curious as being the earliest piece of the kind which we find in the *English* language. The writings of Philippe de Thaum belonged to a period of our history when the Anglo-Norman was the common language of life among the respectable classes of society; it was only after the middle of the thirteenth century that it began to give place to the altered form of the Anglo-Saxon, which we call English; and the present fragment was probably composed not long after that period.<sup>7</sup>

The chief object of the Editor of the present volume has been to give correct texts. The translations are intended merely to aid those who are not well skilled in the different languages to understand the original, and have no further pretensions. They have necessarily been done hurriedly; and every one acquainted with the subject will be aware how much care it requires to edit texts like these from the manuscripts for the first time, and translate them at the same time. The poems of Philippe de Thaum belong to a language of which there is neither dictionary nor grammar to assist us. The translations, having been made with the view just stated, are perfectly literal, so much so that many parts of them will perhaps be thought to read lamely. In some places I have preserved intentionally the characteristic phraseology of the original language. Thus, in the Anglo-Saxon treatise I have preserved the gender of the moon and sun, *he* and *she*. It is, perhaps, not known to all readers, that in the Teutonic languages the moon is masculine and the sun feminine:—this is always the case in Anglo-Saxon. In French and Anglo-Norman, and all the Neo-Latin tongues, the custom of the Latin language is retained, and the moon is feminine, and the sun masculine. In the English of the thirteenth century, and, at least, part of the fourteenth, the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon language were retained, and we find in the fragment at the end of the volume the sun again feminine. But as people began gradually to take their notions of grammar from the Latin language, the English writers adopted the same genders for the names of the two luminaries as they have in Latin and Anglo-Norman.

As the Anglo-Norman poems are the oldest monuments of the language known, I have thought it advisable to preserve, even in the Latin phrases and rubrics, all the peculiarities of the manuscript. It will be observed that, in the *Livre des Creatures*, there are several allusions to figures. These were not given in any of the Manuscripts that it was in my power to consult. At p. 64, are some Latin lines, which were arranged in the MS. so as to leave space for the lines of the drawing; I have carefully preserved this characteristic of the Manuscript, as the arrangement of the words may help to give an idea of the figure intended to be inserted. In the Manuscript, spaces are left throughout the Bestiary, to be filled with drawings of the animals, which are mentioned in the Latin rubrics, but which have not been inserted in the Manuscript. I

<sup>6</sup> Not included in the digital edition.

<sup>7</sup> A detailed account of this collection of Saints' lives will be found in Warton's History of English Poetry, vol. i. pp. 13-19, edit. o€1840. I believe that the portion printed in the present volume does not appear in all the Manuscripts.

have also preserved in the printed text the marks used to indicate the conjunctive particle,  $\neg$ <sup>8</sup> and &, wherever they occur in the MS. The general form of the conjunction is *e*; and I am inclined to think that the few instances of *et* arise from oversights of a Latin scribe. Under these circumstances I thought it unsafe to insert *et* in the text for the marks just mentioned, and some philologists might have blamed me for interpreting them by the common form *e*.

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<sup>8</sup> Note to the digital edition: In the printed text, the symbol used here resembles a number 7 with a curved top; lacking such a symbol that will display reliably, this symbol has been replaced with &.

Lores fud Dés juget, batud, e lied;  
 & ci solail levant prime sunt cleric cantant,  
 Ke dunc resuscitat Dés e de mort nus gerat;  
 E pur çeo terce cantum quant terce est par raisun,  
 Ke Deus fud dunc pened, & en la croiz leved.

125 <sup>72</sup> then was God judged, beaten and bound;  
 and at sun rise the clerks chant prime,  
 because then God was raised and recovered us from death;  
 and for this reason we chant tierce when tierce is rightly,  
 because God was then punished and raised on the cross.

*Sexta sunt tenebrae mundi per climata factae.*

**E L'URE** à midi cantent cleric à midi,  
 Lores fud obscuré, quant fud en croiz nafré.  
 Li solail se obscurat, nul luur ne dunat,  
 Pur la veire luur ki dunc suffri dolur,  
 Sulunc humanité, nent sulunc deité.  
 E çeo lisant truvum enz en la paissium,  
 Aiez en remembrance çeo est grant signefiance.  
 Pur çeo nune cantum, ke en icele saisun  
 Li esprit s'en alat, e la terre tremblat,  
 E depecherent peres de diverses maneres.  
 Aiez en remembrance, çeo est grant signefiance.  
 E la vespre est cantéc pur çeo en la vesprée,  
 Ke lores sun veir cors fud en sepulcre enclos.  
 Puis vespers est cumpelic, e içeo signefic,  
 Dés ad tut acumplit, ke diable venquid;  
 Pur çeo est *silencium* que silence apelum.  
 El prim scir repositum, c lores nus taisum,  
 E diable s'esmovent, ki tuz jurs par nuit overent.  
 Quant nus cessum de overer, dunc poent il errer;  
 La nuit unt poestié de traveiler malfé,  
 Ke il sunt fiz Nairun, que nus neir apclum;  
 Pur çeo quant vent le jur, dunc fuient la luur,  
 E nus cuntre li jur levum al Creatur,  
 Cuntre jur levums, e dimes noz ureisuns.  
 Or oez par maisterie que li chars signefic.  
**LI** chars note en verté quatre des feelz Dé,  
 Marc, Matheu senz engan, Lucas, e le bon Sain Johan;  
 E li criz signefic la mort del Fiz Marie,

130 And the hour of mid-day the clerks chant at mid-day,  
 then it was darkened when he was wounded on the cross,  
 the sun became obscured and gave no light,  
 on account of the true light which then suffered pain,  
 according to humanity, not according to deity.  
 And this we find reading in the Passion,  
 135 remember, it is great signification.  
 For this reason we chant nones, because at that time  
 the spirit departed, and the earth trembled,  
 and the stones split in divers manners.  
 Remember this is great signification.  
 140 And we chant vespers in the evening for this reason,  
 because then his true body was inclosed in the sepulchre.  
 Afterwards vespers is completed, and that signifies,  
 that God has accomplished all and vanquished the Devil;  
 therefore is *silencium*, which we call silence.  
 145 In the first evening we repose, and then we are silent,  
 and the devils stir themselves, who always work by night.  
 When we cease to work, then they can wander;  
 by night the evil ones have power to work,  
 for they are the sons of Nairun, which we call darkness;  
 150 on that account when day comes, then they fly the light,  
 and we at the approach of day rise to the Creator,  
 at the approach of day we rise and say our prayers.  
 Now hear, by science, what the cart signifies.  
<sup>89</sup> The cart denotes in truth four of God's lieges,  
 155 Mark, Matthew, without deception, Luke and the good St. John;  
 and the cry signifies the death of the son of Mary,

Que nunciarent el mund, par quei gent raient sunt,  
 Que Jhesu se cremeit sultunc çeo que hom esteit.  
**ET** sacez del leun un altre entenciun;  
 Qu' il ad itel sort que à oilz uvert dort,  
 Sacez çeo signefie le Fiz Sancte Marie  
 Enz en sa mort veillat, quam par mort mortuat;  
 Diable apelat mort, dist qu' il serait sa mort  
 E sun destrusement, nostre respunsement,  
 & en sa mort veillad quant Diablc liad;  
 Par la mort Damne-Dè nus est repos dune,  
 Par sa mort venqui Satan nostre enemi;  
 E içeo entendum par le dormir del leun.  
**ET** uncor par figure leuns ad tel nature,  
 Le jur que primes humme veit, icel jur trembler deit;  
 E çeo poez saveir par cez furnes veer.  
**LE** trembler del leun demustre par raisun,  
 Que Dè se humiliad quant pur hume encarnad,  
 Quant il od deité commust humanité,  
 Cum anme e cors est un, issi fud Dè & hum;  
 Tant sufist de çeo dire, or oez de altre martire.  
**SACEZ** que la leurre, s' un mort feun feune,  
 E dunc sen feun tent, si li leuns i survent,  
 Tant veit entour e cric que al terz jur vent à vie,  
 & iceste nature mustre ceste figure.  
**SACEZ** que Sancte Marie leone signefie,  
 E li leun cel Crist ki pur gent mort se fist;  
 Par treis jurz jut en terre pur noz amer conquere,  
 Sultunc humanité, nent sulum deité,  
 Si cum Jonas fist, ki el peissun se mist.  
**PAR** le cri del leun la vertud Deu parnum,  
 Par quei resuscitad Crist [e] enferm despuillat,  
 Çeo est signefiance, aez en remembrance,  
 Del leun en verité çeo dit auctorité;  
 Mais de ceste raisun ne ferai plus sermun,  
 Ke or voil cumencer de altre beste à traiter.  
**MONOSCEROS** est bestie, un corn ad en la teste,

which they announced in the world, by which people are assured,  
 that Jcsus had fear according to his humanity.  
 And know another signification of the lion;  
 that he has such a nature, that he sleeps with his eyes open;  
 know, that signifies, the son of St. Mary  
 was awake in his death, when he died by death,  
 the devil he called death, said that he would be his death  
 and his destruction, our responsibility,  
 and in his death was awake when he bound the devil;  
 by the death of the Lord God repose is given to us,  
 by his death he conquered Satan our enemy;  
 and this we understand by the sleeping of the lion.  
 And again by figure the lion has this nature,  
 the day when he first sees man, that day he must tremble;  
 and that you may know by these forms here.  
 The trembling of the lion shows rightly,  
 that God humbled himself when he became incarnate for man,  
 when he took humanity in exchange for deity,  
 as the soul and body is one, so was God and man;  
 so much is enough to say of this, now hear of another matter.  
 Know that the lioness, if she bring forth a dead cub,  
 she holds her cub, and the lion arrives,  
 he goes about it and cries till it revives on the third day,  
 and this nature shows this figure.  
 Know that the lioness signifies St. Mary,  
 and the lion, Christ, who gave himself to death for the people;  
 three days he lay in the earth to gain our souls,  
 according to humanity, not according to deity,  
 as Jonah did, who entered the fish.  
 By the cry of the lion we understand the power of God,  
 by which Christ was restored to life and robbed hell,  
 this is the signification, have it in remembrance,  
 of the lion, in truth, as we learn from authority;  
 but of this matter I will make no further discourse,  
 but will now begin to treat of another animal.  
 Monosceros is an animal which has onc horn on its head,

Pur çeo ad si à nun, de buc ad faqun; Par pucele est prise, or oez en quel guise. Quant hom le volt cacer e prendre & enginner, Si vent hom al forçst ù sis repairs est; Là met une pucele hors de sein sa mamele, E par odurement monosceros la sent; Dunc vent à la pucele, e si baiset sa mamele, En sun devant se dort, issi vent à sa mort; Li hom survent atant, ki l'ocit en dormant, U trestut vif le prent, si fait puis sun talent. Grant chose signefie, ne larei ne l'vus die. <b>MONOSCEROS</b> Griu est, en Franceis <i>un corn</i> est Beste de tel baillie Jhesu Crist signefie; Un Deu est e serat e fud e parmaindrat; En la virgine se mist, e pur hom charn i prist, E pur virginité pur mustrar casteed; A virgine se parut e virgine le concout, Virgine est e serat e tuz jurz parmaindrat. Or oez brcfment le signefiement. <b>CESTE</b> beste en verté nus signefie Dé; La virgine signefie sacez Sancte Marie; Par sa mamele entent sancte eglise ensement; E puis par le baiser çeo deit signefier, E (?Que) hom quant il se dort en semblance est de mort Dés cum hom dormi, ki en la cruiz mort sufri, E sa destruction nostre redemptiun, E sun travaillement nostre repositionment, Si deceut Dés Diable par semblant cuvenable; Anme e cors sunt un, issi fud Dés & hom, E çeo signefie beste de tel baillie. <b>PANTERE</b> est une beste de mult precius estre; & oez de sun nun significatiun <i>Pan</i> en Griu <i>trustin</i> est; ke de tel nature est, Ele ad multes valurs, si ad plusurs colurs; Duce est & atempree, de bestes est amée, Tut aime par raisun fors sulement le dragun;	195 200 205 210 215 220 225	therefore it is so named; it has the form of a goat, it is caught by means of a virgin, now hear in what manner. When a man intends to hunt it and to take and ensnare it, he goes to the forest where is its repair; there he places a virgin, with her breast uncovered, and by its smell the monosceros perceives it; then it comes to the virgin, and kisses her breast, falls asleep on her lap, and so comes to its death; the man arrives immediately, and kills it in its sleep, or takes it alive and does as he likes with it. It signifies much, I will not omit to tell it you. Monosceros is Greek, it means <i>one horn</i> in French: a beast of such a description signifies Jesus Christ, one God he is and shall be, and was and will continue so he placced himself in the virgin, and took flesh for man's sake, and for virginity to show chastity; to a virgin he <i>appeared</i> and a virgin conceived him, a virgin she is, and will be, and will remain always. Now hear briefly the signification. <sup>42</sup> This animal in truth signifies God; know that the virgin signifies St. Mary; by her breast we understand similarly Holy Church; and then by the kiss it ought to signify, that a man when he sleeps is in semblance of death; God slept as man, who suffered death, on the cross, and his destruction was our redemption, and his labour our repose, thus God deceived the Devil by a proper semblance; soul and body were one, so was God and man, and this is the signification of an animal of that description. Panther is an animal of very precious being; and hear the signification of its name: <i>παν</i> in Greek is all; it is of such a nature, it has many values, and various colours it is mild and of a good disposition, it is loved by animals, all rightly love it except the dragon alone;
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